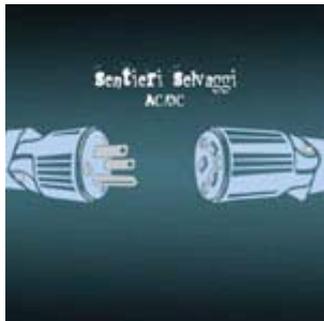

Sentieri Selvaggi

<http://www.sentieriselvaggi.org>

styles: modern composition, contemporary classical, post-minimalism

others: Clogs, Alarm Will Sound, Bang On A Can, Kronos Quartet, Ensemble Modern



AC/DC

Cantaloupe, 2006

rating: 4.5/5

reviewer: jnhasty

Milan-based Sentieri Selvaggi, which translates from Italian to "wild paths," is a group of classical musicians of the "New Italian School," who, as with most Cantaloupe artists, are dedicated to performing and promulgating new music that challenges and collapses the notions of what is commonly deemed "classical" music, especially when placed in opposition to "popular" music. Although a large part of the 20th century as a musical project was to do just this, it is still common to find disparate and incongruous music oafishly lumped under one large blanket heading of "classical," just as there are infinite divisions and subdivisions of styles bracketed under "pop" music. Granted, none of these songs will be mistaken for pop songs, but the music Sentieri Selvaggi presents isn't unapproachable to those of us without extensive classical training—but nothing on this album comes coated in sugar, either. Co-founded by Angelo Miotto, Filippo del Corno, and Carlo Boccadoro (who also conducts the group), Sentieri Selvaggi's players include Paola Fre (flute and piccolo), Mirco Ghirardini (clarinets), Andrea Rebaudengo (piano), Andrea Dulbecco (vibraphone and percussion), Thomas Schrott (violin), and Marco Decimo (cello). The aptly-named *AC/DC* is an anthology of some of their standout recordings, along with premieres of new works by some eminent contemporary composers, including Louis Andriessen, Laurie Anderson, Ludovico Einaudi, David Lang, and Bang On A Can-founder Michael Gordon.

Gordon composed the titular track, which opens with a set of familiar and "direct" piano chords, upon which complex arrangements of piccolo and flute lines, violin strikes, and a picked cello are piled in "alternating" rhythms and notational intervals. At one point, what sounds like a whole other string ensemble is introduced on top of the already calamitous mix. The rhythmic density builds to a head until the piece ceases as sharply as it began. "AC/DC" stretches the foundational chords and original melodic idea to such an extent that you have to question just how far out a song can venture before becoming something entirely different than its original conception. In this sense, "AC/DC" is the perfect opening track for an album out to challenge our expectations of music.

"L'uomo Armato," by Italian composer Filippo Del Corno, continues a similar mode of inquiry into rhythm and its boundaries. A pulsing woodblock offers a false sense of security at the outset; its clarity and steady eighth note rhythm makes it the sonic anchor to which your ear wants to cling, but seemingly random cymbal splashes, abrupt bass drums, and meandering reeds resist falling into an easily discernable pattern or settling into their anticipated place. Instruments speed up and slow down and notes continually sift in musical time. Bear in mind this is not harmonically discordant, but sounds playful and lighthearted in tone, so for listeners more accustomed to the rhythmic solidity of pop music (such as myself), the result is something more frustrating than repellant.

Italian composer Ludovico Einaudi's "The Apple Tree" is the sound of alternating emotional currents and conflicting passion. Although this is a totally subjective call, the song seems to meditate on "doubt," as in the "what if's" or "if only's" that, if chased for too long, only lead to the dark, interior labyrinth of irresolution. The song's blood flows from a minimalist heart, and it is safe to say that most of the composers on the disc have minimalist leanings or compose in some sort of minimalist form.

This is particularly true of David Lang, for whom Sentieri Selvaggi recorded the haunting and beautiful *Child*. Lang's "I Fought the Law," which can be described as a form of concentrated micro-minimalism, offers intimations of a rhythmic center not unlike "L'uomo Armato," but the woodblock has been replaced with what sounds like a glass bottle (or can) being banged on at the center of a storm of oboes, conjuring images of a fire engine racing to put out a blaze. The piece is as focused and sharp as a buzz saw and is one of the more challenging, but rewarding, listens on the album. The stark "Passeggiata in tram in America e ritotno" by Dutch composer Louis Andriessen is the only piece with a vocal performance, set to the words of Italian poet Dino Campana. The elegiac yet peaceful "Hiawatha," by New York performance artist and composer Laurie Anderson, comes as welcome respite from the tense scuttle of Lorenzo Ferrero's paranoiac "Glamorama Spies," but Carlo Boccadoro's "Bad Blood," the most discordant and chaotic piece on *AC/DC*, quickly shatters the calm. As violent as its title hints, the song boils with feelings of resentment and rage.

Cantaloupe Records continually delivers vital and top-notch new music driven by a musical philosophy of breaking barriers and uprooting conventions. This philosophy is perfectly displayed on Sentieri Selvaggi's *AC/DC*. The wonderful thing about this album, and a true testament to Sentieri Selvaggi's musical flexibility, is its diversity. Musically, the group is able to change the voltage or up the wattage with the utmost technical precision. On top of that,

they can change emotional currents without compromising a piece's sentiment. One may not be a fan of all the pieces on an initial listen, but chances are one of them will grab you. Once it does, the rest soon open up to reveal other worlds of musical ideas. All in all, an amazing collection of music that should be heard by anyone curious of current trends and goings on in contemporary music or who is looking for something new to breathe fresh life into their current body of sounds.

1. *AC/DC-Michael Gordon*
2. *L'uomo armato-Filippo Del Corno*
3. *The Apple Tree-Ludovico Einaudi*
4. *Passeggiata in tram in America e ritotno-Louis Andriessen*
5. *I Fought the Law-David Lang*
6. *Glamorama Spies-Lorenzo Ferrero*
7. *Hiawatha-Laurie Anderson*
8. *Bad Blood-Carlo Boccadoro*

