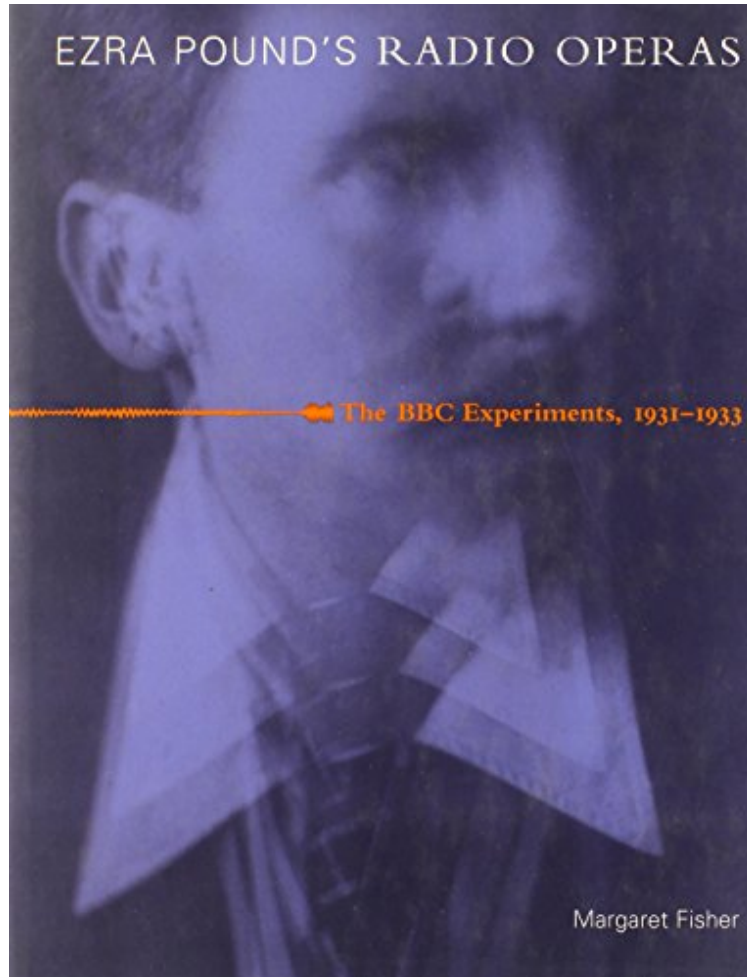


(Mobile book) Ezra Pound's Radio Operas: The BBC Experiments, 1931-1933

Ezra Pound's Radio Operas: The BBC Experiments, 1931-1933

Margaret Fisher

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Margaret Fisher : Ezra Pound's Radio Operas: The BBC Experiments, 1931-1933 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ezra Pound's Radio Operas: The BBC Experiments, 1931-1933:

A study of Ezra Pound's experimental BBC radio operas of the 1930s. Ezra Pound, best known for his Cantos, referred to himself as a "poet and composer" in the 1929 edition of Who's Who. His two BBC radio operas have been obscured by the polemics of his Italian radio broadcasts and his indictment by the United States government for treason during World War II. In this study of Pound's radio operas of the 1930s, Margaret Fisher draws on the unpublished correspondence between Pound and his maverick BBC producer, Edward Archibald Fraser Harding, to reveal a little-known aspect of Pound's career. "Archie" Harding, an advocate of mass microphone access in Britain and the first to

produce a global radio linkup, tutored Pound in radio's theoretical and political potential, as well as in specific radio techniques. Pound's first radio opera, transmitted in October 1931 under the title *The Testament of Francois Villon*, was one of the first electronically enhanced operas to be broadcast in Europe. At Harding's request, Pound wrote a second radio opera, *Cavalcanti*. Although the opera was thought to be unfinished and lost at the time of Pound's death, in 1983 the American composer and conductor Robert Hughes located the various manuscripts and assembled a complete work. Fisher examines Pound's reasons for composing and his theatrical models. She discusses the sound design of the 1931 production, as well as the context in which Pound wrote his radio operas -- artistic trends in film and radio, various broadcasting organizations and facilities, and contemporary radio techniques. She also compares Pound's radio experiments to those of F. T. Marinetti, Walter Ruttmann, and Bertolt Brecht. The book, which contains the 1931 radio script and producer's notes, provides the necessary background and analysis to facilitate a recreation of the 1931 broadcast, a contemporary stage performance, or a film or video production.

From *Library Journal* Ezra Pound's *The Cantos* stands as probably the longest and most complex work of epic poetry of the 20th century. In 1931, the misunderstood genius delved into another medium, radio, with two BBC radio musical operas, *The Testament of Francois Villon* and *Cavalcanti*. Here, choreographer and video director Fisher examines each of these "lost" radio productions, providing details of their development and insight into Pound's composition of the operas' music and poetry. Additionally, she offers a glimpse at the techniques used to produce radio programs at the time. Vintage black-and-white photographs and illustrations are also included. One major feature of this book is the appearance of the actual BBC script to *The Testament of Francois Villon*, accompanied by notes and corrections by the producer, Edward Archibald Fraser Harding. As probably the only compiled source of information on these historic Pound operas currently available, this book is recommended for academic libraries with music and telecommunications collections. David M. Lisa, Wayne P.L., NJ Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. This fascinating, meticulously documented study of Pound's two unpublished Radio Operas, *The Testament of Francois Villon* and *Cavalcanti*, casts a remarkably wide net. It chronicles Pound's relation to the new medium of radio from his Futurist and Vorticist experiments to the moment of his notorious Rome broadcasts, all the while considering the larger relationship between avant-garde intermedia and the new technologies. (Marjorie Perloff, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Stanford University, author of *The Futurist Moment and Twenty-first Century Modernism*)... [an] exhaustive study. (The Chronicle of Higher Education) Fisher's style makes you feel almost as if she had been there herself. (Leonardo S) With great narrative flair, Margaret Fisher tells some fascinating and unfamiliar stories about Pound's career as a dramatist. I find her account of the radio operas as a complement or counterweight to the whole of the *Cantos* an important contribution to Pound studies: what the *Cantos* omit -- the melodramatic, the vulgar, the ostentatiously sexy -- the radio operas include. Fisher is herself a stage director, and she re-creates the drama of the BBC broadcast with a remarkable precision of imagination. (Daniel Albright, Richard L. Turner Professor in the Humanities, University of Rochester) This is Pound's other stint on radio. Here the poet-composer collapses old historical quarters into what was the new media of its day. Margaret Fisher's learned book places Pound's radio operas on the backdrop of the European avant-garde, the inner workings of the 'B.B.C.', and Pound's own formidable breadth of ideas, to provide us, for the first time, with comprehensive case studies of modernist radiophonic experimentation. (Douglas Kahn, University of California, Davis, author of *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*) The first scholarly study of Pound and radio, Margaret Fisher's *Ezra Pound's Radio Operas* marks a quantum jump in our understanding of this important subject. Particularly impressive is her command of the intersections of art and technology. This groundbreaking book places Pound's work within its various contexts: the performance tradition, the works of Villon and Cavalcanti, and technical innovations in the new medium of radio during its formative years, with particular reference to the importance of Pound's collaboration with Edward A.F. Harding of the BBC. Of particular interest are Pound's development of a radio aesthetic with reference to the work of Marinetti on radio, and the uses of radio as a political tool in Germany and Italy. (Tim Redman, Professor of Literary Studies, University of Texas at Dallas, author of *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism (1991)*) About the Author Margaret Fisher is an independent choreographer and video director.