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Girolamo De Simone
Shama [Die Schachtel; 2008]



Styles: Italian new musical avant-garde, minimalist, electro-acoustic

Others: Luciano Cilio, Eugenio Fels, Stephan Mathieu

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Since it first emerged in the 1970s, the Italian new musical avant-garde has received limited exposure outside of the community's inner circle. Thankfully, one of the primary aims of the Die Schachtel label is to locate archival and unreleased material from these artists and present their work to a broader audience. Arguably, one of the label's most important releases is the reissue of late Luciano Cilio's 1977 masterpiece *Dell'Universo Assente*, whose brilliance was rightfully acknowledged by receiving a perfect score on this very website ([TMT Review](#)).

Playing a major role in this reissue was pianist, composer, and musicologist Girolamo De Simone, who, among other things, recovered, restored, and remastered many of the tracks on the album. So, when it comes to his own material, there may exist a certain level of expectation. Namely, a "high" level. Fortunately, *Shama* does not disappoint.

The album's first half consists mainly of electro-acoustic sound collages and miniatures comprised of an array of voices, field recordings, samples, and other instrumentation. The oddly anxious feel of these pieces creates an intense, foreboding mood that, at times, can be as unsettling as it is engaging. It is this fragmentary and discordant approach, however, that ultimately serves to heighten the emotional impact of the relatively sparse and introspective piano pieces that dominate the remainder of the album. Songs such as "Chiari," in particular, with its melancholic interplay of sustained notes and silence, create moments that prove to be genuinely beautiful and heartbreaking.

Taken as a whole, the dynamic variations heard throughout *Shama* combine to form a whole that is not only stunning in its own right, but is also a great representation of the broader community in which it arose. Girolamo De Simone succeeds in filtering the influence of great Italian composers such as his master Luciano Cilio and, in turn, articulates a collection of deeply moving pieces. Consequently, *Shama* is as good of an entry point as any into the utterly rewarding and sadly overlooked world of the Italian new musical avant-garde.

by [Stephen Bezan](#)

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