

Julia Freund, Federica Marsico, Matteo Nanni
Perspectives on Sylvano Bussotti

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Table of Contents

Introduction: Impulses for Multifaceted Bussotti Research <i>Julia Freund, Federica Marsico, Matteo Nanni</i>	7
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(De-)Constructing Identities

Sylvano Bussotti's Masks. The Author on the Stage (After the "Death of the Author") <i>Matteo Nanni</i>	21
From Silvano to Sylvano. The Young Bussotti in the Mirror of His Letters to Arrigo Benvenuti <i>Paolo Somigli</i>	38

Queerness and Eroticism

Michelangelo Unveiled. Discovering <i>Nottetempo</i> <i>Federica Marsico</i>	55
<i>Izumi Shikibu nikki</i> : An Inspiring Love Story from Ancient Japan in Sylvano Bussotti's Music <i>Alessandra Origani</i>	72

Contexts and Networks

<i>I semi di Gramsci</i> . Communism, Capitalism, Cold War, Avant-garde and the Italian Position <i>Vera Grund</i>	91
Bussotti in 'The Labyrinth'. Friendship and Artistic Relationships with Alain Daniélou and Jacques Cloarec <i>Costantino Vecchi</i>	103

Interpretation and Performance

"Œuvre d'adieu à la musique de concert". <i>Julio organum Julii</i> by Sylvano Bussotti <i>Matthias Geuting</i>	127
Between (Pre-)Fluxus and New Music. Reflections on the Performance Practice of Sylvano Bussotti's Scores of the Early 1960s <i>Anne-May Krüger</i>	149

Notational Transformations

“Adventures of Writing”. On Bussotti’s Practice of Freehand
Line-drawing
Julia Freund 177

Outlook

Towards a Rhizomatic Future. Directions for Sylvano
Paul Attinello 199

Abstracts 227

Contributors 233

Introduction

Impulses for Multifaceted Bussotti Research

Julia Freund, Federica Marsico, Matteo Nanni

Born on 1 October 1931 in Florence and having studied with Luigi Dallapiccola and Max Deutsch, Sylvano Bussotti entered the international post-war new music scene that gathered prominently at the Darmstadt Summer Courses in 1958. In fact, with his graphic scores, he was significantly involved in one of the major issues of these years: the critical deconstruction of standardised notation. His *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* (1959) served as a paradigmatic reference point in the debates on the theoretical reflection on and desired renewal of musical writing.¹ According to Paul Attinello and David Osmond-Smith, it was Bussotti's open homosexuality, in connection with the vivid sensuality and corporality of his compositions, that set him apart from his peer composers, and led to irritations in the climate of the late 1950s in which homosexuality was still a taboo, and avant-garde music was, at least *prima facie*, strongly focused on structural, and not sensual issues.²

With his 'mystère de chambre' *La Passion selon Sade*, in 1965, Bussotti presented a music-theatre work that was characterised to a previously unknown extent by an erotic physicality. He used the score to not only notate sound events or structures but also fixate movement, gestures and lighting, placing his work in the vicinity of the endeavours of Mauricio Kagel's 'instrumental theatre', and within the context of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* idea. In the decades to come, within the exceptional personal union of composer, director, actor, stage and costume designer, poet and visual artist, Bussotti consistently explored the boundaries between medially differentiated art forms and different genres (music theatre, ballet, instrumental music), even coining a term specifically designed to indicate his stage compositions: 'BussottiOperaBallet'.

In the research discourses on 20th-century music and music theatre, Bussotti's *œuvre* has a very limited presence. A detailed study of the majority of his works is still pending, and the hitherto available archival material has been examined only partially, which poses difficulties for well-founded musicological studies. While there is a small community of researchers who have been laying the groundwork in explicating Bussotti's biography, aesthetics and poetics, so far, there is not a single

1 See e.g. Stockhausen, "Musik und Graphik"; Ligeti, "Neue Notation – Kommunikationsmittel oder Selbstzweck?".

2 Osmond-Smith/Attinello, "Gay Darmstadt".

larger publication in the English language dedicated to the life and work of the composer³ – with severe consequences for the reception of Bussotti in academic and public discourses. These diagnoses are in striking disproportion to the historical importance of the Italian artist and, as a matter of fact, the potential that lies in engaging with his work in view of current discourses. This book responds to this *desideratum*. It aims to bundle recent approaches, break new ground in research on Bussotti and stimulate a broader debate on his *œuvre* and aesthetics.

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON SYLVANO BUSSOTTI AND HIS WORK

The research idea in this volume is based on the conviction that Bussotti's work cannot be studied from a single methodological perspective, but that a multi-perspective, polyvalent, plural approach is most productive when dealing with an *oeuvre* such as his. Methodologically, this book deals with seminal questions concerning his work and its context, as well as notation and aesthetics in a way that attempts to correspond to the subject matter. Bussotti's artistic path was at the cutting edge of the development of multimediality in contemporary art at a very early stage. Adorno diagnosed a blurring of medial differences between the arts in 1966, a phenomenon he described as the "hybridization of the arts",⁴ which consisted of the fact that visual principles of the visual arts influenced music as well as constructive moments of the serial composition technique had an effect on literature. In this context, Adorno referred to Bussotti's graphic notation⁵ to show that graphics and composition are in a dialectical contradiction: they converge in the work and, simultaneously, diverge through the centripetal force of their autonomous power. In this volume, this dialectic is to be taken up productively and will be discussed from different points of view: Starting from the question of identity and its deconstruction, the contributions of this book touch on the biographical questions of queerness and eroticism in the specific way in which these are reflected in his composing alongside the music-historical contextualisation of friendships and networks. Furthermore, Bussotti's work will be discussed, from investigations into interpretation and performance to the core question of the transformation of musical notation. In the sense of a polyvalent approach, this

3 As an exception, the trilingual (Italian-English-French) collected volume *The Theatres of Sylvano Bussotti* edited by Daniela Tortora contains several English essays. Shorter publications include, among others, Attinello, "Signifying Chaos"; Ulman, "The Music of Sylvano Bussotti"; Osmond-Smith/Attinello, "Gay Darmstadt"; Marsico, "Contemporary Music Theater and the Experience of Marginalization".

4 Adorno calls this phenomena "Verfransung der Künste" and, thus, means the fraying and fringing of the material and medial specificities of the arts producing polyvalent and hybrid art works. See Adorno, "Die Kunst und die Künste", p. 452 and id., *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 258. See also Bertram/Deines/Feige (Eds), *Die Kunst und die Künste*.

5 See Adorno, "Die Kunst und die Künste", p. 432.

book cannot be exhaustive; many other research perspectives can be addressed. This volume proposes some perspectives that are interconnected and is based on the very firm idea that Bussotti's work can only be understood from a multidimensional approach.

Building on existing research and especially more recent studies on Bussotti, we would like to outline perspectives in the following which, in our opinion, can be made productive for the development of Bussotti studies and the (re)examination of his work in the light of current discourses. These perspectives play an important role throughout the contributions to this volume.

Bussotti's fluid, hybrid writing practices and the resulting ambivalent forms of notation constitute a fascinating subject of research. It is, however, not sufficient to merely describe these hybrid (notational and pictorial) phenomena, point out their gestural character and trace them back to the biographical fact that Bussotti has been a composer *and* a painter. It is also essential and, in fact, conceptually highly productive to define precisely *how* the notational and pictorial dimensions *interact* with each other – beyond labels such as 'graphic notation' or 'musical graphics', that are too vague and general to provide insights into specific works of art. To theoretically pin down the relationship between the iconic element of musical writing, i.e. its 'notational iconicity',⁶ and the score as a visual arts object that establishes its own iconic 'logic' and temporality is pivotal.⁷ Taking into account Bussotti's own (deliberately) contradictory statements on his notational practices and unusual employment of performance instructions, his writing strategies can be productively illuminated within (and beyond) the context of interdisciplinary debates on writing and images,⁸ as well as theoretical accounts of contemporary art.⁹

Bussotti's notational strategies, often suspending a direct sign-reference relation, challenge established definitions of what constitutes musical writing or notation, and – since, in recent research, standardised notation has been described as a diagrammatic form of representation – what constitutes a diagram. The spatial arrangement of note heads, stems and staves in *Autotono* (1977), for example, can be read as musical notation, visual ornaments or performative instructions for the theatrical dimension of the piece.¹⁰ This ambivalent state invites one to rethink stable definitions and sharpen terminological distinctions.

6 See e.g. Krämer, "Notational Iconicity"; Nanni, "Musikalische Diagrammatik".

7 See e.g. Boehm, "Jenseits der Sprache?"; id., "Die Sichtbarkeit der Zeit".

8 See e.g. Freund, "Bild und Zeichen"; Magnus, "Aurale Latenzen".

9 See e.g. Seel, *Ästhetik des Erscheinens*; Rebentisch, *Ästhetik des Installation*. For the contextualisation of Bussotti's multidisciplinary artistic output within these discourses, see Freund, "Zwischen bildender Kunst und Musik(notation)".

10 See Freund, "Von japanischen Steingärten und Pariser Geschichten".

As stated above, it has to be considered a major deficit in Bussotti research that the evaluation of a large part of relevant archival material is still pending. Compared to composers whose sketches and correspondences have been subject to extensive investigations, such as Pierre Boulez or Luigi Nono, we know very little about Bussotti's relationships and intellectual exchanges with composers, artists or intellectuals;¹¹ in the same vein, not much is understood about his compositional processes.¹² Unveiling and analysing archival material is long overdue and promises to shed new light on his interactions, aesthetic ideas, creative practices, development as an artist and strategies as an artistic director (e.g. 1976–77 at the *Teatro La Fenice* in Venice,¹³ 1978–83 regarding the *Festival pucciniano* in Torre del Lago,¹⁴ or 1987–91 of the music section of *La Biennale di Venezia*).

The most important collection of archival material related to Bussotti is preserved today in the *Center for Studies and Research on Modern and Contemporary Music "NoMus"* of Milan, where the composer's Fund was donated by Rocco Quaglia after the death of his partner.¹⁵ The forthcoming publication of the catalogue of the Bussotti's correspondence preserved in the NoMus Archive will undoubtedly enable the expansion of the study of his artistic output and professional activity on the basis of unpublished sources.¹⁶ New sources also deserve to be brought to light from other archives, such as Quaglia's private archive, the historical archives of theatres and institutions with whom Bussotti collaborated, the estates of performers of his works (such as the organist Gerd Zacher, who premiered *Julio organum Julii* 1968 in Bremen, or the pianist Aloys Kontarsky, who gave the world premiere of *Tableaux vivants* for two pianos 1964 in Bremen together with his brother Alfons), the archives of Bussotti's closest friends (such as Alain Daniélou), or the National Library of Florence, where some of the composer's letters are stored. These sources allow new insights and contextualisations regarding the composer's artistic biography and network, poetics and aesthetics as well as the performance history and practice of his works.

Bussotti's work was created at a time when the concept of modern subjectivity got into a crisis. Since his very first works, his artistic personality was characterised by a polyvalence and openness towards every kind of aesthetic experience that questioned the subject: even the coincidental change of name from Silvano

11 On the Adorno-Bussotti correspondence in the *Theodor W. Adorno Archiv* see Freund, "Bild und Zeichen"; on Bussotti's correspondence in *NoMus* see Marsico, "Scoprire la corrispondenza di Sylvano Bussotti nel Centro Studi NoMus".

12 In the preface to the score of *Due voci*, Bussotti states that from that moment on, he would directly write a composition down without working with sketches – a statement that still awaits verification or falsification. Bussotti, *Due voci*, n.p.

13 Marsico, "La prospettiva di Sylvano Bussotti"; ead., "Scoprire la corrispondenza di Sylvano Bussotti nel Centro Studi NoMus".

14 Marsico, "Una sorta di padre putativo".

15 On the Bussotti Fund in *NoMus*, see Novati/Vaccarini (Eds), *Sylvano Bussotti. Respirando appagato*.

16 Marsico, *La corrispondenza di Sylvano Bussotti. Il Fondo del Centro Studi NoMus*.

to Sylvano seems paradigmatic of this. His composing can hardly be reconciled with the determining subjectivity of musical structuralism. Not only one individual subjectivity seems to speak from his music, but many. Bussotti's work and his composing can, therefore, be placed within the cultural development of postmodern thought. As the writings of Jean-François Lyotard and Roland Barthes show, the idea of a strong subject crumbled in the course of the postmodern condition. At a time when the relationship between reality and virtuality was being renegotiated, the traditional subject proved to be just a mask. For Bussotti, composing, thus, inscribes itself in the tension between subject and mask, to paraphrase the famous essay by the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo from 1974, *Il soggetto e la maschera*. The early use by the young Bussotti of the twelve-tone technique was just a possibility among others and, thus, found its application beyond the omnipotence of a determining subject. Similarly, his Darmstadt works reveal a critical examination of the totalising determinism of the musical material, while the decision to implement graphic notation was not only due to the fact that he himself worked as a graphic artist, but also to opening up the musical text to the creative participation of the musicians by, thus, breaking up artistic subjectivity. The fact that notational graphism goes hand in hand with the expansion of musical subjectivity in the sense of the dissolution of a *strong* authorship can be seen particularly in his music theatre. There, he continued the play between subject and mask in a new way. The experience of the deconstruction of modern subjectivity then opened Bussotti's creativity to the idea of collective artistic production. If, on the one hand, his activity as an artistic director in Venice and Torre del Lago was featured by a multidisciplinary artistic approach, on the other hand, the *laboratory* of the Genazzano Festival, the invention of the Bussottioperaballet with its inter-medial nature, and, finally, the fusion of life and art are central moments in the exploration of a new conception of postmodern musical subjectivity.

Several of Bussotti's works strongly suggest addressing and including aspects of gender and sexuality in the scholarly discussion. The study of the operas *Lorenzaccio* (1972),¹⁷ *Syro Sadun Settimino* (1974),¹⁸ *Le Racine. Pianobar pour Phèdre* (1980)¹⁹ and *Fedra* (1988)²⁰ shows that his works can be regarded as media for negotiating gender identity and making visible body images and forms of desires beyond heteronormativity.²¹ (In the light of this, it seems hardly plausible why not a single work

17 Freund, "Geschlechterperformanz in der Partitur".

18 Marsico, "Un'opera dimenticata di un 'contestataire contesté'".

19 Marsico, "Da *Le Racine* a *Fedra* di Sylvano Bussotti"; ead., "Il libretto di *Le Racine. Pianobar pour Phèdre* (1980) di Sylvano Bussotti"; ead., *La seduzione queer di Fedra*; ead., "Le provocazioni di *Le Racine*".

20 Marsico, "Da *Le Racine* a *Fedra* di Sylvano Bussotti"; ead., *La seduzione queer di Fedra*; ead., "Le provocazioni di *Le Racine*".

21 Marsico, "Contemporary Music Theater".

of Bussotti's has been included in the 2019 'first gay opera guide' *Casta Diva*.²²) Since many of Bussotti's works invest the hedonistic component of sexuality, it is made clear that erotic desire constitutes one of the key themes of his production. In his works, art and life are merged into one. When homosexual emancipation movements were still far from coming into being, Bussotti did not choose to conceal his sexual orientation or live it as an open secret. Instead, he exhibited it casually, both in life and in art. Musical theatre undoubtedly constituted the privileged place to give expression to such a relevant aspect of his existence. The author gives voice to the multiple forms of erotic desire through subjects, dramaturgy, costumes, sets, choreographic movements and any other element capable of exalting the seductive power of physical beauty and body.

In this respect, a theoretical perspective informed by concepts from gender and queer studies can be made productive for Bussotti research in order to fully understand his aesthetics and additionally highlight the societal relevance of his output. Important socio-cultural issues of contemporaneity in his music can be highlighted by an inquiry into how he destabilises the exclusionary machinery of dominant homophobic thought and uses music to explore non-normative genders and sexualities. Moreover, the investigation of his left-aligned political stance and his relationship with the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI: Italian Communist Party), which until the 1970s never committed itself to gay rights, can further enrich knowledge of the author's biography and thought.

The performance history and practice of Bussotti's works is a further topic worthy of investigation. It reveals a problem that holds true for many 20th- and 21st-century compositions: How can pieces be performed that have been written for specific interpreters or voices, in Bussotti's case, for example, for Cathy Berberian or William Pearson? The absence of the 'original' performers poses a related problem that affects graphically notated music to a great extent: How can these scores be interpreted if there is no continuous tradition of performance practice that provides the necessary contextual information, assuming, with Adorno, that the 'idiomatic' element of musical writing is a vital part of 'reproducing' a score?²³

These questions can be approached from different angles: firstly, by reconstructing through archival documents how interpreters such as Berberian, David Tudor or the Kontarsky brothers realised the scores, for example, by making transcriptions, annotating or modifying them. Secondly, by entering into a dialogue with musicians who have worked intensely with Bussotti and reflecting on how to mediate the discrepancy between the fundamental openness of the pieces for

22 Falk/Limbeck (Eds), *Casta Diva. Der schwule Opernführer*.

23 Adorno, *Zu einer Theorie der musikalischen Reproduktion*, pp. 88f.

co-creativity and the author's intention.²⁴ Or, thirdly, by exploring new readings through detailed musical analysis of single works, taking into account Bussotti's autobiographical references, his self-borrowings that acquire a new meaning in the score, his autopoietic and aesthetic statements, and the formal disposition of the pieces.

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book consists of an introduction, five thematic chapters and an outlook, that sketches possible lines for future research. The central thematic sections focus on different perspectives that range from cultural-theoretical questions on identity and authoriality, gender issues, historiographical and performance-practical questions to the subject of notational changes.

(De-)Constructing Identities opens with Matteo Nanni's paper, which explores the phenomenon of authorial self-staging as a practice of transformation and masking of subjectivity. This practice is outlined against the background of the theoretical discussion of the "death of the author", as was articulated by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, and focused on the analysis of *La Passion selon Sade* and *Lorenzaccio*, discussing the presence of the author on stage after its 'removal'. Paolo Somigli's paper, which follows, investigates the development of the composer's career from his being the young student 'Silvano' to his establishment as a composer on the international stage under the name of 'Sylvano' in the late 1950s. The study is conducted through the examination of the epistolary exchange with his friend Arrigo Benvenuti.

The next section, *Queerness and Eroticism*, consists of Federica Marsico's and Alessandra Origani's papers. The former explores the erotic charge of the opera *Nottetempo*, focusing on the dramaturgical development of the plot and some elements of the scenography designed by Bussotti. An investigation of the intertextual references in the libretto also enriches the study, together with some reflections on the score. Origani's paper addresses the attention to the unpublished and unperformed opera *Izumi Shikibu. Diario di tre Stagioni* by studying the musical manuscript and its peculiarities, the textual structure in the context of the absence of dramaturgy and, finally, the differences between the opera and the Japanese literary sources.

Contexts and Networks is the third element and includes Vera Grund's paper, which investigates Bussotti's position with respect to PCI politics and the Italian

24 At the conference "Perspectives on Sylvano Bussotti" (Gießen, 2021, see below) that preceded that volume, there was a panel discussion with musicians sharing their experience in rehearsing and performing Bussotti's works or, respectively, working with the composer, including Monica Benvenuti (soprano), Evelin Degen (flute), Matthias Geuting (organ), Francesco Giomi (electronics) and Renatus Mészár (bass-baritone).

political context in the 1970s by examining the composition *I semi di Gramsci*. Costantino Vecchi's paper enriches this section with the exploration of the friendship and intellectual relationship between Bussotti, Alain Daniélou and Jacques Cloarec through archival materials of the *Alain Daniélou Foundation*.

The next part of the book, *Interpretation and Performance*, opens with an essay by Matthias Geuting which gives a detailed account of the *première* of Bussotti's organ composition *Julio organum Julii* by Gerd Zacher, providing a rich contextualisation of the performance in Bremen and considering hitherto unknown documents, such as Zacher's playing score and the correspondence between Bussotti and Zacher. Anne-May Krüger's paper compares two performance practice traditions of the 1960s connected to Bussotti's compositions, dissecting the underlying ideal of interpretation in the performance practices of David Tudor and the Konarsky brothers.

In *Notational Transformations*, Julia Freund investigates the graphic element of the line as an intermediary between Bussotti's notational and scenographic practices, using examples from *Oggetto amato* (1975). Her paper proposes a reading in which the dynamic, oscillating lines in Bussotti's musical writing come into view as a negation of the straight, rationalised line prevalent in musical notation.

The book closes with Paul Attinello's outlook which offers some forward-looking reflections on Bussotti's work. Attinello ponders, from a subjective perspective, on the suggestions about music and notation, the radical vision and the suggestive lacunae in symbolism and materiality, rhizomes, graphics, and the ways of making music Bussotti's work shows. This concluding text opens up a range of potential lines of development for future musicological work on this distinct avant-garde composer.

* * *

This volume brings together the contributions of the international conference "Perspectives on Sylvano Bussotti", which took place from 29 September to 1 October 2021, on the occasion of the composer's 90th birthday. It was hosted by the Institut für Musikwissenschaft und Musikpädagogik of the University of Gießen, with the patronage of Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Dipartimento di Filosofia e Beni Culturali. Due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the talks and discussions were held online. After receiving the news that Bussotti passed away on 19 September 2021, we dedicated the conference to his memory.

The event was accompanied by a 'Bussotti portrait concert', given at the Johanneskirche Gießen on 30 September 2021.²⁵ The E-MEX Ensemble, which is based in Essen and specialises in contemporary music, was joined by the guest so-

25 It was recorded by students of the Institut für Musikwissenschaft und Musikpädagogik, University of Gießen.

loists Monica Benvenuti (soprano) and Renatus Mészár (bass-baritone).²⁶ The programme included *Foglio grigio* for baritone and violin from *Silvano Sylvano* (2004), *Attacca subito* (2013) for electronics, *Julio organum Julii* (1958) for organ, *Rondò di scena* (1978) for flute and dance, *Lachrimae* (1978) for soprano and electronics and *Quando il flutto s'incurva* (Seneca's aria from *Tieste la tragedia*, 1993) for baritone.

Directly following the events in Gießen, on 2 October 2021, the E-MEX Ensemble and their guests performed Bussotti's famous but rarely heard cycle *Pièces de chair II* in Cologne.²⁷ The rehearsal process of this elusive chamber musical song collection was supported by an English translation of Bussotti's 12-page-long performance instructions, which were still unpublished and widely unknown at that time.²⁸ The concert was recorded and broadcast on 19 March 2022 on Deutschlandfunk in the series "Atelier neuer Musik".

We hope that this book's output will not only provide impulses for future research on Bussotti and his *œuvre*, but also foster an increased practical engagement with his rarely performed pieces, suggesting new interpretative paths of 20th- and 21st-century music.

Finally, we would like to thank the Open-Access-Fonds of the University of Hamburg and Peter Mischung from Wolke Verlag for making this publication possible. We also wish to thank all the authors of this volume, Philip Saunders, Rocco Quaglia and all those involved in the preceding conference as well as the musicians of the concerts for the wonderful collaboration and productive discussions during the conference and the preparation of this book.

Basel, Frankfurt, Teramo, 2024

26 For further information and the full list of the musicians involved, see the website of the E-MEX Ensemble: <https://e-mex.de/konzerte/attacca/> (1.3.2024).

27 See <https://e-mex.de/konzerte/attacca-2/> (1.3.2024).

28 See Freund/Marsico, "Bussotti's Notes on *Pièces de Chair II*. Facsimile and English Translation".

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(De-)Constructing Identities

Sylvano Bussotti's Masks. The Author on the Stage (After the "Death of the Author")

Matteo Nanni

1. AUTHORIAL SELF-STAGING

It is quite rare in classic-romantic opera that the composer enters onto the stage and becomes part of the theatrical spectacle representing her- or himself as author. Due to the traditional division of labour between librettist, composer, stage director, conductor and musicians, the author's function dwells basically prior to the performed work. While since Richard Wagner's concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, at the latest, the composer's creative tasks have been widened, the gap between the composer as the creator of a work and the "author as a performative figure"¹ has persisted. Her or his presence on stage as an "intertextual/interperformative"² part of the composition still did not come into play until the second half of the 20th century.³ The phenomenon of authorial self-staging has been very common in performative art forms, such as Happening, Fluxus, Conceptual Art, Body Art, Behaviour Art, and Theatre of Mixed Means,⁴ since the 1960s. Avant-garde music generally, as John Cage's works, for example, bear witness,⁵ and more specifically, some composers of music theatre did not remain untouched by this tendency: inspired, without doubt, by different types of performative art, composers of post-war music theatre crop up on the stage as part of the performance in several works. Just to give a few examples: Mauricio Kagel shows up as himself walking on the stage of *Repertoire* (from the work *Staatstheater*, 1970) with his iconic fiddler's cap; Anestis Logothetis plays Daidalos, the main character of his multimedia opera

1 Jestrovic, *Performances of Authorial Presence and Absence*, p. 31. Admittedly, the operatic tradition is not lacking in allusions to the composer, such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's own reference in the finale of the second act of *Don Giovanni* to the aria "Non più andrai" from *Le nozze di Figaro*, where the author's alter ego, Leporello, comments ironically on hearing the melody: "Questa poi la conosco pur troppo."

2 Ibid., p. 140.

3 See on that topic: Barthelmes, "Der Komponist als Ausführender und der Interpret als Komponist"; Künzel/Schönert (Eds), *Autorinszenierungen*; Hiekel/Roesner (Eds), *Gegenwart und Zukunft des Musiktheaters*.

4 For a general discussion of performative arts, see Jappe, *Performance – Ritual – Prozeß*; Carlson, *Performance*, pp. 83–134; Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*.

5 Just as one of many examples, I wish to remind that in *Water Walk* (1959), John Cage appears as a television showman using materials related to water including a bath tub, a toy fish, a pressure cooker and a rubber duck. This work was premiered on the popular Italian television show "Lascia o Raddoppia" on 5 February 1959. Subsequently it was repeated on "I've Got a Secret", an American television game show, on 24 February 1960.

Daidalia oder das Leben einer Theorie (1976–78); and Franco Donatoni is present on the stage of his opéra comique *Alfred-Alfred* (1995), lying in a clinic hospital bed and ‘re-enacting’ hospital scenes that he himself had really experienced. Significant examples of an early and substantial new way of self-staging is provided by many works of music theatre by Sylvano Bussotti since *La Passion selon Sade* (1965). It is important to highlight that in the works mentioned, the presence on stage is always marking the ambiguity between actor and composer, role and author, and creator and mask. Referring to the late medieval writer Antoine de La Sale, Julia Kristeva discusses the ambivalence between *actor* and *author*, highlighting that the “homophony (Latin: *actor-auctor*, French *acteur-auteur*)” for La Sale “touches upon the very point where the speech *act* (work) tilts toward discursive *effect* (product), and thus, upon the very constituting process of the ‘literary’ object.” And Kristeva concludes, therefore, that “the writer is both actor and author”.⁶

As Silvija Jestrovic pointed out, such phenomena can be reinterpreted in terms of the performative turn:

Hence, the performative turn in resurrecting the author is not only about how the authorial figure becomes theatricalized, dramatized and fictionalized through concretization, but also what aspects of it escape this process in the dialectic tension between text and body, self and other, presence and absence.⁷

Once on stage, the composer paradoxically steps back as the author behind his or her text and, in a variety of ways, transforms him- or herself into a new body, a new figure, a new persona with a masked subjectivity: “The subjectivity of the author might disappear at one end of the textual machine [...], but the author re-emerges at the other end as a performative figure”.⁸ Building her theoretical reflection on the authorship on Michail Bakhtin, Kristeva had already suggested that authorship can be reflected in terms of the carnival, where “the subject is reduced to nothingness, while the structure of the *author* emerges as anonymity that creates and sees itself created as self and other, as man and mask”.⁹ In the following, this practice will be explored and discussed against the background of Kristeva’s and Jestrovic’s theory of authorial presence, starting from the theoretical discussion of the “death of the author” as was articulated by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. After that, I will take under examination some scenes from *La Passion selon Sade* and *Lorenzaccio* and discuss them under the theoretical frame of the presence of the author after its ‘removal’.¹⁰

6 Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 44.

7 Jestrovic, *Performances of Authorial Presence and Absence*, p. 115.

8 Ibid., p. 7.

9 Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, p. 78.

10 See Barthes, “The Death of the Author”, p. 145. There is a steadily growing debate on this topic. I refer to the following studies as examples from the large number of publications: Biriotti/Miller, *What is an Author?*; Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*; Jannidis et al. (Eds.),

2. THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR

The French philosopher and semiotician Roland Barthes declared in his text *The Death of the Author* that what we call an author is “a product of our society”¹¹ and that “the image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions”.¹² The key question Barthes suggests for every kind of art work is: “Who is speaking thus?”¹³ Is it the author who is speaking or the fictive character? Or is it the historical context which is evoked by the work? Is it the language itself? Barthes’ theory of the text as “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash”¹⁴ figures out that what we call the author is, in truth, nothing but somebody who writes and, by doing that, disappears behind the written product. The author is always behind what was done: he or she “is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and an *after*”.¹⁵ Facing the work of art itself, Barthes states that the author is dead. And this happens in the very act of writing, composing, painting or producing, because, as Barthes points out, “writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin”.¹⁶

Michel Foucault, echoing Barthes, revised the hypothesis of the death of the author, highlighting against Barthes that the production of a text – the act of writing – implies the existence of an author due to its absence.¹⁷ Foucault states that

This usage of the notion of writing runs the risk of maintaining the author’s privileges under the protection of the a priori: it keeps alive, in the gray light of neutralization, the interplay of those representations that formed a particular image of the author.¹⁸

The intrinsic condition of the author is not to be always before the work, but to be a “function of discourse”¹⁹ and, as such, “the result of a complex operation that

Rückkehr des Autors; Detering, *Autorschaft*; Rebellato, “Exit the Author”; Seymour, *An Analysis of Roland Barthes’s “The Death of the Author”*; Sayers, *Authorship’s Wake*.

11 Barthes, “The Death of the Author”, p. 142.

12 Ibid., p. 143.

13 Ibid., p. 142.

14 Ibid., p. 146.

15 Ibid., p. 145.

16 Ibid., p. 142. Barthes explains this concept further as follows: “No doubt it has always been that way. As soon as a fact is *narrated* no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.” Ibid. For a commentary on that, see Jestrovic, *Performances of Authorial Presence and Absence*, pp. 29–30.

17 “When rigorously applied, this notion [writing, écriture] should allow us not only to circumvent references to the author, but also to situate his recent absence.” Foucault, “What is an Author?”, p. 208.

18 Ibid., pp. 208–209.

19 Ibid., p. 221.

constructs a certain being of reason that we call ‘author’”.²⁰ Therefore Foucault emphasises that the crisis of authorship is induced by the end of what he calls the “unit of the author and the work”.²¹ Thus, he stresses that “[t]he word *work* and the unity that it designates are probably as problematic as the status of the author’s individuality”.²²

Both Barthes and Foucault converge in the radical separation between writer and text, between authorship and art work – a perspective that can help us to better understand the phenomenon of the author on the stage. It is well-known that Barthes and Foucault’s theoretical approach led to an intense discussion in literary theory.²³ I do not want to reproduce this debate which should focus less on the supposed contradictions of this thesis, as Seán Burke polemically wrote, but should discuss more constructively the performative aspect of the act of writing. However, the most important question for my purpose is: What happens with the author, when he or she is present on stage and becomes part of the work? What is his/her function? How should we deal with the presence of the author?

3. BUSSOTTI’S PRESENCE ON THE STAGE

Bussotti is decisively one of the composers in contemporary opera who offers one of the most frequent moments of self-presence on stage. Beside all the works in which he was involved as pianist, stage director or costume designer, he showed a substantial presence in his music theatre compositions: In *La Passion selon Sade* (1965–66) he appears in the second *tableau vivant* as “concertatore e Maestro di Cappella”²⁴ and remains mostly on stage with various role changes. In one number of *Raramente* (1971), namely *Ultima Rara (pop song)*, he takes the role of the actor,²⁵ and in *Lorenzaccio* (1968–72), he embodies Alfred De Musset, but, as we will see, this part is shimmering between many different characters, namely, De Musset, Lorenzo, a romance-singer and Bussotti himself. While he played the role of the *dicitore* in the ballet *Syro Sadun Settimino* (1973–74), he also appeared in a short filmic insertion of *Nottetempo* (1976), the sequence called *immagine*, as the Titan Atlas²⁶ from Greek mythology, and, still in relation to Antiquity, he takes

20 Ibid., p. 213.

21 Ibid., p. 205.

22 Ibid., p. 208.

23 For some of the actual contributions on that, see Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*; Jannidis et al. (Eds), *Rückkehr des Autors*; Weimar, “Doppelte Autorschaft”; Teuber, “Sacrificium auctoris”; Wuggenig, “Den Tod des Autors begraben”.

24 Bussotti, *La Passion selon Sade*, no. 12.

25 Some considerations on Bussotti’s acting are discussed by Guardenti, “À propos de Sylvano Bussotti, acteur”.

26 See Amidei/Bussotti, “Immagine (sequenza cinematografica)”, p. 45.

over the role of Atreus²⁷ in *Tieste* (1993). Bussotti's voice can be heard in various works, such as *Julio organum Julii* (1968) and *Fedra 'ncora* (1992). Finally, in this brief overview of Bussotti's presence on stage, which does not claim to be exhaustive, what has, of course, to be mentioned is the central role as author and, at the same time, as the mask of himself in *Silvano Sylvano* (2004).²⁸

I will now examine some examples from both premiere productions of *La Passion selon Sade*²⁹ and *Lorenzaccio*,³⁰ focussing on the array of Bussotti's self-presences on stage. We are already confronted in these two works with a plurality of functions impersonated by him. The variety of camouflages and the multiplicity of personalities embodied by Bussotti seems to go beyond and burst the traditional figure of the composer as an author. Due to the performative act of self-masking, his parts goes much further than just that of the procreator of the work. He is projected into a polyvalent play of identities which contributes to deconstruct his function as composer, librettist and author and expands it to the role of actor, singer, narrator, part of the audience of his own work, and, eventually, as a mask of the author acting on his own stage. I want to discuss the following scenes against the backdrop of Barthes and Foucault's approach, trying to give evidence of the dialectics of authorship and self-masking. The idea I want to discuss here is that whenever Bussotti becomes a part of his own work, he separates himself from it and turns, at the same time, into the *author* and the *mask of the author*.

The appearance of Bussotti on the stage during the 1965 premiere in Palermo of *La Passion selon Sade* happens like a sudden interruption that will change the course of the scenic action – which, of course, is never set in a narrative way. At this point, the audience has attended the introductive parts and the presentation of the female protagonist J. singing verses from the sonnet by the French renaissance poet Louise Labé, as well as a first suspension of the action through the first *tableau vivant*, entitled “mistico”.³¹ This pivotal moment occurs after J. had shown her duality between the dominatrix Juliette, and the sex slave Justine,³² the two main figures from Marquis de Sade's novels, and opens the second *tableau vivant: libertino*.

27 See https://archivistorico.operaroma.it/edizione_opera/tieste-2000/.

28 See Guanti, “La scommessa di Sylvano Bussotti”.

29 The premiere of *La Passion selon Sade* took place at the Teatro Biondo in Palermo on 5 September 1965, but under the title **selon Sade* in order not to offend the sensibilities of the ecclesiastical authorities. On the genesis and early staging in Palermo and then in Paris 1966, see Esposito, *Un male incontinentibile*, pp. 99–112, 125–135; Iotti, *Laura ritrovata*, pp. 37–94.

30 Bussotti's *Lorenzaccio*, melodramma romantico danzato in 5 atti, 23 scene e due fuori programma, in omaggio al dramma omonimo di Alfred De Musset, was premiered in the Teatro La Fenice in Venice on 7 September 1972. For further information, see Esposito, *Un male incontinentibile*, pp. 187–245; Iotti, *Laura ritrovata*, pp. 95–184.

31 Bussotti, *La Passion selon Sade*, sections nos. 8, 8a and 8b.

32 See Nanni, “Il Dioniso restituito”.

The exclamation “vois”³³ at the end of section n. 11 introduces *Tableau Vivant II* (section no. 12). J. sings the verse “Tant de flambeaux pour ardre une femelle! [So many sparks to set a girl aflame!]”.³⁴ At this moment, Bussotti appears on the scene as Maestro di Cappella and a substantial transfer of power is celebrated here: the faun, played by the percussionist, was dominating the action until then and now, he cedes the control of the scene abruptly to the Maestro di Cappella. As the composer writes in the score, the “furious beats and rises of the percussion”³⁵ take on the function of guide for all those present on the scene just at the beginning: from the seventh bar onwards, it is the Maestro di cappella himself who takes the lead.



Figure 1: Screenshot from Bussotti: **selon Sade*, Palermo 1965, *Tableau vivant II* (section n. 12).

Bussotti emerges from the half-light behind the protagonist (Cathy Berberian) imitating the gestures of a conductor. However, Bussotti/Maestro di Cappella apparently takes over only the musical conduction (in the score, the real conductor is indicated with the role of “un noto direttore d’orchestra [a famous orchestra conductor]”³⁶). In this scene, he just puts on the mask of a conductor. His presence is ambivalent: the dominant role he takes over is more like the role of someone directing a mystical ceremonial. This section is conceived as an interruption following the idea of an opera-intermezzo.³⁷ Bussotti’s appearance seems here to escort the musicians and audience outwards from of the musical work. With an

33 Bussotti, *La Passion selon Sade*, section no. 11.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Bussotti, *La Passion selon Sade*, personaggi.

37 Ibid., section no. 12.

iconoclastic gesture, he leads the whole action into a situation like “a ‘resting time’ during rehearsals”, where the participants are “smoking, talking, reading”.³⁸ Further notes in the score by Bussotti – “masks, déshabillés, servants and firemen on duty. Sparkling party atmosphere. Tepid and haphazard lighting with conspicuous flaws”³⁹ – indicate even more precisely that with his action, the Maestro di Cappella is deconstructing his own work (see fig. 2).

The composer writes explicitly in the *nota bene* at the lower right end of the score of the section no. 18, which Bussotti calls “Happening”, that the dominant role of the Maestro di Cappella overshadows the “figure of the author”.⁴⁰ He notes further, with a slightly ironical tone, that he, as the author of *La Passion selon Sade*, “therefore retains all rights to play the role”.⁴¹ The ambivalence extends through the next parts of the work. During the Happening, in line with the role of the Maestro di Cappella directing a mystical ceremonial, he participates in different sadistic and orgiastic actions on the stage.



Figure 3: Bussotti draws whip strokes on the back of the figurant (comparsa). Stage photo from: Bussotti: * *selon Sade*, Palermo 1965, section n. 18 (*Happening*) (Magnum Photo, Ferdinando Scianna).

After his first appearance, Bussotti/Maestro di Cappella, seated on a sofa, is present in the ensuing musical sections: the chamber music sections nos. 13–17 and then, after the Happening (section no. 18), during *Solo J.* (section no. 19) and *Phrase à Trois* (sections nos. 3/16; 20–23), he listens to the music still sitting on the sofa with his back to the audience. During the first chamber music sections, he follows the music by reading in his score, during the other parts, he just listens to his music as a self-presence on stage.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., section no. 18.

41 Ibid. Bussotti notes: “N.B. il personaggio del concertatore e Maestro di Cappella, addombra la figura dell'autore, che, pertanto, siriserva tutti i diritti d'interpretare il ruolo.”



Figure 4: Bussotti sitting on the sofa with Cathy Berberian reading the score and following his composition. Because Cathy Berberian is singing, the picture must have been taken between sections nos. 14 and 17. Stage photo from: Bussotti: ** selon Sade*, Palermo 1965 (Magnum Photo, Ferdinando Scianna).

These scenes of theatre-in-the-theatre break up the role of the author, projecting him on the stage in a subtle play of camouflages: during the performance, he becomes a character of the work (Maestro di Cappella), he transforms himself into a part of the audience and, finally, he presents himself in a surrealistic mode as the author listening and watching his own stage work.

Another main work of Bussotti's music theatre was premiered only a few years after *La Passion selon Sade*. In the first staging of *Lorenzaccio*, which took place 1972 in Venice during the 35th Festival di Musica Contemporanea, Bussotti is indicated in the programme as an actor in the role of Alfred De Musset. In fact, his presence is vaster than only that of one character. He acts as the speaker of the part of De Musset in different scenes of the first, second and third act, and he also recites texts of other characters, for example, Lorenzo's part, in the recording of the Venetian premiere.



Figure 5: Bussotti as reader on the stage of La Fenice during the premiere of *Lorenzaccio* (1972) © Archivio Storico della Biennale di Venezia-ASAC.

Bussotti/Musset enters into a brief dialogue with Mara Soderini, who is the mother of Lorenzo, in the second act towards the End of the “grande aria di Mara” (scene Vc). Interrupting the aria sung by the soprano, the actor Bussotti/Musset interacts with her, posing some questions. While the actor is using spoken language, Mara answers singing. In this scene, the libretto discloses a fine dissociation of the personality of the enquirer, because while he is asking Mara about Lorenzo, he calls her “Mother”, suggesting an overlap of characters: Bussotti/Musset is virtually transformed into Lorenzo.

Mara Soderini:	<i>“Dans les vertes campagnes une belle génisse à son superbe amant Adressait devant elle un doux mugissement”</i> aprì il suo libro e subito riconosco il mio Lorenzino d’un tempo.
Musset:	Mamma, l’hai visto?
Mara Soderini:	<i>“A son front attache la guirlande”</i> così come mi vedi
Musset:	E quando è andato via? [in the recording: E quando è ritornato?] ⁴²



Figure 6: Bussotti, *Lorenzaccio*, act II: scene V: *l’amore come in sogno*; c) *apparve* (excerpt), p. 12. Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

The libretto had already given an indication of this ambivalence in the first act, second scene: “leggendo la parte di Lorenzo [reading the part of Lorenzo]”, Bussotti/Musset had to read the sentence: “Pazienza, altezza, pazienza”.⁴³ In that scene, he went on reading this part and seems to blur the boundary between Musset and Lorenzo and between himself as author and the characters he played.

We can state that Bussotti’s presence on the stage of *Lorenzaccio* is characterised by a multiplicity of facets. In the recording from the Venetian premiere, at the beginning of the second act, Bussotti reads in the scene Va some parts from a dialogue which, according to the libretto, is between Musset, Palle, the Andalusian, and the young Florentine Remo. The persona of Bussotti as the author of this

42 Bussotti, *Lorenzaccio*, [Libretto], in: Iotti, *Laura ritrovata*, p. 212.

43 *ibid.*, p. 206.

work is displaced here through the emulation of three different voices, to whom he gives different prosodic features. In other words, Bussotti hides with his voice behind the characters of Musset and Remo. The most interesting fact is that in this scene, Bussotti expounds some very personal concepts on the aesthetical value of stage music as a performative art, presenting what Iotti called a “manifesto of his poetics”,⁴⁴ or, to be more precise, what could be called, echoing Giovanna Morelli, a manifesto on ‘post-total theatre’.⁴⁵ There is a passage of text in the libretto before the beginning of the 5th scene of act II that consists of a longer dialogue, which was greatly reduced to a collage of single libretto passages at the premiere in Venice. In an emotional *crescendo*, Bussotti recites the different dialogue parts with distinct voice timbres exposing his aesthetic convictions on music theatre. Bussotti/Musset/Remo proclaims here, like in a *dèjà vu*, a second beginning and the accomplishment of the scenic action:

Musset:

Quando, diciamo, un credente assiste ai riti stupendi dell’Opera in Musica, che soddisfazione! Chi rimarrebbe insensibile? L’artista vi scopre i paradisi del proprio cuore; il mercante, il prete, il guerriero, trovano qui ogni gioia. Mirabile armonia del canto. Colori splendenti dei costumi, velluti, veli, sete, porpore, ori e argenti.

[In the Venice premiere the libretto text is interrupted]

Musset:

...quanto ci corre da qui all’immortalità?

[In the Venice premiere the libretto text is interrupted]

Remo:

Da una ferita aperta, la carne viva, corrotta in seno al corpo più sano, distillerà gocce preziose del sangue materno, e un’erba odorosa spunterà per guarirci dal male.

[In the Venice premiere the libretto text is interrupted]

Musset:

(*all’apparizione di Lorenzo*) Ah pazzi zoppi ragazzi che non fossero zoppi a meno d’esser pazzi come saltare le pietre di un selciato dove l’ultimo servo di un Medici ti può ammazzare, e tutti zitti, in onore a idee di Libertà! Ah! Verrà poi Cirri a ritrarre l’Eroe tutto ignudo per la festa delle mie nozze!! Stiletto, spada e daga, il pennello e la canzone e il coltellino girato nel ventre. Ah! Precipitare i tempi. Eh! Si compie l’Opera!⁴⁶

Bussotti reads the part of Musset again in a later scene of the second act (scene VI) in a *mélologue* based on a combination of different text passages from De Musset’s drama. The text reports some aspects of the topic around the historical figure of

44 Iotti, *Laura ritrovata*, p. 162.

45 See Morelli, “Primo piano e panoramica”, pp. 181–184.

46 Bussotti, *Lorenzaccio*, [Libretto], in: Iotti, *Laura ritrovata*, pp. 210f. The scene proceeds with a quartet (George Sand) singing the dedication of the opera: “L’OPERA DI SYLVANO PORTA MEMORIA AL BABBO E A LUI LA DEDICA NELL’EMBLEMA DI SYRO E’ TESTIMONIANZA D’AMORE INCOMINCIA DA L’EROE TOSCO DOVE SI RICONOSCE IN PRIMA REINCARNAZIONE LORENZACCIO OGNI SCENA D’OPERA SEGUENTE RAPPRESENTERÀ LE MIE MILLE E UNA METEMPSICOSI”. Ibid., p. 211.

[illegible]

Figure 7: Bussotti, *Lorenzaccio*, act II: scene VI: *la vita è solo sonno* (excerpt), p. 19, Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

cal canto
 1. 84-72
 6/8

Muscat

Figure 8: Bussotti, *Lorenzaccio*, act III: scene IX: *Minnelied*; b) *tramontana* (excerpt), p. 6. Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

Lorenzo de Medici. Facts about his life exposed: Lorenzino's conflict with Pope Clement VII and the mutilation of some ancient statues of the Arch of Constantine as well as a referee of the "sarcastic and offensive" defence which Alessandro – who will be murdered in the following scene – did of Lorenzo.⁴⁷ In this scene, Bussotti, as an author, withdraws behind the mask of Musset, turning his role to one of the narrators (see fig. 7).

In the second part of the opera, which, as Iotti pointed out, consists of a series of self-contained "visions",⁴⁸ Bussotti/Musset is transformed into a singer of 'salon music'. He performs the romantic romanza *Ninon* by Francesco Paolo Tosti (composed in 1884) on verses by Musset in the third act, scene IXb. He is accompanied by the guitar (Giomo), a piano and instruments. The ambiguity between the typical 19th-century floating tonality of E-minor/E-major and the atonal insertions of the instruments put this scene in an iridescent atmosphere of post-romantic theatricality. Here, the author Bussotti also steps back behind a multiple camouflage. In this scene, he blends himself in an intertextual play with different characters: Musset, of course, but also Tosti and the figure of an entertainer, singer of romances (see fig. 8).

4. THE AUTHOR AS READER OF HIMSELF

After these brief observations on Bussotti's two earliest stage works, we can state that whenever Bussotti gets physically as a body on stage he takes – indeed with great pleasure – over many different roles beside his original one as the composer of the work: in *La Passion selon Sade*, he appears as a fake conductor who takes over the control of the action before becoming the spectator of himself. In *Lorenzaccio*, he turns, as a reader, into a character of the opera (Musset, Lorenzo, Remo) as well as into a storyteller, switching, finally, to a dressed-up singer of romances. Given the diversity of Bussotti's presence on stage, one might ask: in all these scenes, who is the author? What remains of the traditional figure of the author as procreator, composer, writer, etc.? Of course, Bussotti is and remains the authoritative creator of his work.⁴⁹ However, due to his heterogeneous presence on the stage, authorship seems to be dissolved and deconstructed into the postmodern gesture of a series of masks. A theoretical background for this theatrical practice can be identified in Barthes' idea of a transformed return of the author:

47 See Iotti, *Laura ritrovata*, p. 167.

48 *ibid.*, p. 169.

49 Two days after the premiere of *Lorenzaccio*, the intendant Messinis wrote on 9 September 1972 in an article on *Il Gazzettino*: "This work by Bussotti is an 'auteur' work if ever there was one." Quoted after: Esposito, *Un male incontinentabile*, p. 191.

[t]he pleasure of the Text also includes the amicable return of the author. Of course, the author who returns is not the one identified by our institutions (history and courses in literature, philosophy, church discourse); he is not even the biographical hero.⁵⁰

Bussotti can be seen as an example of a polyvalent figure in the sense of Barthes:

The author who leaves his text and comes into our life has no unity; he is a mere plural of “charms,” the site of a few tenuous details, yet the source of vivid novelistic glimmerings, a discontinuous chant of amiabilities, in which we nevertheless read death more certainly than in the epic of a fate; he is not a (civil, moral) person, he is a body.⁵¹

Following the emphasis on the role of the reader in Barthes’s text on the *Death of the Author*, we can state that Bussotti on the stage becomes a ‘reader’ of his work. “The reader” said Barthes, “is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination”. And Barthes points out further that the reader “is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted”.⁵² And if Barthes declares that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author”,⁵³ we still have to ask: Which status of authorship is he embodying by this practice? Who is Bussotti when he steps on the stage? As a reader of himself he turns into a polyvalent, non-univocal personality. And, finally, beside the mere anecdotal evidence,⁵⁴ it is reasonable to think that the decision to change the way to write his first name – from Silvano to Sylvano⁵⁵ – may be a symptom of that or, at least, give a hint to that interpretation.

If, on the one hand, Barthes had stated that the author “is always conceived of as the past of his own book”,⁵⁶ on the other hand, Bussotti struggles against that, putting himself ‘in the work’ as a part of it. By doing that, he contributes dialectically to the deconstruction of his own authorship. Considering Bussotti’s works in the sense of Barthes’ text, considering them as a “multi-dimensional space”,⁵⁷ we can realise that Bussotti, the reader, inscribes himself on the multidimensional stage as a mask, as the mask of himself as author.

50 Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, p. 8. I wish to thank Julia Freund for this reference.

51 Ibid.

52 Barthes, “The Death of the Author”, p. 148.

53 Ibid.

54 See Esposito, *Un male incontenibile*, pp. 72f.

55 Cf. Paolo Somigli’s contribution to this volume.

56 Barthes, “The Death of the Author”, p. 145.

57 Ibid., p. 146.

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From Silvano to Sylvano. The Young Bussotti in the Mirror of His Letters to Arrigo Benvenuti*

Paolo Somigli

“Arrigo Benvenuti, se eravamo i Dioscuri, era quell’altro e io quell’altro [*sic*]: c’era proprio un rapporto molto stretto.” With these words, Sylvano Bussotti remembered his friend Arrigo Benvenuti (1925–1992) in 2005, during an informal, long and articulated conversation with the author about his childhood and youth in Florence.¹ The two musicians had met in that city when they were young men and had been among the six members of a small group of twelve-tone composers, all pupils of Luigi Dallapiccola. In 1954 they named it the *Schola fiorentina*. These musicians were very different in age and musical characteristics, but shared a desire to learn and practice the twelve-tone technique. In addition to Benvenuti and Bussotti, who was the youngest, the group included Bruno Bartolozzi (1911–1980), Alvaro Company (1931–2023), Reginald Smith-Brindle (1917–2003) and Carlo Prosperi (1921–1990).²

Dallapiccola had discovered Arnold Schönberg’s compositional technique in the 1920s and been using it since the second half of the 1930s. Few Italian composers had had this kind of experience, and he rapidly became a point of reference for those young musicians who wanted to know and experience the atonality and the dodecaphony.³ From 1934 to 1940 and after 1944, he held an informal course on composition at the Conservatory of Florence, where he officially taught piano for students majoring in other courses (e.g. violin, flute, trumpet). He had transformed this secondary course into a sort of hidden, ‘clandestine’ course of analysis and composition in which, among various things, he could spread the knowledge of twentieth-century music, especially of the twelve-tone technique. In 1944, this

* In this contribution I discuss aspects of the correspondence between Bussotti and Benvenuti which I am going to deal with in the edition of Bussotti’s letters to Benvenuti (publication foreseen by 2026). I warmly thank Aloma Bardi for her kind and competent linguistic English proofreading of my paper. I sincerely thank Rocco Quaglia, Benvenuti’s daughter Elisabetta and the staff of the Music Room of the National Library (BNCF), particularly the director Caterina Guiducci for the availability of the original documents, which, in many cases, I already had in copies received from Liliana Poli, and the permission to publish some passages of the correspondence.

1 “If we were the Dioscuri, Arrigo Benvenuti was the one and I was the other: there was a very close relationship.” Author’s unpublished interview with Sylvano Bussotti, Milan, 9.2.2005. The recording is saved in the author’s personal archive. All English translations are by the Author.

2 See Somigli, *La Schola fiorentina*.

3 See Somigli, “Dallapiccola maestro schönberghiano”.

aspect of freedom in his teaching activity led him to renounce the official course in composition that he had assumed for outstanding merits in 1940 but that he felt too constrictive for his teaching aims. The violin student Silvano (not yet ‘Sylvano’) was among his pupils.⁴ Nevertheless, a deeper encounter with twelve-tone music took place after the war thanks to his neighbour and Dallapiccola’s disciple Proserpi.⁵

In the same period of the late 1940s, Bussotti also came in touch with Benvenuti, who was to become not only a member of the *Schola fiorentina* with him but also one of his closest friends, perhaps his best friend. He had arrived in Florence from Algeria in 1942 to attend musical studies in trumpet and Dallapiccola’s lessons on composition.⁶

In the aforementioned conversation of 2005, Bussotti explained the reasons that made their friendship so special. The two young musicians not only shared a vivid passion for theatre and performing arts but also, even though coming from different experiences, had in common an articulated relationship with the city where they lived.

It is widely known how Bussotti’s feeling toward his hometown was affected by a sort of sense of attraction and distance throughout his life. To express his perception of Florence, he used to call it “La bella addormentata nell’orto” (“The sleeping beauty in the vegetable garden”), a word pun with “La bella addormentata nel bosco” (“Sleeping Beauty in the Wood”), how the title of Charles Perrault’s famous tale is translated into Italian. In fact, especially when he was young, on the one hand, he was fascinated by the town and absorbed in its cultural and artistic stimuli; on the other hand, he found it closed and provincial, particularly in the musical field. Precisely about this last aspect, Bussotti stated in 2005 during the interview mentioned at the beginning: “Con Benvenuti questa problematicità [di provincialismo fiorentino] non c’era perché credo che Benvenuti provenisse un

4 Bussotti, “I miei teatri”, p. 34.

5 Bussotti, “Carlo Carissimo”, p. 237.

6 As the name of Benvenuti can be relatively unknown to the readers (about the different aspects of this composer, see Somigli (Ed.), *Arrigo Benvenuti*), I provide here some brief biographical information about the period preceding his friendship with Bussotti, which is necessary to better understand it and its deep roots. Benvenuti was born in Buggiano, near Pistoia, in 1925. When he was a child, after his father’s death, he had to move to Algeria. He came back to Italy in 1942 to study at the Conservatory of Florence. The war, the armistice of 8 September 1943 and the subsequent Nazi-Fascist occupation of the Peninsula disrupted his plans. At the beginning of 1944 he was forced to join the army of the Social Italian Republic (the so called “Repubblica di Salò”). During the military training on Elba Island, Benvenuti started to pretend to be crazy. He used to declaim sentences in French and say that he was Beethoven and was composing his Tenth symphony. When he was driven to the hospital in Florence to be appropriately treated, he took advantage of a moment of inattention by his guards and fled from the ambulance. He spent the following months in hiding, perhaps participating in the Resistance, and was captured by the Nazi-Fascists in the summer of 1944. About the life of Benvenuti, see Nardini, “Per una biografia di Arrigo Benvenuti”, and Somigli (Ed.), *Arrigo Benvenuti*, pp. 61–88, 25–59.

po' da Montecatini [...], e Arrigo aveva questi aspetti di provincia più scanzonata, più campagnola, più [...]”.⁷ Thus, with apparent contradiction, one of the main reasons for his friendship with Benvenuti was the fact that he came from the provinces. This, paradoxically, protected him from the closures of provincialism that the young Silvano felt in the city.

Indeed, Bussotti himself was not completely Florentine. His father was from the Tuscan capital, but his mother, Ines Zancanaro, was from Veneto, namely, from Padua. This double origin allowed the young Silvano to observe the city with the detachment of a person who is not completely part of it. As a proof of his feeling of belonging to two cultures, we can consider that he could speak both the Florentine vernacular (quite close to the Italian standard language) and the Venetian dialect from Padua (which can differ deeply from it). We might say that he was ‘bilingual’, similar in this to his six-year older friend, a native Italian-speaker who became bilingual with French thanks to the years in Algeria (actually, he maintained aspects of French pronunciation throughout his life).

However, a further reason cemented this friendship. In the same conversation of 2005, after a short pause, Bussotti added to the sentence I have quoted a few lines above: “Poi c’è stato l’incontro con Liliana” (“Then there was the encounter with Liliana”).⁸

‘Liliana’ is Liliana Poli, the great Florentine singer to whom many of the most important twentieth-century composers entrusted the premieres and the recordings of their works. She was Benvenuti’s fiancée in the 1950s. In those years, she was beginning to manifest her extraordinary vocal means, which were particularly appropriate for contemporary music. For this reason, together with Cathy Berberian, who came into Silvano’s life at the same time, she rapidly became one of Bussotti’s most favourite performers, as well as a lifelong friend.

Poli and Benvenuti got married in 1959, and in 2015, shortly before her death, she decided to donate her husband’s archive to the National Library in Florence. Many important documents are part of this legacy: scores, manuscripts, drafts and letters that Benvenuti had collected over the whole of his life (the first documents date back to 1942). He himself had organised them as a *corpus* in the last months of his life.

Bussotti’s letters and postcards constitute a conspicuous section of these materials. They are about one hundred documents, mostly dating from the period between 1950 and 1960.⁹ The papers were carefully saved by their recipient, who,

7 “With Benvenuti this problematic aspect [of Florentine provincialism] did not exist because Benvenuti came from Montecatini [...], and Arrigo had these aspects of a more easy-going, country-like provincialism [...]”. Author’s unpublished interview with Bussotti.

8 Ibid.

9 For the complete list, see Pascarella (Ed.), “Arrigo Benvenuti”, pp. 269–275. I had the privilege to receive copies of several of these documents from Liliana herself in 2004; they constitute the main material for this paper.

until the 1970s, did not archive his own communications with the same care, in copy or minute.¹⁰ However, precisely because of this unilateral nature, the *corpus* of letters from Bussotti to Benvenuti is an extraordinary documentation on the young composer, not only regarding aspects of his private life – which are not lacking – but also, and above all, about his activity and poetics. In the eyes of music historians, these documents appear as a magic mirror. They hand down Bussotti's images from seventy years ago and allow us to witness, as if 'live', the passage from the talented but yet scarcely known *enfant-prodige* of Florence and Padua to the celebrated international artist, i.e. from "Silvano", or "Silvanino" ("little/sweet Silvano") to "Sylvano".

I will concentrate here on a few examples in chronological order and mainly following two strands, which often intersect in the same document: personal and biographical elements useful for a better understanding of the figure of the composer in the 1950s; information and testimonies related to the musical life of the time.

The first dated document we find in the correspondence is a letter of January 1950. Bussotti sent it to Benvenuti from Castell'Arquato, near Fiorenzuola d'Arda, in northern Italy. It bears witness to the period in which the sender lived the experience of community and interdisciplinary life in the "Torrione Farnese" with several other artists, including his brother Renzo, and the writer and intellectual Aldo Braibanti, the ideal soul of this artistic cenacle. This early period in Bussotti's life is crucial for many aspects. Not only did it give the young musician the possibility of getting in touch with many different arts, artists and public contexts in northern Italy, particularly in Milan, but it also laid the foundations for the intense artistic relationship with Braibanti himself. In the aforementioned letter, the young composer invites his dear friend Arrigo to spend a couple of days with the community. He informs him about the public transportation's timetable and describes the essentiality of the accommodation regarding food and overnight. No particular information about the artistic life is given, however Bussotti does not omit to underline how in that context "sono abolite tutte le convenzioni e passerai un paio di giorni in libertà" ("all conventions are abolished and you will spend a couple of days in freedom").¹¹

A further document, dated "Rome, April 1950" (a sort of note entitled "Le musiche del XX secolo", i.e. "twentieth-century kinds of music"), is an example of the style adopted by the musician in his missives, akin, in its expressive and often ironic versatility, to that of his artistic creations and of the Torrione experience

10 Benvenuti's letters to Bussotti saved by the latter date from the 1970s and are stored in the NoMus Archive in Milan. I thank Federica Marsico, who is cataloguing Bussotti's correspondence and writings in the composer's collection (see Marsico, "Scoprire la corrispondenza di Sylvano Bussotti nel Centro Studi NoMus"), and the director of NoMus Archive Maddalena Novati for the kind information.

11 Bussotti, Letter to Arrigo Benvenuti, Fiorenzuola, 1.1950.

itself. The note, in fact, is essentially a joke based on the number 12, with the numbers from 1 to 12 repeated endlessly in changing combinations: clearly, an ironic reference both to the dodecaphony that the two friends were discovering in those years and Benvenuti's passion for serial permutation techniques.

In 1951, the correspondence is more intense. Two letters are particularly interesting. They were written on the occasion of the *Biennale Musica* of Venice, which Bussotti attended by commuting from the family home in Padua. The first was written on 6 September and is characterised by a camaraderie concerning situations seen in the lagoon city with insistent goliardic references in Florentine vernacular to the theme of homosexuality – a theme that, indeed, is completely absent in the other letters by Bussotti in Benvenuti's archive. The second is dated 27 September and offers us a glimpse of the musical life and a testimony about the tastes and idiosyncrasies of the young Silvano towards some celebrated protagonists of Italian music of the time (Giorgio Federico Ghedini and Goffredo Petrassi *in primis*) as well as towards Igor Stravinsky, whose *Rake's Progress* was performed for the first time in Venice that year. In the letter, Bussotti pronounces a severe critique of the Russian composer's work, which he defines "musica buona, spesso bella, quanto inutile" ("good music, often beautiful, but useless"),¹² and refers with astonishment to Stravinsky's public statements about works and figures of music history: for example, *Boris Godunov* "non gli interessa" ("does not interest him") e Palestrina "lo annoia" ("bores him").¹³ In talking about all this, however, Bussotti does not express only surprise and bewilderment. In fact, it is possible for us to perceive, from his side, in his words and reflections a sense of belonging to the history of music and figures such as Giuseppe Verdi or Vincenzo Bellini, Claude Debussy or Giovanni Pieluigi da Palestrina, Modest Mussorgsky or Schönberg, that is, to that historical tradition in which he would always weld himself, albeit from a critical, ironic, dialectical and desecrating, but also conversely somehow devoted, position (let us think of his opera productions as a stage director). About this aspect, Renzo Cresti has properly affirmed that the past is always present in Bussotti as a form of "ancient present".¹⁴

Attested by a single postcard in 1952 relating to a seaside holiday after a very intensive period of work, the correspondence is richer in 1953. A couple of letters of September (respectively, 5 and 16) are particularly relevant. These documents contain information on the *Venetian International Festival of Contemporary Music* of that year, which, according to Bussotti, "non costa un accidente" ("does not cost a penny")¹⁵ and on a meeting with the pianist Pietro Scarpini. Moreover, they include some more personal details that lead us into the process of composition of what was to become *Juvenilia I*. In referring to his friend about his composi-

12 Bussotti, Letter to Arrigo Benvenuti, Venezia, 27.9.1951.

13 Ibid. Also quoted in Somigli, "Arrigo Benvenuti", pp. 43f.

14 Cresti, *Silvano Bussotti e l'opera geniale*, p. 152.

15 Bussotti, Letter to Arrigo Benvenuti, Venezia, 5.9.1953.

tional work, Bussotti informs Arrigo that he is making a “small quartet”, indeed a string quartet with bass, tenor and soprano voices, on *Les nourritures terrestres* by André Gide in the original language; this work probably remained at the level of a project: in fact, *Tre canti* is for voice and piano and the poem is in an Italian version. Furthermore, he reveals in the letter of 5 September that he is uncertain whether to entitle his new composition on Gide’s poems *Menalca*, or even *Menalca e Natanaele*, or *Nourritures*. According to the letter of 16 September, *Menalca e Natanaele* is the definitive title. In fact, this was the one on the 1953 manuscript, a title which was cancelled for the production and the premiere of the work with Carla Fracci in 1983.¹⁶

We have information from the 1954 correspondence on the progress and completion of an “operina” (*Satiresca*), on the beginning of the composition of another one, *Gli sposi*, and about the staging of a musical-theatrical performance in the Boboli Gardens in Florence, while the 1955 correspondence testifies to the first great turning point in Bussotti’s career: the journey to Aix-en-Provence. After it, Bussotti’s international career ‘took off’ and his first name itself arose: no longer Silvano but Sylvano.

Bussotti’s enthusiasm for the increasing success and his experiences in Aix was expressed in a letter of July 1955 but paradoxically gave rise to a melancholic text, imbued with a feeling of nostalgia. This sadness could be defined as ‘preventive’. Indeed, it is generated by the awareness that military service awaited him on his return to homeland: “Sarebbe da scrivere, allora, un notturno di più sulla mia vita in Provenza. Ma altro non scriverò che la tristezza di dover presto tornare a un destino grigio e inumano mentre qui tutto non è che cielo e bellezza, e la vita è bella della nostra stessa poesia.”¹⁷

In fact, Silvano felt that he had found his human and artistic dimension among “camerati di 16 diversi paesi al ritmo quotidiano di Schönberg, Webern e Berg” (“comrades from 16 different countries to the daily rhythm of Schönberg, Webern and Berg”), in a context in which his multifaceted creativity was expressed not only through music (he composed a trio with a soprano in the finale) but also through drawing and even photography. It was during this period that Silvano, due to a misunderstanding or misprint in a review that at first irritated him, became *Sylvano*.¹⁸ However, unfortunately we do not find this story ‘live’ in the correspondence with Arrigo.

16 The manuscript of the composition can be consulted online: <https://www.digitalarchivioricordi.com/it/partiture/display-new-window/801> (22.12.2023).

17 “It would be necessary to write, then, one more notturno about my life in Provence. But I will write nothing but the sadness of soon having to return to a grey and inhuman destiny while here everything is but sky and beauty, and life is beautiful with our own poetry.” Bussotti, Letter to Arrigo Benvenuti, Aix[-en-Provence], 7.1955.

18 Fallai, “La vita è un esordio anche a 80 anni”; Esposito, *Un male incontenibile*, pp. 72f.

The trauma of the return to Italy and the military service is reflected in the letters of the autumn of 1955. They are full of nostalgia both for the previous life with his friends of the *Schola fiorentina* and attest one of the few cases in which Bussotti shows to his friend Arrigo such feelings towards some aspect or context of his hometown. However, despite his worries, military service did not prevent him from going to Venice. Thus, Bussotti could attend the premiere of *Ognenny angel* (*The Fiery Angel*) by Sergey Prokofiev and immediately wrote about it to his friend on 21 September with a postcard. In it, he judges that composition to be “mica male” (“not so bad”) and hopes to return to Venice and attend “la prima visione per la critica del cortometraggio d’Aldo e mio” (“the first screening, only for critics, of the short film by Aldo and myself”).¹⁹

This brief note is very interesting. We know how fascinated Bussotti was by photography, cinema and film, and this letter offers us an example of his formal activity in this field before the official films attested in the late 1960s. It is not clear which this short film was: the 1955 Film Festival had already ended before Bussotti wrote this letter, while the catalogue of the eighteenth season of the Music Festival has no trace of Bussotti’s work. However, according to Luigi Esposito, we could formulate the hypothesis that it may be *Pochi stralci di sole*, probably lost and, until now, dated at 1960.²⁰

The Florentine nostalgia disappeared in 1956, together with the military service that had generated it. Bussotti affirmed in a letter of 8 October 1956 that he felt that he was at a turning point which would take him definitively away from his hometown and the figure he was. Both prophecies did not really come true. In fact, on the one hand, Bussotti never completely cut his ties with Florence – unfortunately this does not appear to be mutual – and, on the other hand, he did not undergo a metamorphosis that made him completely unrecognisable from the young man he had been. Indeed, a deep transformation concerned the use of the dodecaphony, which he completely abandoned after 1958,²¹ and it is a matter of fact that in this period, his life and career effectively underwent a turning point that, in the space of two years, catapulted him among the most famous and discussed musicians of the twentieth century. If the first sign of this change was his stay in Aix in 1955, a brief journey to Paris during 1956 made it irreversible. Despite being still under military conscription, Bussotti could reach the French capital city for

19 Bussotti, Postcard to Arrigo Benvenuti, Riva del Garda, 21.9.1955.

20 Luigi Esposito, Private messages to the Author, 25.9.2021, 13.12.2023. I thank Esposito for suggesting this hypothesis and giving me the possibility of sharing it in this paper. I mention the episode also in Somigli, “Music in Interaction with Other Arts: Florence in the 1960s and the Experience of Gruppo 70”, which reconstructs the vivid and controversial Florentine cultural life of the 1950s and 1960s focusing on the Gruppo 70, an inter-artistic experience to which Bussotti himself contributed.

21 The new version of *Musica per amici* (composed in 1957 and revised in 1971) is accompanied by a short, slightly ironical text about the composer’s relationship with the twelve-tone technique and with Dallapiccola in his youth. See Somigli, “Dallapiccola maestro schönberghiano”.

the production of his *Maschere in gloria* for a puppet theatre on 27 July. The letter he wrote to Arrigo on 25 July allows us to know that on that occasion they were four and not three, as in the official catalogue.

That short Parisian stay had to be the premise for longer and more intense experiences in the French capital city, and in the letter of 8 October, Silvano communicates to his friend his intention to move there soon. The turning point determined by this decision was both professional and personal, with the two plans soon coming together, as would happen also in the future in Bussotti's life. After the resonance of his participation in the Aix Festival in 1955 and the excellent response to his performances in Paris in July 1956, Bussotti had the possibility to personally meet Max Deutsch, a former student of Schönberg. He himself tells Benvenuti about this episode on 10 February 1957. Bussotti affirmed "sono felice della mia vita qui e mi sento alle soglie di perfetti sviluppi per il lavoro: che chiedere di più all'esistenza?"²² and informed him about the most important development of that encounter, about which he asks Arrigo "di mantenere il massimo segreto" ("to maintain the highest secrecy").²³ In fact, he had started to attend regular lessons with this musician, whom he defines as "un personaggio [...] notissimo [...] che] conosce da Strawinsky a Charlot, tutte le più grandi figure del secolo" ("a very well-known person [...] who knew all the greatest figures of the century, from Strawinsky to Charlot").²⁴ The enthusiasm of this encounter was not unilateral. Deutsch reciprocated it and found a reason for profound affinity and sympathy for Bussotti in his music and his Florentine roots in Dallapiccola's circle, thus, alien to electroacoustic experimentation: Deutsch "è in guerra aperta con gli elettrofonici di tutte le latitudini ed ha tirato sospiri di gioia al vedersi arrivare, dall'Italia e per mio mezzo, della "musica", come si suol dire".²⁵

Under Deutsch's guidance, Bussotti deepened his knowledge of Schönberg's music, about which he became increasingly passionate. The esteem received by the composer also contributed to introduce him into the lively Parisian musical context, so much so that one year later, between January and February 1958, he invited Benvenuti and his old Florentine friends to send him some compositions to be performed in a series of concerts he had planned hoping for the presence of figures such as René Leibowitz and Pierre Boulez (letter dating 1 February 1958).²⁶ The project could not take place and Bussotti probably had not yet personally met the two musicians. However, his hope concerning their possible involvement testifies the relevance of his name in Parisian musical contexts. In fact, a few weeks later,

22 "I am happy with my life here and feel on the threshold of perfect development for the work: what more could one ask of existence?" Bussotti, Letter to Arrigo Benvenuti, Paris, 10.2.1957.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 "[Deutsch] is at war with the electroacoustics of all latitudes and he sighs with joy at seeing 'music', as one says, arrive from Italy and through me." Ibid.

26 See Somigli, *La Schola fiorentina*, p. 63.

he not only met Boulez but also received important suggestions and encouragement from him about his music and career. Thus, on 7 June 1958, Sylvano wrote to Arrigo: “Boulez mi ha convinto di tante coserelline e mi ha fatto intravedere un futuro assai interessante per me.”²⁷

This “interesting future” was not so far away. While attending Deutsch’s lessons, Bussotti met the composer and musicologist Heinz-Klaus Metzger with whom he would soon form an intense human and artistically fruitful relationship.

Thanks to the impulse he received from him, he decided to participate in the Darmstadt courses of 1958 and on 4 October, from Cologne, he reported almost in real time to his friend what he heard and experienced during that stay. The letter is an incredible mine of information on Bussotti’s artistic path, the music and the courses of that year, and their protagonists. In fact, not only does it testify to the young composer’s definitive detachment from Dallapiccola and his influence, but also allows us, by means of his words, to be a witness of events such as the European *exploit* of John Cage or the *debut* of David Tudor in the *Ferienkurse*. About the American composer, Bussotti writes: “Cage ha sbaragliato paurosamente tutto. Il suo concerto per piano e orchestra, creato a Colonia il 19 settembre, è la bomba più micidiale che l’Europa si sia vista infliggere per i secoli dei secoli”,²⁸ and a line after, he defines Tudor “il più formidabile strumentista dell’epoca” (“the most formidable instrument player of the time”).²⁹ In the same letter, our musician manifests his admiration towards Bruno Maderna, “che ha diretto tutti i concerti” (“who conducted all concerts”)³⁰ and informs his friend of the imminent premiere of his *Breve* (5 November), which will be broadcast by Cologne Radio in a monographic night programme. Furthermore, the missive is also enriched by a copy of the programme and the catalogue of the recent publications of Universal Edition with dense and detailed handwritten annotations through which Sylvano wanted to keep his friend updated (Fig. 1 and 2).

It was in this lively climate that Bussotti started to conceive – with the contribution of Metzger himself – *Pièces de chair II* and particularly the *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor*, which would cause a scandal at the *Ferienkurse* in 1959.

27 “Boulez has convinced me of many little things and has given me a glimpse of a very interesting future for me”: Bussotti, Letter to Arrigo Benvenuti, Paris, 7.6.1958. Some years later Bussotti tells the episode a little differently: “Allora conobbi anche Boulez, il quale con freddezza e rigorosa franchezza, pur riconoscendomi un vago talento artigianale, mi buttava a mare integralmente tutto quello che avevo composto sin lì” (“At that time I also met Boulez, who with cold and rigorous frankness, while recognising a vague talent for craftsmanship in me, threw overboard everything I had composed up to that moment”). Bussotti, “Autoritratto di Sylvano Bussotti (1958–1967)”, p. 37.

28 “Cage terrifyingly overcame everything. His piano concerto, premiered in Cologne on 19 September, is the deadliest bomb Europe has been inflicted from throughout the centuries.” Bussotti, Letter to Arrigo Benvenuti, Köln, 4.10.1958.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

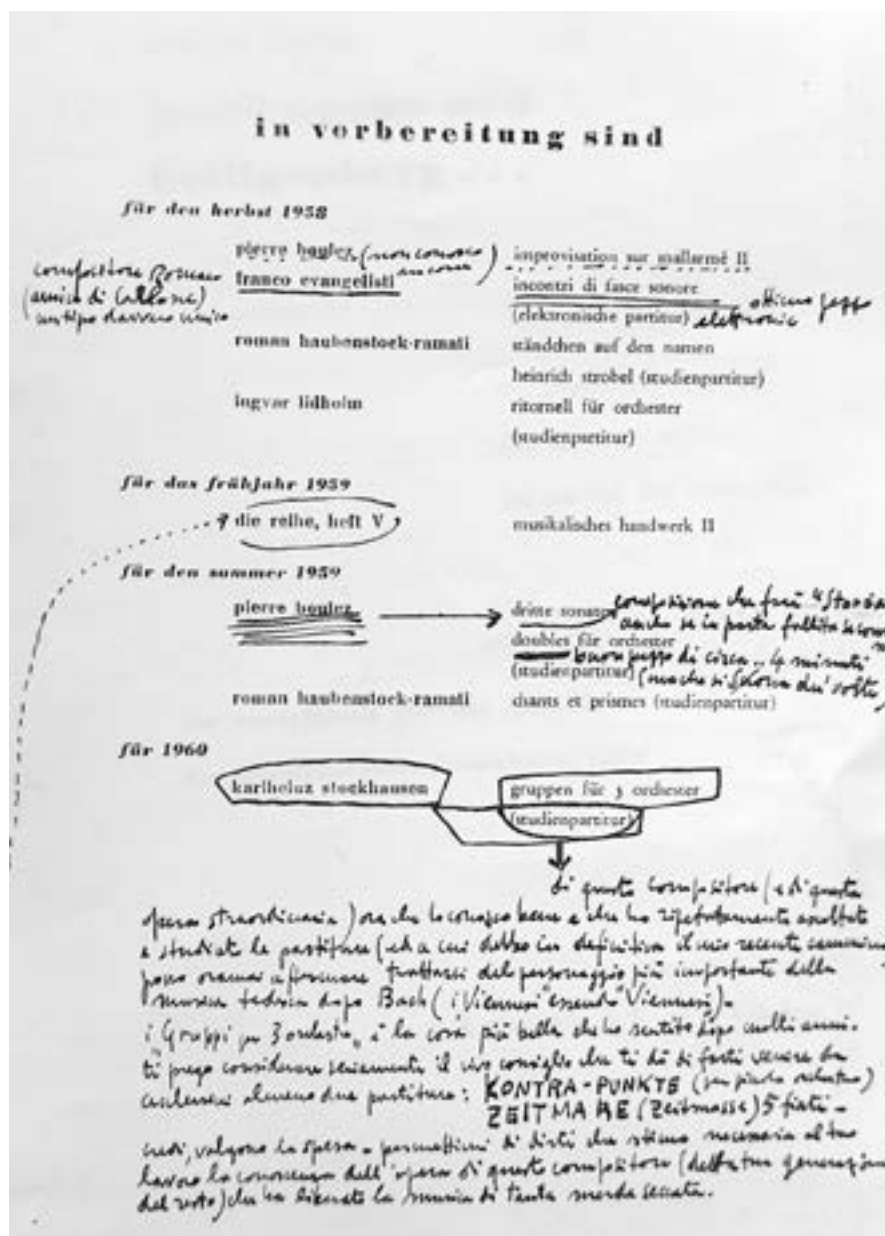


Figure 1: First attachment to Bussotti's letter to Arrigo Benvenuti, Köln, 4.10.1958.

The letter sent to Benvenuti on 27 September 1959 is a very relevant document for twentieth-century music studies.³¹ In it, Bussotti adumbrates the hypothesis, indeed the certainty in his eyes, that Luigi Nono's famous polemical speech *Geschichte und Gegenwart in der Musik von Heute*, published shortly after in Italian,³² was not only addressed to Karlheinz Stockhausen – as is usually claimed – but also to himself. Not without a hint of self-satisfaction he writes:

È un peccato che tu non sia venuto a Darmstadt [...] quest'anno le cataratte degli scandali si sono aperte ed io mi sono trovato a sostenere sulle spalle il più gran peso poiché oggi in Germania passo come il compositore più estremamente folle del mondo, che ha superato anche Cage nel processo di totale distruzione dello spirito.³³

Since then, contestation and scandal have ever been a constant feature of Bussotti's work and fortune. At the same time, they are complained about and deliberately sought out by him, and exactly in these terms the theme of the scandal and the contestations appears in the only preserved letter of 1960 (from Padua, before Easter but without a precise date). Here, he refers to how one piece of his (probably *Voix de femme*, which is part of *Pièces de chair II*) had been approved by Luciano Berio, well performed by Berberian ("quanto alla Berio è stata straordinariamente brava"; "as for [Cathy] Berio, she was extraordinarily good")³⁴ and "disapprovato alla unanimità dalla scuola milanese" ("unanimously disapproved of by the Milanese school");³⁵ then he comments:

Debbo ormai convincermi di essere un musicista importante – se no non si spiega tanto odio e disprezzo da parte della quasi totalità dei colleghi italiani. *La Rassegna musicale* (n. 4, 1959, l'ultimo uscito) ha pubblicato una velenosissima recensione di Giacomo Manzoni sui miei *Piano Pieces for David Tudor* dove si giunge fino a ironizzare sulla mia vita privata, leggilo, sì che ti divertirai! [...] Tutto sommato è quel che ci vuole per la 'carriera' dunque: avanti!³⁶

31 About it, see Somigli, *La Schola fiorentina*, pp. 88–90; id., "Arrigo Benvenuti", pp. 44–47.

32 Nono, "Presenza storica nella musica d'oggi."

33 "It is a pity you did not come to Darmstadt [...] this year the cataracts of scandals have opened and I have found myself carrying the greatest weight on my shoulders, because today in Germany I pass as the most extremely insane composer in the world, who has surpassed even Cage in the process of total destruction of the spirit." Bussotti, Letter to Arrigo Benvenuti, Köln, 27.9.1959.

34 Bussotti, Letter to Arrigo Benvenuti, Padova, Friday [spring 1960].

35 Ibid.

36 "I must by now be convinced that I am an important musician – otherwise one cannot explain so much hate and contempt on the part of almost all Italian colleagues. The *Rassegna musicale* (no. 4, 1959, the last issue) published a very poisonous review by Giacomo Manzoni on my *Piano pieces for David Tudor*, which went so far as to make fun of my private life; read it, you will enjoy it! [...] However, it's what is needed for a 'career'; so, ahead!" Ibid. Bussotti refers to Manzoni, [Review] "Sylvano Bussotti, *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor*, Universal Edition, 1959", where – to understand his comments – we can read: "Of the pieces in question, only two, the second and the fifth, make use of the traditional notation, and, of these, the last one also features a voice – which, however, is not to be sung and serves only as an indication of

I would like to stress and repeat two passages of this quotation: “I have to convince myself that I am an important musician [...] it’s what is needed for a ‘career’; so, ahead!” That is affirmed by a 29-year-old Bussotti, biographically still young but actually a well-defined, mature, man and artist who senses for himself a status that he sought and would maintain and consolidate throughout his life both with his musical, film and visual works, his artistic actions and the following indifferent, pleased or irritated reactions to the scandal that they, not surprisingly, animated.

The letters to Benvenuti between 1950 and 1960 accompany us in this process of transformation and growing self-awareness. Through them, we can directly face the development of a young artist who is finding his path by means of highly enriching experiences, such as the Torrione Farnese, attendance to musical events in Venice, participation in music courses and international festivals in France and Germany, until the complete discovery and self-acknowledgment of his uniqueness and specificity in the wider musical and cultural context.

Some of these biographical passages cannot be considered unknown. Bussotti himself used to refer to them in talks, speeches and writings, and they can be found in other works on the composer’s life.³⁷ However, these letters provide new information about compositional projects which were later abandoned or more or less drastically transformed (e.g. the case of *Nourritures*) and, more generally, cast new light on the existing knowledge and literature about the musician by means of suggesting additional information which allows us to better understand several aspects both of his biography and general musical life (i.e. Bussotti’s first produc-

atmosphere – to which phrases of this feature are entrusted: ‘I love the whites [the white guys] [...] and I love the coloureds. I do not say no to the guys with clear eyes but most of all I like those with black and shining eyes.’ Having established his human vocations in this piece, Bussotti offers us in the preceding pages a series of graphs which, as we said, remain open only to Tudor’s understanding [...]. In front of these pieces, unfortunately, it is not possible to make any musical judgement, which, in any case, the author himself probably does not want, and Universal Edition can only be credited with having published a pleasant collection of graphs that can usefully serve for domestic decoration purposes. The fact that Stockhausen then spent a few hours explaining this product to his listeners remains a mystery we cannot explain. [...] It suffices for us here to have pointed out these pieces as one of the most curious testimonies to the music of our time” (“Dei pezzi in questione, solo due, il secondo e il quinto, si servono della grafia tradizionale, e di questi l’ultimo presenta anche una voce – che però non va cantata e serve solo come indicazione di atmosfera – a cui sono affidate frasi di questo tenore: ‘Amo i bianchi [...] e amo i bruni. Non dico di no ai ragazzi dagli occhi chiari, ma amo più di tutti quelli dagli occhi neri e rilucenti.’ Stabilite in questo pezzo le sue vocazioni umane, il Bussotti ci offre nelle pagine precedenti una serie di grafici che, come si diceva, restano aperti solo alla comprensione del Tudor [...] Davanti a questi pezzi non è purtroppo possibile alcun giudizio musicale, che del resto l’autore stesso probabilmente non desidera, e solo si può dar atto alla Universal Edition di aver pubblicato una piacevole raccolta di grafici che possono utilmente servire per scopi di decorazione domestica. Che poi Stockhausen abbia speso qualche ora per spiegare questo prodotto ai suoi ascoltatori, resta un mistero che non possiamo spiegarci. [...] Ci basti in questa sede aver segnalato questi pezzi come una delle testimonianze più curiose della musica dei nostri giorni”).

37 E.g. Bussotti, “I miei teatri”; id., “Autoritratto di Sylvano Bussotti”; Esposito, *Un male incontinentibile*; Cresti, *Sylvano Bussotti e l’opera geniale*.

tion for film; the roots of his consideration of twentieth-century composers, such as Stravinsky, Ghedini or Petrassi; the animated atmosphere in events such as the *Biennale* or the *Ferienkurse*; a further implicit recipient – Bussotti himself – in Nono’s famous speech at Darmstadt). Furthermore, as they were written in the same days of the events to which they refer, they have the feature of a direct, ‘live’ testimony, in which we can find not only data about artistical, musical or personal experiences but also traces of immediate feelings and sensations that could be lost in a later contribution (let us consider the different narrations of the meeting with Boulez).

From this point of view, the correspondence between Bussotti and Benvenuti in the 1950s can be seen as a precious contribution to a deeper knowledge of one of the most important and original artists of our time from the innovative perspective of a sort of unexpected autobiographical *Bildungsroman*.

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Queerness and Eroticism

Michelangelo Unveiled. Discovering *Nottetempo**

Federica Marsico

*It would be trivial to say that eroticism
holds a large place in my life
because it's always evident from my performances.*¹

SYLVANO BUSSOTTI

1. QUEERNESS BETWEEN ART AND MYTH

The operas by Sylvano Bussotti stand out in the musical landscape of the second half of the twentieth century for their frequent thematisation of all-round eroticism, an heterodox subject in contemporary composition. This theme is often addressed through a highly original elaboration of literary classics, aimed at challenging and breaking social taboos associated with sexuality and queerness (as in the eponymous opera based on Alfred de Musset's *Lorenzaccio* or in *Le Racine. Pianobar pour Phèdre*, based on Jean Racine's *Phèdre*).² Ivanka Stoianova aptly summarizes the aesthetic tenets of Bussotti's musical theatre as follows:

Never fashionable yet intrinsically modern, always interested in our cultural heritage from the Antiquity to the present and keenly attentive to contemporary reality, [Bussotti] was and remains unerringly opposed to univocal, final and normative principles; this is what defines the contagious vitality of his music.³

A particularly representative example of this aesthetics is the opera *Nottetempo*, “dramma lirico in un frammento (da Varagine a Michelangelo a Sofocle)” (“a one-fragment lyrical drama based on Varagine, Michelangelo and Sophocles”). The libretto was by Bussotti and his then partner Romano Amidei.⁴ Commissioned by the Teatro alla Scala, the opera debuted at the Teatro Lirico in Milan on 7 April 1976 in a diptych with Bussotti's ballet *Oggetto amato*, marking the birth

* I would like to thank Maria Maddalena Novati, president of the Center for Studies and Research on Modern and Contemporary Music “NoMus” of Milan, and Rocco Quaglia for their precious support to the archival research during the writing of this essay.

1 “Dire che c'è un largo spazio per l'eros nella mia vita è dire una banalità, perché ciò balza fuori sempre dai miei spettacoli”. Mo, “Bussottistory fra opera e balletto”. All translations are author's unless otherwise indicated.

2 See Marsico, “Le provocazioni di *Le Racine*”; ead., *La seduzione queer di Fedra*; ead., “Contemporary Music Theater”.

3 “Toujours hors mode mais intrinsèquement moderne, toujours intéressé à l'héritage culturel allant de l'antiquité à nos jours et nécessairement en prise directe sur le réel de la contemporanéité, il a sans cesse été et reste ennemi de toute fondation unique, définitive et normative, ce qui définit la vitalité contagieuse de sa musique”. Stoianova, “Sylvano Bussotti”, p. 21.

4 Amidei/Bussotti, “*Nottetempo*”.

of BussottiOperaBallet (BOB). The three terms of the name coined by Bussotti to label all of his following theatrical works⁵ sum up his intent to introduce autobiographical elements on stage and to take down the barriers between the genres of opera and ballet.

Today, only a few photographs⁶ and an audio recording⁷ document the first and sole performance of the opera, never to be staged again after the 1975/76 season. The opera was poorly received,⁸ despite the exceptional cast (which included, among others, Slavka Taskova Paoletti and Liliana Poli in the allegorical roles of Truth and Music)⁹ and the various promotional events organized by the publisher Ricordi and the Teatro alla Scala (see Fig. 1 and 2).¹⁰

The main character is Michelangelo Buonarroti (dramatic tenor), whose five hundredth anniversary of birth was commemorated the year before the premiere. The artist is shown working on the vault of the Sistine Chapel “sul finir della vita, curvo, ammalato” (“at the end of life, bent and sick”),¹¹ although in real life the artist completed the masterpiece before his fortieth birthday. He is assisted by 16-year-old Antonio Mini, aka Mino (*primo ballerino*). Here is Bussotti’s description of the main plot:

After an allegorical vision of a stairway to the afterlife, the action takes place throughout the night, from dusk to dawn, on the floor of the Sistine Chapel where Michelangelo is lying, injured and passed out after a fall. He is haunted by Hellenistic hallucinations, nightmares and excruciating pain, leading up to the final allegorical concert of the Arts singing a *Gloria*.¹²

5 On the genesis of the acronym BOB see Bussotti, “Testi manoscritti”, p. 424.

6 I-Mts. The photographs are also available in digital format at https://www.teatroallascala.org/it/archivio/spettacolo-oggetti.html?id_allest_=2321&id_allest_conc_=22492&id_evento_=66&guid_=159f2ecf-a3e3-47df-9078-3f5e87341518&page=2&type_=fotografie (14.12.2023), while two of them are reproduced in Lombardi (Ed.), *Sylvano Bussotti*, pp. 263, 266f.

7 NoMus, Bussotti Fund, audioc 022.

8 See Tedeschi, “Sylvano Bussotti e il gioco della libertà della fantasia”, and the press review stored in I-Mts.

9 See the playbills of the performances in I-Mts, viewable also in digital format at https://www.teatroallascala.org/it/archivio/spettacolo-oggetti.html?id_allest_=2321&id_allest_conc_=22492&guid_=159f2ecf-a3e3-47df-9078-3f5e87341518&page=1&type_=locandine#1-2 (14.12.2023).

10 The conferences are mentioned in Bussotti, “Testi manoscritti”, p. 418. No audio recording of them is stored in either the composer’s private archive (email from Rocco Quaglia to the author, 1.9.2021) or the Bussotti Fund of NoMus or the archives of Casa Ricordi.

11 This and subsequent quotes in the paragraph are taken from Amidei/Bussotti, “Nottetempo”, p. 28.

12 “Dopo la visione allegorica di una Scala, che si finge per l’aldilà, l’azione si svolge – tra l’imbrunire, l’intera notte e l’alba del giorno seguente – sul pavimento della Sistina ove Michelangelo, caduto, feritosi e perduti i sensi, soffre allucinazioni ellenistiche, incubi e atroci dolori; risolvendosi infine nel concerto allegorico delle Arti tutte che pronunziano un Gloria”. Amidei/Bussotti, “Nottetempo”, p. 28.

Oggetto amato

(Balletto)

RICORDI

Nottetempo

(Opera)

Conversazioni con Sylvano Bussotti

In occasione della prima rappresentazione mondiale del balletto *Oggetto amato* e dell'opera *Nottetempo* di Sylvano Bussotti, che avrà luogo al Teatro Lirico il 6 aprile 1976 nell'ambito della Stagione del Teatro alla Scala, sono previsti i seguenti incontri con l'autore e con esponenti del mondo culturale:

1. *martedì 9 marzo, ore 18 - Accademia di Brera (Salone Napoleonico)*
Via Brera 28
"Scenotecnica nel teatro musicale contemporaneo"
coordinatore: Franco Russoli
2. *lunedì 15 marzo, ore 21 - Galleria Milano - Via Marin 13*
"Musica e sogno"
coordinatore: Franco Quadri
3. *venerdì 19 marzo, ore 21 - Salone Pier Lombardo - Via P. Lombardo 14*
"Musica e immagine"
coordinatore: Mario Pasi
4. *lunedì 22 marzo, ore 21 - Casa della Cultura - Via Borgogna 5*
"Situazione attuale del teatro musicale"
coordinatore: Mario Messinis
5. *mercoledì 24 marzo, ore 21 - USIS - Via Bigli 11/a*
"Danza e teatro musicale oggi"
coordinatore: Walter E. Wells
6. *giovedì 25 marzo, ore 21 - Piccola Scala - Via Filodrammatici 2*
"Aspetti e funzioni del teatro musicale contemporaneo"
interverranno: Luigi Nono, Francesco Degrada
7. *lunedì 29 marzo, ore 20.30 - Associazione Amici del Loggione del Teatro alla Scala - Via Marino 7*
"Dramma lirico e balletto oggi"
coordinatore: Mario Pasi
8. *martedì 30 marzo, ore 21 - Centre Culturel Français - Via Bigli 2*
"Cosmopolitismo e culture nazionali"
coordinatore: Francesco Degrada
9. *mercoledì 31 marzo, ore 17.30 - Fabbrica F.M. Borletti - Piazza Invernizzi 2*
"Situazione della musica d'avanguardia"
coordinatore: Rubens Tedeschi
10. *mercoledì 31 marzo, ore 21 - Pensionato Universitario Statale - Via Milanese 300*
Sesto San Giovanni
"La tradizione e il nuovo"
coordinatore: Piero Santi

E' previsto l'ascolto di musiche registrate

INGRESSO LIBERO

Figure 1: Programme of the events with Bussotti organized by the Teatro alla Scala and the publisher Ricordi before the premiere of the opera. By courtesy of NoMus.

After a sudden fall from a scaffold, Michelangelo hallucinates that he is the Achaean archer Philoctetes, abandoned by Ulysses on the island of Lemnos, and that Mino is his brother-in-arms Neoptolemus. The libretto categorizes the stream



Figure 2: Promotional card of the event with Bussotti organized by the Teatro alla Scala before the premiere of the opera. By courtesy of the Teatro alla Scala Historical Archives.

of characters moving around the couple in the following groups: “apparitions”, i.e. the despotic pope Julius II, who commissioned the Sistine chapel (*chiaroscuro* baritone), Tomaso Cavalieri (light tenor), Vittoria Colonna (dramatic soprano) and a reader/scribe (low bass); the “allegories” include Music (lyric soprano), Truth (coloratura soprano), and an *aoidos* (*a solo* trumpet); there are also twenty-four “figures” (treble voices, contraltos, tenors, baritones and basses) named after martyrs or partisans, with the exception of the youth ‘Syro’, whose name is made of the initials of the composer, the librettist and Rocco Quaglia, the first interpreter of Mino and also romantically involved with Bussotti at the time of the premiere; a choir of treble voices and one of readers; “wandering youths and shipwrecked sailors resurrected as allegories of Arts and Crafts” (eight dancers); and various extras in the roles of “the dilapidated marble figure of Francesco Landino [...], a beheaded saint and other martyrs, papal courtesans and novices”.¹³

This multitude of characters revolves around the protagonist, whose figure and artistic persona are markedly homoerotic in Amidei and Bussotti’s interpretation. *Nottetempo* stages Michelangelo’s feverish attraction to Mino and Tomaso — in real life, the artist addressed to the latter several sonnets and drawings, as well as passionate letters¹⁴ — and overlays his historical persona with the mythological figure of Philoctetes, whose feelings for Neoptolemus also take on a homoerotic

13 “Francesco Landino [...] decrepito, di marmo, un santo decollato ed altri martiri, cortigiani papali, novizi”. Amidei/Bussotti, “Nottetempo”, p. 28

14 On the debate around homoeroticism in Michelangelo’s *Rime* see Francese, “On Homoerotic Tension in Michelangelo’s Poetry”. On the relationship of the artist with Cavalieri see Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, pp. 229–237. For the interpretation of the drawings given to Cavalieri as an allegory of homosexual desire see Zöllner/Thoenes/Pöpper, *Michelangelo*, pp. 240–244.

connotation in the opera. In order to adapt this all-male myth, Amidei and Bussotti draw on Sophocles' version, the only surviving of the three tragedies on the Achaean warrior written by Attican playwrights;¹⁵ the aria entitled *Cavata (detta "di Ulisse")* (*Cavata (called "of Ulysses")*) develops the dialogue between Odysseus and Neoptolemus that opens the Greek tragedy, and a strophe of the choir which, in the play, comes before Philoctetes' sleep is evoked in the *Corale con figure (Chorus with Figures)* that follows.¹⁶ As the myth goes, Odysseus, having abandoned Philoctetes on Lemnos because of an incurable and purulent wound on the foot, returns ten years later to retrieve his companion's bow, which formerly belonged to Heracles and is vital for the conquest of Troy. Odysseus plans to obtain it by trickery: Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, will introduce himself to Philoctetes and claim that he decided to abandon the battlefield and go home after his commanders refused to give him the weapons of his dead father. Philoctetes falls for the trick and gives his bow to Neoptolemus, in the false hope that he will be able to return home with him. However, Neoptolemus regrets his deceit and returns the bow to his friend, thereby clashing with Odysseus. The conflict is settled by Heracles' final appearance as a *deus ex machina*. Philoctetes is cured and returns to the Achaean army.

Amidei and Bussotti's homoerotic interpretation of the relationship between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus is enabled by Sophocles' strong emphasis on male friendship, sanctioned by Heracles' final words: "You shall not have the strength to capture Troy | without this man, nor he without you, | but, like twin lions hunting together, | he shall guard you, you him".¹⁷ Philoctetes, moreover, has another characteristic that makes him potentially queer: he is isolated from his former community of warriors because of a pathology that makes him different. Historian of religion Marcello Massenzio comments:

Our hero's deviation from the norm is expressed through the language of monstrosity: his body is diseased, or rather filled (possessed?) with a 'poison' that cannot be cured by ordinary therapies; the infected liquid constantly oozing from the wounded foot; the loss of upright position; the sickening stench of corruption; articulate speech giving way to inhuman screams. All of these elements testify to the hero's change of condition and project him into the realm of the extraordinary [...] as opposed to existing canons.¹⁸

15 On the literary adaptations of the myth see Alessandri, *Mito e memoria*, pp. 153–203.

16 Amidei/Bussotti, "Nottetempo", pp. 36f.

17 Sophocles, "Philoctetes", p. 133.

18 "La diversità del nostro eroe rispetto alla norma si esprime attraverso il linguaggio della monstrosità: il corpo malato o, meglio, invaso (posseduto?) da un 'veleno' refrattario alle normali terapie; l'inarrestabile fuoriuscita di liquido infetto dal piede ferito; la perdita della stazione eretta; il nauseante odore di putredine mescolato al gridare selvaggio, che prende il posto del linguaggio articolato. Tutto ciò testimonia del mutamento di stato subito dall'eroe, il quale appare proiettato nella sfera ambivalente dello straordinario [...] rispetto ai canoni vigenti". Massenzio, "La ferita sacra", pp. 12f.

Philoctetes is therefore an outlier, yet he proves more valuable than the warrior Odysseus, who despite his health is unable to achieve victory without him.¹⁹ His non-canonical qualities are even more outstanding in André Gide's *Philoctète* (1898), which addresses the relationship between an individual's authentic self and social conventions through an intense reflection on the alterity of the wounded hero, who finds his own identity after being abandoned in the wilderness. Neoptolemus is seduced by the words of his friend, which open up unexplored horizons to him: the island of marginalization becomes a place for asceticism where the outcast prefers to live in solitude rather than returning to his companions, because this place corresponds to the conquest of his own self-expression.

Some elements of the scenography designed by Bussotti for the premiere can also be explained in terms of his wish to underscore the homoeroticism that permeates the plot in this original reinterpretation of the classical myth. The surviving stage photographs show a large-scale reproduction of Michelangelo's marble relief *Centauiromachia* (*Battle of the Centaurs*), depicting the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths and held in Casa Buonarroti.²⁰ The piece celebrates Michelangelo's favourite theme, namely the "heroic nude in action";²¹ the (mostly male) naked bodies, entangled in fight, "make a full display of their violent vitality through multiple points of view".²² One can easily infer that Bussotti's reproduction of the relief in the scenography of *Nottetempo* was a means to visually suggest the celebration of homoerotic desire that constitutes the opera's driving plot. To the same end, a few years prior, in the score and scenography of *Lorenzaccio* (1972), the composer had placed the statue of *David* with its back to the audience, clearly with the intent to emphasize the power of seduction of the male body.²³

The homoerotic reading of the *Centauiromachia* is also related to an observation made by Bussotti about another painting by Michelangelo featuring a battle, during an interview with the author of the present chapter on 12 February 2014 in which we were discussing *Nottetempo*. See the following excerpt:

F. MARSICO: Let's talk about the two pieces that launched the BOB performances in 1976, *Oggetto amato* and *Nottetempo*. The myths on which they are based have different geographic origins. The first comes from ancient Egypt and tells the story of the fight between the brothers Osiris and Typhon and the love of their sister Isis, Osiris's wife, tightly connecting eroticism and incest. The second comes from Sophocles' take on the

19 See Clarke Kosak, "The Male Interior".

20 See the photograph at https://www.teatroallascala.org/it/archivio/spettacolo-oggetti.html?id_alltest_2321&id_alltest_conc_22492&id_evento_66&guid_159f2ecf-a3e3-47df-9078-3f5e87341518&page=22&type_fotografie#1-6 (14.12.2023). On the sculpture see Zöllner, "Catalogo delle sculture", p. 369.

21 "Nudo eroico in azione". Risaliti/Vossilla, *Michelangelo*, p. 35.

22 "Sono [...] evidenziati a imporre la loro violenta vitalità secondo una molteplicità di tagli visivi". Ibid., p. 31.

23 Bussotti, *Lorenzaccio*, p. 3. For a photograph of the *mise en scene* see Bucci (Ed.), *L'opera di Sylvano Bussotti*, p. 124.

myth of Philoctetes. In Gide's interpretation, the feeling that drives Neoptolemus to forsake his own hypocrisy toward Philoctetes is connoted as homoerotic love.

S. BUSSOTTI: Of course.

F. MARSICO: To what extent did these aspects influence your choice of these two subjects?

S. BUSSOTTI: Well, Gide was kind of doing things *pro domo sua*, I mean he was pushing in that direction, which was fine, and he also gave a certain pathos to the whole thing. But when you slip into images, and when the image is supported by figures which, beautiful or horrible as they may be, are important, then there's no way out because it's the important figure that prevails. [...] As I speak to you, what comes to me is the image of a battle. In a very famous museum there is this incredible battle with arrows and spears, which, except for the Bacchae, was for some reason attributed to men. But during the battle these men have removed their clothes to take a bath, in other words these men who are supposed to use spears, arrows and terrible things to kill are actually cooling down in the water, naked. So it's possible to give that impression, even unwittingly.²⁴

Bussotti could be referring to the fresco *Battaglia di Cascina* (*The Battle of Cascina*). The work was destined to Palazzo Vecchio, but Michelangelo only completed a cartoon of the composition, which has been lost. The sketch has come to us through a *grisaille* copy attributed to Aristotile da Sangallo and is held in the Holkham Hall collection. As in the *Centaureomachia*, this historical episode in which the Florentine warriors took advantage of a pause in the fight against Pisa to bathe in the Arno river as a respite from the scorching heat becomes an opportunity for Michelangelo to depict the vigorous movements of naked and strapping male bodies. They are shown just after the commander on guard, witnessing the sudden arrival of the enemy troops, tells them to pick up their clothes and arms and hurry to the riverbank.²⁵

The previous considerations can also shed light on Michelangelo's *Dannato* (*Damned Soul*), the sketch of a head also reproduced in the scenography of the

24 "F. MARSICO: Parlerei ora dei due lavori che inaugurarono la sigla BOB nel 1976, *Oggetto amato* e *Nottetempo*, ispirati a miti di diversa provenienza geografica. Nel primo il mito discende dall'antico Egitto e narra lo scontro fra i fratelli Osiride e Tifone e l'amore di Iside, moglie e sorella, connettendo strettamente eros e incesto. Nel secondo, il mito discende da Sofocle ed è quello di Filottete. Nella rielaborazione di Gide, il sentimento che spinge Neottolemo a rinunciare all'ipocrisia verso Filottete assume i connotati di un amore omoerotico. S. BUSSOTTI: Certo. F. MARSICO: Quanto questi aspetti hanno influito sulla scelta dei due soggetti? S. BUSSOTTI: Beh, Gide ha fatto un po' le cose *pro domo sua*, cioè ha spinto in quella direzione, che andava benissimo, e ha dato anche una forza patetica al tutto. Però quando si scivola nell'immagine, e quando l'immagine è sostenuta da figure belle o orrende, ma importanti, non ne esci più, perché è la figura importante che comanda. [...] Mentre ora parlo, [...] mi viene in mente l'immagine di una battaglia. E in un museo celeberrimo c'è una battaglia incredibile con frecce e lance, che, a parte le baccanti, si attribuiva non si sa perché ai maschi. Questi però durante questa battaglia si erano spogliati per fare il bagno, cosicché chi potrebbe utilizzare lance, frecce e cose terribili per uccidere, se ne sta invece nudo nell'acqua per rinfrescarsi. Ecco che si riesce a dare quella sensazione, anche se non vuoi". Marsico, "Conversazione con Sylvano Bussotti".

25 Zöllner, "Catalogo dei dipinti", p. 409.

premiere, although the homoerotic reference is more implicit than in the *Centauromachia*.²⁶ Art critics see in the rage of the screaming head an “allegory of the *furia amoris*”²⁷ that Michelangelo felt toward his pupil Gherardo Perini, to whom he gave this charcoal drawing; Bussotti was likely aware of this meaning and therefore chose to reproduce the drawing in the scenography in order to covertly hint at Buonarroti’s homoerotic desire.

The background placed above a Renaissance staircase (based on the staircase designed by Michelangelo for the Laurentian Library) alludes to erotic pleasure *tout court*: it is a collage of various images, including two pictures by Antonia Mulas drawn from the volume *Eros in Grecia* (*Eros in Greece*), published one year before the premiere.²⁸ The two photographs feature a marble high-relief depicting a Dionysian procession, known for its association with sexual frenzy (now at the *National Museum in Naples*) and the fragment of another marble high-relief showing the sexual encounter between Heracles and a nymph (now at the *Boston Museum of Fine Arts*). In the latter photograph, Bussotti isolated only the part showing the hero in the heights of ecstasy.²⁹ Another background, depicting the island of Philoctetes, also underscores the centrality of the erotic theme; by using two additional photographs by Mulas, Bussotti foregrounds the ruins of the sanctuary of the goddess of Love in Erice, Sicily, under a picture of the sea seen from the island of Delos.³⁰

2. INTERTEXTUALITY

The most powerful expression of Michelangelo’s homoerotic desire in the opera is in the aria sung by the protagonist in the section *Nottetempo*, the third of the four parts in which the score is divided. After falling from the scaffold at the end of the second part (*Melodramma*), Michelangelo is moaning in pain as he sings the sixteenth fragment of his *Rime* (“Febbre, fianchi, dolor, morbi, occhi e denti”, “Fever, sides, pain, sicknesses, teeth and eyes”) and falls asleep.³¹ The next part

26 Two photographs of the performance, in which the reproduction of Michelangelo’s works can be seen, are in Ferretti/Pierini/Ruschi (Eds), *Michelangelo e il Novecento*, p. 195.

27 Thoenes/Pöpper, “Catalogo dei disegni”, p. 552.

28 Boardman/La Rocca (Texts), Mulas (Photographs), *Eros in Grecia*.

29 Compare the photograph of the performance at https://www.teatroallascala.org/it/archivio/spettacolo-oggetti.html?id_allest_=2321&id_allest_conc_=22492&id_evento_=66&guid_=159f2ecf-a3e3-47df-9078-3f5e87341518&page=23&type_=fotografie#1-5 (14.12.2023) with *Eros in Grecia*, pp. 41, 156.

30 Compare the photograph of the performance at https://www.teatroallascala.org/it/archivio/spettacolo-oggetti.html?id_allest_=2321&id_allest_conc_=22492&id_evento_=66&guid_=159f2ecf-a3e3-47df-9078-3f5e87341518&page=22&type_=fotografie#1-6 (14.12.2023) with *Eros in Grecia*, pp. 10, 35.

31 The English translations of Michelangelo’s verses are taken from Linscott (Ed.), *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of Michelangelo*, p. 170. References to the numbering of Buonarroti’s

features Michelangelo's dream in which pope Julius II becomes Ulysses, Mino Neoptolemus and the artist himself Philoctetes. In this guise he addresses Mino-Neoptolemus with an aria whose lyrics are entirely based on quotations and elaborations of pre-existing literary sources. In the libretto, Amidei and Bussotti make explicit two intertextual references³² by using quote marks and adding the footnotes "Da *Le finestre illuminate* di Heimito von Doderer" ("From Heimito von Doderer's *The Lighted Windows*") and "da un racconto di Aldo Palazzeschi" ("from a story by Aldo Palazzeschi"). I shall now proceed with the identification of all the literary sources and with a description of some aspects of the setting into music in order to show how these intertextual elements underscore the protagonist's homoerotic desire toward the young apprentice.

Table 1 summarizes the textual collage created by the librettists: the above-mentioned quotations are juxtaposed to verse drawn from fragment no. 3 and

ARIA	LITERARY SOURCE	ORIGINAL
Solo e solo <i>di più</i>	BUONARROTI, r. 98, v. 13 ³³	[maraviglia non è se nudo] e solo
"di nottetempo, di nottetempo"	HEIMITO VON DODERER, <i>Le finestre illuminate</i>	di nottetempo, di nottetempo
"nel vuoto acustico <i>di notte</i> "	ALDO PALAZZESCHI, <i>Il cuore e la legge</i>	nel vuoto acustico <i>della</i> notte
oilmè oilmè chi è quel che <i>in</i> forza a <i>me ti</i> mena, legato e stretto, e son libero e sciolto? Se tu incateni altrui senza catena e senza <i>boci</i> o braccia m'hai raccolto oilmè oilmè oilmè Chi mi difenderà dal tuo bel volto?	BUONARROTI, r. 7	Chi è quel che <i>per</i> forza a <i>te mi</i> mena, oilmè, oilmè, oilmè, legato e stretto, e son libero e sciolto? Se tu incateni altrui senza catena e senza <i>mane</i> o braccia m'hai raccolto, chi mi difenderà dal tuo bel volto?
Se vint'è <i>prese</i> i' debb'esser beato, maraviglia non è se nudo e solo resto prigion d'un cavaliere armato. Omai l'intensa voglia	BUONARROTI, r. 98, vv. 1, 12–14	[...] omai l'intensa voglia [...] Se vint' è <i>preso</i> i' debb'esser beato, maraviglia non è se nudo e solo resto prigion d'un cavaliere armato.
l'età 'l desir <i>discorda</i> ;	BUONARROTI, r. 120, v. 3	l'età <i>col</i> desir <i>non ben s'accorda</i>
'l ciel che l'alma veste 'l <i>corpo</i> mai ne spoglia	BUONARROTI, r. 98, vv. 3–4	[se di tal sorte] 'l ciel, che l'alma veste, [tard' o per tempo] <i>alcun</i> mai <i>non</i> ne spoglia?

poems are taken from Buonarroti, *Rime*. Before *Nottetempo*, Bussotti set into music fragments nos. 16 and 17 in 1967 in *Ancora odono i colli* (from *Cinque frammenti all'Italia*) for mixed vocal sextet (p. 2).

32 Amidei/Bussotti, "Nottetempo", p. 38.

33 Rhyme 98 is hypothesized as the source of the beginning of the aria, because the same lyric is the source of some subsequent verses.

ARIA	LITERARY SOURCE	ORIGINAL
ma l'alma cieca è sorda. Amor, come tu sai del tempo e del morire ancor me ne ricorda;	BUONARROTI, r. 120, vv. 4–7	ma l'alma, cieca <i>e</i> sorda, Amor, come tu sai, del tempo e del morire [che, contro a morte] ancor, me <i>la</i> ricorda;
<i>vedo</i> , perc'ancor forse non <i>sie</i> la fiamma spenta l'arco subito torse	BUONARROTI, r. 142, vv. 1–2, 4	<i>Credo</i> , perc'ancor forse non <i>sia</i> la fiamma spenta [nel freddo tempo dell'età men verde,] l'arco subito torse
e se l'arco e la corda avvien che tronchi o spezzi	BUONARROTI, r. 120, vv. 8–9	e se l'arco e la corda avvien che tronchi o spezzi
nel freddo <i>pecto</i> dell'età men verde che 'n gentil <i>core</i> 'l colpo <i>mai</i> non perde	BUONARROTI, r. 142, vv. 3, 6	nel freddo <i>tempo</i> dell'età men verde, [l'arco subito torse Amor, che si rammenta] che 'n gentil <i>cor ma'</i> suo colpo non perde
<i>Neottolema la fromba ed io</i> <i>quest'arco!</i>	BUONARROTI, fr. 3, v. 1	<i>Davitte colla fromba e io</i> <i>coll'arco.</i>
Se l'un nell'altro amante si trasforma, resto in te vivo, c'or mi vedi e piangi.	BUONARROTI, r. 194, vv. 3–4	resto in te vivo, c'or mi vedi e piangi, se l'un nell'altro amante si trasforma.

Table 1: Comparison between the aria and its literary sources

poems nos. 7, 98,³⁴ 120, 142 and 194 of Buonarroti's poetic production. The italics in the first and third column highlight the changes brought by Amidei and Bussotti to the original version, while the square brackets isolate the passages that were not included in the libretto; indentations indicate that the verse in the aria has a different position than in the original poem.

The first quotation (“di nottetempo, di nottetempo”, “by night, by night”) comes from the Italian translation of Doderer's novel *Die erleuchteten Fenster* (*The Lighted Windows*, 1951) and more precisely from a passage in which the protagonist Julius Zihal, a retired office worker, receives an unexpected visit from his neighbour, who wishes to peek at the woman he loves from Zihal's window. Zihal sits down to listen as his strange visitor explains his idea of love. Below is the passage from which the librettists draw the quotation (highlighted in italics):

Zihal sat back as he listened to the petitioner during that strange nocturnal hearing (*di nottetempo, di nottetempo*); he sat still, as if cast in bronze.

— Please continue! — he said.

Love generates intense longing, an endless desire, as they say in elevated language, for the unattainable if not impossible possession of the beloved object³⁵ — (increasingly

34 Sonnet 98 was set into music by Benjamin Britten in *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*. See Whitesell, “Love Knots”.

35 Amidei and Bussotti could have taken from this passage also the title of *Oggetto amato*.

wide-eyed, the Counsellor leant further back in his chair) — of the object of our sympathy and inclination, isn't it so, the desire to at least behold that object, that it to say the person we are in love with, for whom we feel love and sympathy, and we wish to behold them, whenever possible of course, in an attire that may satisfy our passion and feed it with the appropriate nourishment.³⁶

As for the second quotation (“nel vuoto acustico di notte”, “in the acoustic emptiness of the night”), drawn “from a story by Aldo Palazzeschi” whose title is not specified, the source is probably the story *Il cuore e la legge* (*The Heart and the Law*).³⁷ The protagonist, Maddalena, is unable to attend to her dying companion of forty years Mauro because she has been kicked out of their house by the lawyer of his wife, whom he couldn't legally divorce, and of his daughters, greedy for the heritage. The quotation comes from a passage in which Maddalena, having found out that Mauro is on the brink of death, rushes off at night to give him one last farewell from the courtyard of the house that they used to share. The passage is reported below with the quotation highlighted:

Maddalena went out on foot, alone *in the acoustic emptiness of the night*; she reached their house, opened the gate, walked through the courtyard and into the garden under the ten-metre high window of his room. A light was shining through the shutters, making her shiver. — Mauro! Mauro! Goodbye. — Then, downcast, she walked back to the hotel.³⁸

The rest of the aria is drawn from several poems by Buonarroti, all about love except for fragment no. 3. Poem no. 7 is built around the metaphor of the lover bound by love's chains. The metaphor of imprisonment returns in poem no. 98, dedicated to Cavalieri, whose name (meaning ‘knights’ in Italian) is evoked in the final wordplay (“resto prigion d'un cavalier armato”, “I remain prisoner of a

36 “Zihal sedeva appoggiato un po' all'indietro, mentre ascoltava il postulante in quella strana udienza notturna (di nottetempo, di nottetempo); sedeva immobile, come fissato nel bronzo. — Prosegua, la prego! — disse. — L'amore genera la brama intensa, il desiderio infinito, come si suol dire in senso elevato, se non dell'impossibile e attualmente irraggiungibile possesso dell'oggetto amato — (a questo punto il Consigliere spalancò ancor più gli occhi e si appoggiò ancor più all'indietro) — dell'oggetto della propria simpatia, della propria inclinazione, nevvvero, il desiderio almeno di guardar quell'oggetto, cioè la persona di cui si è innamorati, che si ama, che suscita la nostra simpatia, di vederla, se appena naturalmente è possibile, in condizioni di abbigliamento che appaghino l'impulso amoroso e gli assicurino di conseguenza l'alimento appropriato, cioè lo alimentino”. Von Doderer, *Le finestre illuminate*, p. 108.

37 The story was first published in *Corriere della Sera*, 13 November 1954, p. 3, then in Palazzeschi, *Tutte le novelle*.

38 “Maddalena uscì a piedi, sola nel vuoto acustico della notte; arrivò fino alla sua casa, aprì il portone del quale aveva conservata la chiave, attraversò il cortile, entrò nel giardino dov'era la finestra della camera alta due metri da terra. Dalle persiane filtrava una luce che la faceva rabbrivire: — Mauro! Mauro! Addio. — E a capo basso ritornò all'albergo”. Palazzeschi, *Tutte le novelle*, p. 588.

knight-in-arms”).³⁹ Poem no. 120, dedicated to Vittoria Colonna, is directly addressed to Love, which keeps alive the lover’s flame by breaking the bow, symbol of Eros, and the string, metaphor of a passionate bond.⁴⁰ Poem no. 142, dedicated to a “*donna bella e crudele*” (“beautiful cruel lady”),⁴¹ takes up again the image of Love stretching his bow to rekindle the flame that time might extinguish. Quatrain no. 194 is an epitaph dedicated to a prematurely departed youth and also celebrates love, albeit more indirectly: it claims that the dead shall be kept symbolically alive by the affection of the mourner. The protagonists of fragment no. 3 are king David, who defeated the giant Goliath with his sling, and Michelangelo himself; according to literary critics, the latter identifies with the biblical king as a servant of God who carries out his mission through art, symbolized by the bow, rather than the sling.⁴²

The changes made to the original verses and their specific arrangement in the aria form a collage that poignantly expresses the love of Michelangelo-Philoctetes for Mino-Neoptolemus. The quotations from Doderer and Palazzeschi can also be understood as a means to underscore the protagonist’s powerful attraction to the object of his passion. Zihal’s neighbour, Maddalena and Michelangelo are all in the grip of intense erotic desire expressed by the fact of beholding the loved one; the first two must hide (the man in his neighbour’s house, the woman in the courtyard of her companion’s apartment), while Michelangelo speaks openly. The references to Doderer and Palazzeschi could also be explained by the fact that the two passages from which the quotations are drawn could potentially be a description of queer desire. Doderer (who was bisexual) does not define the genre of the loved one, and in the story by Palazzeschi (a closeted homosexual) Maddalena’s desire is denied social recognition, just as queer desire was at the time of the premiere of *Nottetempo*.

Bussotti deliberately underscores the erotic charge of the passage in the music, too. Unlike the rest of the score, which the director of the premiere Gianpiero Taverna described as “diabolically difficult”,⁴³ Michelangelo’s aria stands out for the simplicity of its vocal line, occasionally reminiscent of the operatic *topos* of the love romance. See per instance the *a mezza voce* passage in which Michelangelo calls for Mino’s attention (“*chi è quel che in forza a me ti mena*”, “who is the one that draws you to me”): it is almost an *a solo*, insofar as the instruments enter only on the syllable “ti” (you), possibly to highlight the addressee (see Ex. 1). Singability is particularly evident also in the *a solo* of the last tercet of the sonnet that originally

39 Linscott (Ed.), *Complete Poems and Selected Letters of Michelangelo*, p. 71.

40 For this interpretation see Michelangelo, *Rime e lettere*, p. 175.

41 Ibid., p. 189.

42 Ibid., p. 296.

43 Taverna, *Il Direttore Artistico che sa anche cucinare*, p. 7.

contained the allusion to Cavaliere, in which every hendecasyllable is sung on the same dodecaphonic series (see Ex. 2).



Example 1: Bussotti, *Nottetempo*, p. 116. Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.



Example 2: Bussotti, *Nottetempo*, p. 117. Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

The offstage interventions by Julius II and Vittoria Colonna also highlight the homoeroticism at the core of the piece: the pope enumerates a series of men's names including Rocco's ("Alì Enzo Vincenzo Ciri Rocco") while Michelangelo sings "Chi mi difenderà dal tuo bel volto" ("Who shall protect me from your beautiful face"). The overlap between the two voices underscores that the "bel volto" from which Michelangelo is seeking protection is that of a man, the object of homoerotic desire. During the last five lines of the aria, Julius resumes the enumeration of male names, including Romano and Rocco ("Haro Tullio Bruno Gianni Pupo Mario Rocco Tony Jacopo e Apollo Romano Pablo").⁴⁴ The mention of the names

44 For this and the previous interventions of Julius II Bussotti reworked some extracts from his *Pièces de chair II*, movement *Voix d'homme*.

of two of Bussotti's partners in the list sung by the pope introduces into the opera the erotic desire of the composer himself. As for Vittoria Colonna, she sings off-stage the lines "Fermati caro rimani a me dinanzi scopri la grazia" ("Stand before me, my beloved, and unveil your grace") while Michelangelo sings "I corpo mai ne spoglia ma l'alma cieca è sorda" ("the body never gets stripped of it but the blind soul is deaf"), showing that he turns a deaf ear to the gentlewoman's invitation to come near her.⁴⁵

3. A "BIG ONEIRIC-EROTIC-HOMOSEXUAL MESS"

Presenting an opera such as *Nottetempo* to the audience of La Scala in 1976 was certainly a bold move. The theme of gay identity had started gaining visibility in the press at the end of the 1960s, in conjunction with student and worker protests. In the wake of the Stonewall riots, Europe saw the emergence of movements akin to the US Gay Liberation Front, including the *Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano* (FUORI). One of the most significant demonstrations organized by the latter was the protest in Sanremo in 1972 during an international conference promoted by the *Italian Sexology Centre*, which still considered homosexuality an illness to be cured with humiliating treatments.

By putting on stage the queer desire of an artist as great as Michelangelo, Bussotti was addressing a topic that was still taboo for a large portion of the society of the time. Many critics were reticent to acknowledge the connection between the figures of Buonarroti and Philoctetes, namely their homoerotic desire, and harshly criticized the opera for the plot's lack of logical consistency: "The relationship between Michelangelo and Philoctetes, based on the wounded foot, is too vague"⁴⁶ wrote the critic Rubens Tedeschi in *l'Unità*, the daily newspaper of the Communist Party, which Bussotti incidentally supported. Leonardo Pinzauti, also a historical figure of Italian music criticism, pointed out the same flaw and denigrated the work: "One fails to see [...] the logical connection, except for an orthopaedic one, between Michelangelo's broken leg and Sophocles' myth of Philoctetes and his gangrenous foot".⁴⁷ A paradigmatic instance of the stir caused by *Nottetempo* are the words of Giovanni Carli Ballola, who defined it a "big oneiric-erotic-homosexual mess".⁴⁸

Always attentive to the reception of his operas,⁴⁹ Bussotti knew that most critics, the mouthpiece of the dominant ideas of the time, would not appreciate

45 In this passage an excerpt from *Pièces de chair II*, movement *Voix de femme* is reworked.

46 Tedeschi, "Sylvano Bussotti e il gioco della libertà della fantasia".

47 Pinzauti, "Tempestosa 'prima' di Bussotti".

48 Carli Ballola, "I partigiani diventano omosex".

49 See Bussotti, "Testi manoscritti", in which the author transcribes and comments some passages from Italian newspapers.

Michelangelo's explicit queerness. The savage campaign conducted by several newspapers against the intellectual Pier Paolo Pasolini, who had been murdered the year before the premiere and was a symbol of post-war overturning of sexual taboos, was paradigmatic of the public opinion of the time. The composer noted: "Pasolini suffered from the same unjust attacks, and for exactly the same motives that have been spit out at me. Let someone try to deny it".⁵⁰

With *Nottetempo*, Bussotti was trying to put the public in front of an unfiltered and controversial topic, well aware that the provocation would elicit a negative reaction or a denial of the underlying homoerotic content, and that the opera would be criticized for its lack of dramatic consistency. It is no coincidence that he was able to present such a controversial topic back in the 1970s at La Scala, of all places; the then superintendent of the theatre was Paolo Grassi, a tireless advocate of the theatre as "a place where the community listens to a word in order to accept or reject it"⁵¹ and a staunch supporter of Bussotti's theatrical aesthetics.⁵²

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50 Ibid., p. 413.

51 "Il luogo dove una comunità ascolta una parola da accettare o da respingere". Grassi, *Lettere*, pp. 27f.

52 Grassi declared: "Sono stato felicissimo che nel 1975 [sic] si sia fatto il *BussottiOperaBallet* che ha avuto un esito contrastato; però ha avuto pubblico, nonostante i ferocissimi fischi dei melomani tradizionali della 'prima' e l'errore, a mio avviso, di Bussotti, di aver fatto uno spettacolo più lungo di quello che era stato concordato" ("I was very happy that in 1975 the *BussottiOperaBallet* was done, which had a contrasting outcome; however, it had an audience, in spite of the fierce whistles of the traditional melomaniacs of the 'premiere' and the error, in my opinion, of Bussotti, of having made a longer show than what had been agreed upon"). Pozzi (Ed.), *Paolo Grassi*, p. 305.

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Izumi Shikibu nikki: An Inspiring Love Story from Ancient Japan in Sylvano Bussotti's Music

Alessandra Origani

The present article turns the attention to the unpublished and unperformed opera *Izumi Shikibu. Diario di tre stagioni*, composed by Sylvano Bussotti between 2005 and 2006 and dedicated to Rocco Quaglia, his lifelong partner.

The subject of the opera is the diary of Izumi Shikibu, who was a prominent writer and poetess of Japanese literary history, perhaps one of the most famous female Japanese poets of the Heian period alongside Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shonagon.¹ She composed her diary between 1003 and 1004 CE. The Heian period (794–1185) is renowned for its artistic flourishing, particularly in poetry and literature. It represents a time in Japanese history characterised by the peak of the imperial court, marked by a decline in Chinese influence and the rise of Japanese vernacular literature, predominantly authored by court women who were not as proficient in Chinese as their male counterparts.

Many sources of the same period corroborate the hypothesis that the episodes described in the diary truly belong to Izumi Shikibu's personal life at the court.² After her first marriage and subsequent separation, Izumi fell in love with Prince Tametaka, who tragically passed away at a young age in 1002. Following Tametaka's demise, the poetess was courted by prince Atsumichi, Tametaka's brother. The first year of their love affair constitutes the subject of the work.

Interestingly, the diary alternates prose with poetry, and that is because the love affair mainly develops through the exchange of love poems between the lovers. Due to this reason, scholars have debated about the literary typology of the work, as it is described as a diary (*nikki* in Japanese), but it also shows hybrid characteristics of a poetry collection and a fiction novel at the same time. The use of the third person singular instead of the first person is another aspect that suggests the hypothesis of a fiction novel (*monogatari*) rather than a diary format.³

The first complete translation of Izumi Shikibu's Diary into Italian was undertaken by Giorgia Valensin and published by Einaudi in 1946. The text possessed by the composer is a copy of that first translation titled *Diari di dame di corte*

1 Cranston, *The Poetry of Izumi Shikibu*, p. 1.

2 General historical information about Izumi Shikibu's life is to be found in the introduction to the English translation. Cranston, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, pp. 3–30.

3 Further information on the diary-novel debate in the paragraph "Authorship and Formation" in *ibid.*, pp. 44–90.



Figure 1: Chikanobu Yoshu (1838–1912): *Eastern Brocades: No. 21 Izumi Shikibu*, Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, California, USA – Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Ballard. Accession number 93.6.108. In this work, in the central section, Izumi is depicted together with her daughter. Above them, Izumi's lover playfully holds onto her kimono.

dell'antico Giappone, an anthology featuring the diaries of four different courtly poetesses from the Heian period, including Izumi Shikibu.⁴

1. THE MUSIC MANUSCRIPT

Sylvano Bussotti meticulously dates on the very first *folio* of the manuscript “*Milano, duemila e cinque – duemila e sei*” as well as at the end of each of the three parts (seasons) of the work.⁵ However, on the last page of the introduction, presenting the characters and the instrumental setting, there is a section titled “*Osservazioni generali e pratiche*” (“General observations and practices”), where the composer explains the opera’s *mis-en-scène*.⁶ These further remarks date to 14 February 2007, as we will later see, probably these pieces of information were still not complete but helped to give a better idea of the general setting of the opera.

After the front page, the manuscript introduces the characters and their musical role: Izumi Shikibu, poetess and lady-in-waiting, is a dramatic soprano; Miyobu, Izumi’s maid, a lyric soprano; Sochi no Miya, the imperial prince, has a timbre of a lyric tenor; Ukon no Zo, his page, is a tenorino and, finally, Michinaga, Sochi’s uncle and tutor, is vocally a bass-baritone. Further into the manuscript, the composer displays the following instrumental setting: two flutes (of which one also plays the piccolo), two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, two horns, piccolo trumpet, two trumpets, two trombones, tuba, percussion, two harps, strings and voices, specifically, a mixed choir and five soloists. The instrumental setting is similar to that of other works by Bussotti, such as *L’ispirazione* (1984–86), with which it also shares the presence of instruments on stage. Another example is *Pater doloroso* (1978–2005), which similarly features various vocal timbres and mimes. The variety and the precise description of the instruments and voices used, similar to those in other compositions, along with the state of the handwritten score, suggest that the opera was fully complete and ready for performance from a musical standpoint.

The composer adopts the main characters’ perspectives, showing their actions directly on stage. However, the choir has the role of expressing comments and descriptions to underscore the protagonists’ intents and psychological development from an external point of view.

4 Valensin, *Diari di dame di corte dell'antico Giappone*. The book was gifted to Sylvano Bussotti by Rocco Quaglia. This Italian translation diverges stylistically from the literal translation from Japanese, as the story is always described by the poetess in the first person.

5 In *Estate dei presagi* we even find two dates: at the end of the opening, it reads “*Dedica (del S. Stefano ventisei dicembre 2005) a Rocco*” and at the end of the section 1 May 2006; while *Autunno dell'amore* was completed on 16 August and *Inverno d'abbandono* on 25 November 2006.

6 Author’s translation from Italian unless otherwise specified.

The opera's libretto diverges from verbatim passages of the original literary source. Bussotti's new text is succinct, omits certain plot episodes and none of the original poems is quoted entirely. The composer's intention is rather to evoke the suspended and dream-like ambiance of the original poems by selecting recurring elements, such as tears, leaves, snow, rain or the moon. Thus, in the lyrical passages, the poems serve as reservoirs for words that contribute to depict different atmospheres by selecting and putting into the text.

In Bussotti's opera, compared to the book, more depth and significance is given to secondary characters within the musical composition, such as the page Ukon no Zo and Izumi's servant, Miyobu (without a name in the book), probably with the musical purpose of facilitating vocal duets. Ukon in particular transcends his role as a mere servant, transforming into a sort of cupid – "*Idolino d'amore*" – exerting influence on the two lovers, and symbolizing love itself.

The manuscript, spanning about 28 folios, is organised into three parts: "*Estate dei presagi*" ("Summer of omens"), "*Autunno dell'amore*" ("Autumn of love"), and "*Inverno d'abbandono*" ("Winter of abandonment"), illustrating a progressive chronological development of the plot. The opera reaches its climax in the middle section, where the two protagonists unite in an erotic scene. Conversely, in the original text, the protagonists meet several times without describing a tangible physical connection between them, lacking a precise pivotal moment. Explicit erotic scenes are in general avoided in the literature, but intercourse is suggested through poetic metaphors or simply reporting the lover's departure at dawn. As pointed out by scholar of Japanese literature Edwin Cranston, *Izumi Shikibu nikki* is mainly based on the alternation of contrasting passions following a "wave-like pattern, of alternate ardour and indifference on the part of the prince, and timidity and yearning on the part of Izumi".⁷ The original Japanese text is steeped in the dynamics of a courtly love and dwells on the description of the lovers' states of mind and emotions. The whole book is about the wooing between Izumi and prince Sochi through the exchange of letters and nocturnal encounters. A contrasted love story made it difficult by their mutual jealousy and need of attention.

The Diary concludes abruptly as Izumi accepts the prince's winter invitation to move to his place. However, Bussotti's opera diverges from this, ending the section *Inverno d'abbandono* with the depiction of Izumi's sense of loss for her lover. The composer chose to deviate from the literary source, suggesting the prince's demise or the dissolution of the lovers' relationship. This is the main point in which the musical version diverges drastically from the literary source. The latter one closes with a happy ending, as the two lovers are reunited and will live together in the prince's palace; whereas Bussotti's opera concludes with Izumi's crying, after a sequence of dialogue alluding to a tragic end for the prince.

7 Cranston, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary*, p. 26.

The manuscript provides limited details regarding character movements, acting and staging. Instead, movements on stage are often hinted at by verses, such as “*Lasciami entrare dove sei tu*” (“let me in where you are”) or “*tornare deluso al tramonto*” (“to return disappointed at sunset”). This lack of detail could be attributed to the intention of a semi-scenic staging for *Diario di tre Stagioni*. Quaglia even suggests that Bussotti envisioned the opera to be performed in the Auditorium Verdi in Milan, where there is no orchestra pit. The proposed staging would only involve a bridge-like structure over the orchestra, with the protagonists placed at opposite ends, exchanging letters through an attendant crossing the bridge.⁸ However, a note in the section “*osservazioni generali e pratiche*” leaves room for speculation regarding alternate settings, indicating that the author would typically prepare sketches for stage design, detailed plans, and costumes designs as well as a lighting design:

Come di consueto l'autore prepara i bozzetti per la scenografia, le piante particolareggiate, schizzi d'attrezzaria ed i figurini per i costumi; un disegno-luci nel calcolo dei tempi, e la nota storico-editoriale.⁹

Yet, none of these elements have been discovered thus far, and with the passing of Maestro Bussotti, understanding the original staging intentions for *Izumi Shikibu*. *Diario di tre Stagioni* remains speculative.

2. MUSIC AND TEXT

When examining the manuscript, it becomes evident that the absence of dramaturgy is compensated by elaborate instrumental sections, which serve to elucidate the narrative rather than depict actions directly. Upon the prince's carriage making its initial appearance (folio 7, *recto*), for instance, it is heralded by a grand orchestral march.¹⁰ Consequently, the audience can ‘envisage’ the arrival of a significant character in the storyline, despite minimal stage activity.¹¹ Further into

8 Email from Rocco Quaglia to the author, 13 July 2021: “[...] purtroppo non esiste nulla, disegni ecc, riconducibili a ‘IZUMI’ un'unica [sic] idea, si pensava ad una rappresentazione all'auditorium Verdi di Milano e per quell'occasione Sylvano aveva pensato ad un ponte che passasse sopra l'orchestra, l'auditorium non ha la fossa, ed essendo Izumi principalmente una passione che si esprime in messaggi portati dai paggi che passavano da un lato all'altro del palcoscenico tramite questo ponte.”

9 Manuscript of *Izumi Shikibu*. *Diario di tre Stagioni*, Archivio NoMus, Fondo Bussotti, folio 2, *verso*. “As usual, the composer will provide scenery sketches, detailed maps, sketches for props and models for costumes; a light-drawing in the time-calculation and an historical editorial note.”

10 Page and bar numbering is not reported on the manuscript. The current numbering has been simply given following the order of the folios as displayed in the original folder.

11 Above the staves it reads “Apparizione del carro coperto / è trainato da una coppia di grossi bufalini / il 1° Chigo conduce; all'interno, celato, un gran personaggio; segue, con frusta, il 2°

the score, the depiction of rain (as described in Figure 2) “*cade e batte sugli scuri*” (“falls and beats against the shutters”) is characterised by a distinctive musical arrangement involving cellos and percussion. The cellos play pairs of quavers, while the tom drum layers an irregular pattern of quavers and semi-quavers using iron sticks. The singers, beginning with Ukon and followed by Sochi, blend seamlessly into the ‘rainy’ musical texture, articulating through lyrics the atmospheric elements portrayed on stage.

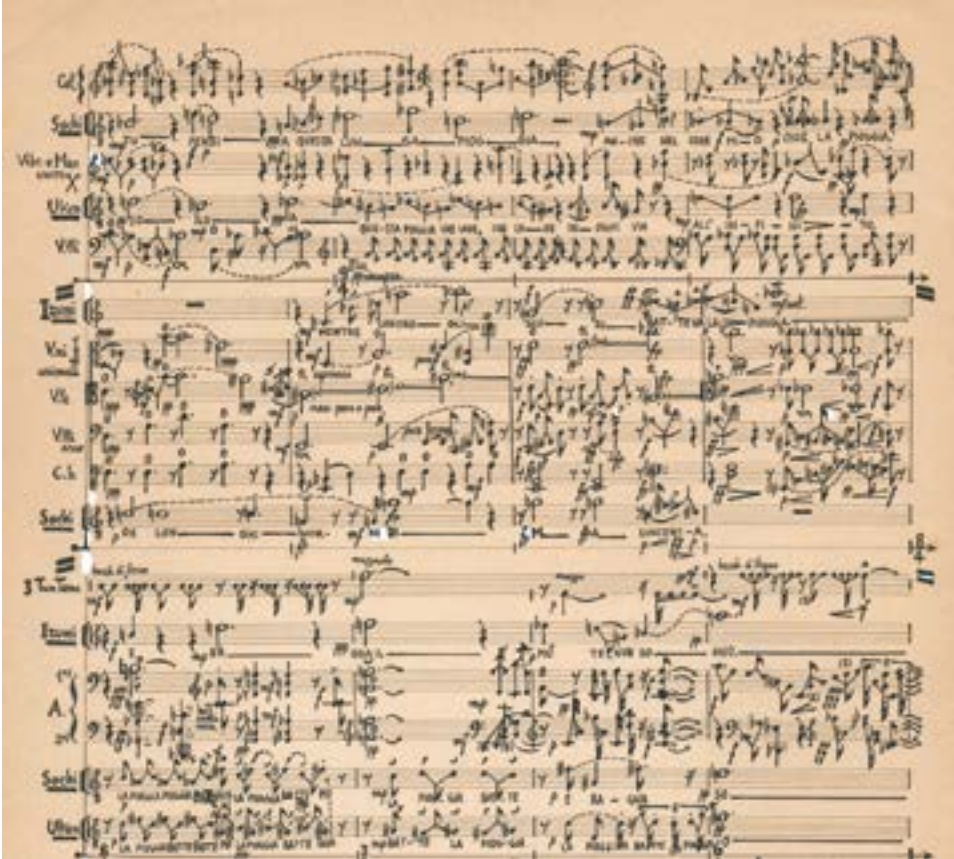


Figure 2: Bussotti: manuscript of *Estate dei presagi*, from *Izumi Shikibu. Diario di tre stagioni*, f. 9 recto (detail). Courtesy of Archivio NoMus, Fondo Bussotti.

In *Estate dei presagi*, the opening section of the opera, the lovers’ initial encounter – which happens after the prince’s entrance with the carriage – unfolds following a brief introductory passage sung by the choir and Ukon, featuring the verse “*nella*

Chigo” (“Appearance of the covered carriage / it is pulled by a pair of large buffaloes / the 1st Chigo leads; inside, concealed, a prominent figure; followed by the 2nd Chigo with a whip”).

stoffa dei sogni” (“in the fabric of dreams”). The dreamlike ambiance is established from the very outset of the composition. The harps commence the scene with a tranquil melody, while the strings sustain a dissonant pedal, creating an ethereal atmosphere. This echoes a similar sentiment expressed in the lyrics, likening human relationships to fragile dreams, particularly that of Izumi and the prince.

Shortly thereafter, Izumi echoes the melody of the harps from a distance, followed by Miyobu, the maid. The two female voices sing together and engage in a virtuosic cadenza.¹² Following this, the page implores Izumi to respond to the prince’s gesture of sending her a sprig of orange blossom, prompting her to compose a poem. Here, Izumi’s lyrics in the opera are:

Sentir cantare sopra quel ramo scuro.
 Fiore d’arancio aroma amato
 Sentir cantare il cuculo
 Parliamo, esce la luna
 tutto diventa terribilmente chiaro
 Se una sera tu venissi in segreto da me¹³

The first three lines in the book correspond to the poem that Izumi writes to the prince as a reply to his present, whereas the following three lines mix the action of the prince who goes to visit the girl on a moonlit night and Izumi invites him to do so. There is no difference in Bussotti’s musical setting between poems and prose that we can find in the book: both are at the same level and contribute to the description of feelings and actions.

In the book, the exchange of poetry continues until the prince resolves to visit Izumi during the night. On the contrary, in the opera, there is an ellipsis, and prior to Sochi’s appearance, the page sings the following lines: “*Passa la decima notte/del primo mese d’estate/e mandare un messaggio per bocca di un paggio è forse imbarazzante/ma nulla aveva scritto il mio principe, nulla.*”¹⁴ From this, we can infer that a significant amount of time has elapsed while awaiting the prince’s response to Izumi’s invitation. The themes of waiting and the time passing permeate the entire story and these are often described by the singers in words.

Sochi’s entrance is commanding (in *f*), highlighted by his declaration, “*lasciami entrare dove sei tu*” (“let me in, where you are”), delivered over a complete twelve-tone series. The four characters sing briefly together, yet, there is a narrative gap. Through their dialogue, we gather that Sochi stayed with Izumi overnight, followed by the onset of a heavy rain. Izumi expresses fear that the rain may never

12 This is a case where a character is added to the story for musical reasons (the duet), as in the book, the figure of the maid never speaks and is only mentioned in few episodes.

13 “To hear singing above that dark branch / orange blossom beloved scent / To hear the cuckoo singing / We talk, the moon comes out / everything becomes terribly clear / If one evening you were to come secretly to me.”

14 “The tenth night of the first month of summer is passing, and to send a message through a servant might be embarrassing, but my prince has written nothing yet.”

cease, metaphorically linking it to her tears, reflecting her apprehension of being abandoned by the prince. The prince, in turn, reveals his own distress, acknowledging his tears shed over their forbidden love affair: Sochi is married, and Izumi belongs to a lower social rank, posing a scandalous situation at court.

This section concludes with a poignant musical juxtaposition of love and pain (as depicted in Fig. 3). The female choir sings “*amore*” (love), while the male choir responds with “*dolore*” (pain). Similarly, Izumi and Sochi sing together but conceptually oppose each other: the man sings “*amore*”, while the woman sings “*dolore*” – thereby establishing, musically, the foreboding of their doomed love.

Figure 3: Bussotti: manuscript of *Estate dei presagi*, from *Izumi Shikibu. Diario di tre stagioni*, f. 11 recto (detail). Courtesy of Archivio NoMus, Fondo Bussotti.

The section *Autunno dell'amore* marks the central segment of the opera. The opening immediately evokes a sense of romantic love with the agogic description “*languore e dolcezza come una barcarola*” (“languor and sweetness like a barcarole”).¹⁵ The cellos introduce a lingering melody, followed by the two lovers singing together, echoing the phrase “*notti, notti d'autunno*” (“nights, autumn nights”), recalling fond memories shared with the same sentimental fervour. To underscore the union of the two lovers, the page Ukon assumes the role of the ‘*idolino d'amore*’ with a divine aura surrounding him, embodying the essence of love. The music here reaches a peak of expressionism. After the barcarole, violas introduce a tense and rhythmic motif – “*ffff risentita e ritmica/dim. (fff) ma sempre con violenza*” (“resentful and rhythmical/diminuendo but always with violence”) – leading into a mimicry session with violins and violas, portraying an onslaught upon Izumi with rapid quadruplets interspersed with pauses, akin to shivers and excited heartbeats. Sochi and the tenor choir join in singing “*Oh mio incessante tormento/pensiero dominante/tormento*” (“Oh my incessant torment / dominant thought”).¹⁶

This sequence represents the climax of the entire composition. The action unfolds evocatively, conveyed solely through the music. The orchestra and choir depict the auditory imagery of an intercourse. The tenors pant “*ansando*”, while the mixed choir alternates between “*respirando/gemendo/grida/soffoca/aspirano*” (“breathing/ moaning/ crying/ choking/ aspirating”).¹⁷ The orchestra mimics a human heartbeat with cellos and double-basses alternating between pairs of chromes and pauses, while violins provide rapid embellishments resembling dynamic impulses – akin to spasms and shivers described as “*mossi, scomposti e violenti*” (“waver ing, erratic, and violent”). Towards the conclusion of this scene, the choir vocalizes with “m” and “n”, simulating moans. Consequently, although not displayed onstage, the erotic scene is vividly portrayed through the music. As a theme that belongs to the composer’s poetics, this scene might recall the eroticism exposed in *Pièces de chair II* or *Lorenzaccio*, but does not reach the explicit peaks of *La Passion*.

The moment of union between the two lovers just mentioned is the acme of the entire work, both because of its position – in the middle of the three-part story – and because of the intensity of actions and feelings that are displayed here. Interestingly, this scene does not exist in the book. Descriptions of physical contact are completely avoided or just suggested whenever it is said that the lovers spend the night together.

The passionate meeting is followed by the image of the destructive flood of the Kamo river. Prince Sochi mentions that he went see it. In the book, the flood is compared to the overflowing love of the prince for Izumi and from this metaphor, the girl teases him saying “*non bastano le parole*” (“words are not enough”). In the

15 Manuscript of *Izumi Shikibu. Diario di tre Stagioni*, Archivio NoMus, Fondo Bussotti, f. 12 recto.

16 Ibid., f. 13 recto.

17 Ibid., f. 13 verso.



Figure 4 Bussotti: manuscript of *Autunno dell'amore*, from *Izumi Shikibu. Diario di tre stagioni*, f. 13 verso. Courtesy of Archivio NoMus, Fondo Bussotti.

literary source, there is a pivotal point where Sochi decides to go and visit her but his intention is hindered by his page Ukon and his nanny, Jiju no Menoto, who advise that rumours at the court are damaging the prince's image because of his improper behaviour (of having a mistress). After this episode, Sochi resolves to

move Izumi into his palace where she can live as lady-in-waiting. The book ends when Izumi accepts these conditions and move in with the prince.

Bussotti's opera develops differently. After the vision of the flood, Izumi sings the words "*non bastano le parole*", but afterwards no action is taken. Instead, a voice quintet with Sochi, Izumi, Miyobu, Michinaga and Ukon sings the verses of a poem:

Vita, come rugiada pronta a svanire
di sé dimentica, lunghi giorni sospesa
brilla sui petali del crisantemo longevo¹⁸

This short poem intertwines the representations of two opposite conditions: on the one hand, the brief existence of a drop of morning dew and, on the other, the long-lived chrysanthemum flower. This description metaphorically depicts the passion of the two lovers that will not last as long as their lives and it will dry out.

There is a percussive section overlapping the vocal quintet. In folio 14 *verso*, the percussion intensifies with the use of unconventional instruments – such as pans, pots, washing boards, whips and body percussion – utilised by the two Chigos.¹⁹ On folio 15 *verso*, adjacent to each soloist's name, it specifies their associated percussion instruments. Ukon no Zo, for instance, is paired with "corporal percussion, stick"; Michinaga with "whips, fabrics, fans"; Miyobu with "gong, bin-sasara, tubophone"; Izumi Shikibu with "numerous wind-chimes"; and Sochi no Miya with "a small tam-tam, donkey's jawbone, caxixi". The use of the percussion here is suggested as a literal representation of Sochi knocking at Izumi's door, a scene cut off from the opera but aligning with the original plot. Before the chrysanthemum poem, the book mentions a further episode, in which the prince, in the nighttime, reaches Izumi's front door and knocks repeatedly, but she does not hear it because she is asleep.

After the central scene, infused with erotic energy, *Inverno d'abbandono* presents a serene and austere atmosphere. The initial character to appear on stage is Michinaga, Sochi's elderly uncle, who sings in a deep tone the verses "*non rifletter troppo, cose da nulla*" ("do not dwell too much, these are trifles"). The character of Michinaga, created by Bussotti, does not exist in the book, but his role as the antagonist of the young lovers is represented by the old nanny of the prince and the jealous courtiers who gossip behind the prince's back. Shortly afterwards, Izumi sings "*e già sui rami sbocciano I fiori del susino/e pensando che il susino fosse in fiore spezzai quel ramoscello e volò via*" ("and already the plum blossoms were blooming

18 *Diari di dame di corte*, p. 83. English translation: "Life, like dew ready to vanish / forgetful of itself, suspended in long days / shines on the petals of the long-lived chrysanthemum."

19 "1° Chigo/ 14 anni /2° Chigo /12 anni /assistono Ukon / Ragazzi del mondo fiabesco in Asia/ Non cantano ma eseguendo sulla scena strumenti esotici fanno sentire le loro voci bianche" as described in the musical manuscript *verso* of the first *folio*, under the *Personaggi* list. The two boys are also supposed to distribute some of the instruments mentioned to the singers.

on the branches/and thinking the plum tree was in flower I snapped that twig and [the snow] flew away”). Here, Izumi mistakes the white snow on the plum tree for blossoms. This serves as a metaphor for her perception of her love for Sochi, taking the snow on a bare branch for blossoms on a tree: everything that initially appeared promising was an illusion. In this scene, Izumi sings softly alongside harps and choir, almost whispering (pp).

In *Inverno d'abbandono*, the characters seem to be more solitary, as there are no large parts with them singing together, and progressively, Izumi loses her lover. For the last time, Sochi sings in folio 21 and his last sentence is drenched in resignation “*In questa terra dove le tristezze come giunture della lunga canna di bambù si susseguono erette non vorrei vivere neanche un solo istante*” fading away.²⁰ Bussotti does not explain what the destiny of the prince is and from the manuscript, one can only assume his death as Izumi displays unceasing grief.

In this part of the opera, the composer quotes himself – folio 26 – with an excerpt of *Krankheit ist wohl der letzte Grund* (2006) played by flute and piccolo (exactly like in the original piece) together with Ukon and Izumi singing in unison. The self-quotation is not rare in Bussotti’s music, starting from 1959. The main examples are *La Passion selon Sade*, or *Rara Requiem*, in which the composer quotes other works of his such as *Ancora odono i colli* and *Mit einem gewissen sprechenden Ausdruck* or, again *Oggetto amato* (1975), using some parts of *Pièces de chair II*.²¹ Such explicit quotations contribute to creating unity and coherence in the composer’s artistic production as well as less defined borders between his works.

Back to the last section of *Izumi Shikibu. Diario di tre stagioni*, the prince Sochi appears to give his final farewell to his lover. His words, “*Lasciami andare, seguimi laggiù,*” “*terribile il silenzio della neve/lunghissimo nel tempo il mio pensiero/ma in una casa vicino alla mia non potremmo scordare tempo e neve?*” (“Let me go, follow me down there, terrible the silence of the snow/very long in time my thought/ but in a house near mine could we forget time and snow?”) suggest he is about to succumb to an eternal silence and whiteness. Not coincidentally, in ancient Japan, the colour white symbolised not only purity but also death. Indeed, white is the predominant colour of many elements mentioned in this final section: *fiori del susino* (“plum tree blossoms”), *neve* (“snow”), *candide ombre di luna* (“white moon’s shadows”), *paramenti bianchissimi* (“shiny-white vestments”).

Additional elements hint at the passing of the prince. Further into the manuscript, as a parenthetical element, Ukon sings “*in memoriam principe Tametaka*”, the former lover of Izumi and brother of Sochi, who died shortly before Izumi began her new affair, leaving her in despair. This narrative twist creates a loop in the story where Izumi, who was initially grieving for her lost first lover, Tametaka,

20 “In this land where sorrows, like joints of the long erect bamboo cane, stand one after another, I wouldn’t want to live even for a single moment.”

21 Ulman, *The Music of Sylvano Bussotti*, p. 194

now might lose her current partner, Sochi.²² This loop is reinforced by the repetition of certain objects, such as the cloth (*“dipinto nella stoffa”*) recalling the initial verse (*“nella stoffa dei sogni”*) and the tears (*“piangere sul mondo”*) echoing Izumi’s final verse (*“lagrime continue finché avrò lacrime da versare/sopra i fiori/ le piante/ la terra”*).

The recurring theme gives the entire piece a moral dimension, suggesting that one cannot escape an unhappy fate. Izumi is probably destined to find no peace or enduring love, as she continues to dwell in the sorrow of losing her first lover. Her negative disposition, prone to suffering, prevents her from fully embracing any form of love and affection. Whether Sochi dies or simply leaves her, it does not alter the essence of the story. This second loss overlaps with Tametaka’s, perpetuating an eternal cycle of loss. In the final bar of the manuscript, in the tenor part, the phrase *“lasciami entrare”* (“let me in”) appears once again. This same sentence is echoed in the first section of the opera when the two lovers first meet. The cycle seems to be complete, and the pursuit of new love can begin anew.

The length of the piece does not allow for a thorough exploration of the characters’ psychology, Izumi and the prince are stylized protagonists. Nevertheless, Bussotti tries to give them a sort of dynamism: Izumi grapples with the memory of her deceased love and the promise of a new one. She eventually surrenders to Sochi’s love but remains unhappy. On the other hand, the prince is portrayed as a seducer who overcomes Izumi’s resistance. He is a dynamic character, descending from his splendid carriage, physically possessing the woman and, ultimately, disappearing. In a way, he embodies the cliché of masculine dynamism and firm resolve, juxtaposed with the female counterpart’s insecurity and static condition. This cliché is inserted into a circular plot, as if to identify a pattern that is difficult to subvert. From this point of view, there is no real change in the characters, who are lacking their own will, but are at the mercy of the events of a story that cannot help but repeat itself.

The plot develops slowly in the book, with many repeating actions and waiting time. The role of Izumi is built up of waiting for a message or a visit by the prince, but also of trying to be resilient to his disrespectful behaviour. In Bussotti’s opera the waiting parts are cut or described in verses such as *“lunghe giorni di malinconia”* (“long days of melancholy”), *“giorni d’autunno si trascinano stanchi”* (“autumn days drag wearily”) or *“pene infinite, una notte, un’altra e un’altra ancora”* (“endless sorrows, one night, another, and yet another”); similar to other parts of the opera, where the composer summarises staging circumstances with words.

As has been said, the composer condensed the actions into three parts. In the first, *Estate dei presagi*, the choir opens with a slow melody *“piangere sul mondo”*

22 In this passage, Bussotti adds in the music a dedication to the singer and friend Gianpaolo Principe who had recently died. Prince Tametaka in the lyrics is translated into Gianpaolo Principe (manuscript, folio 23 *verso*).

(to cry above the world) and the prince makes his appearance from an elegant carriage; in *Autunno dell'amore*, Izumi and Sochi have their love scene as the focus of the story; the third, *Inverno d'abbandono*, displays once again a crying scene and Sochi dies (or disappears). Therefore, the three-section setting can be seen as symmetrical, presenting the absence like apparition and disappearance scenes in the first and third part, whereas the core scene of the lovers' union represents the central axis. By doing so, the narrative becomes more dynamic compared to the book but, at the same time, a bit more conventional in the storytelling.

3. JAPANESE LITERATURE AS A SOURCE OF SUBJECTS

In this final part of the article, the intention is to try to establish a connection between *Izumi Shikibu. Diario di tre stagioni* and its contemporaneity and highlighting some neglected aspects of the reception of Japanese culture in Italian music production of the early 2000s.

Izumi Shikibu nikki has also been taken as a musical subject by the Sicilian composer Salvatore Sciarrino (1947) for the opera *Da gelo a gelo. 100 scene con 65 poesie*. This piece is a co-production between the Opéra National de Paris, Grand Théâtre de Genève and Schwetzingen Festspiele, where it premiered in 2006 under the German title *Kälte*.²³ *Da gelo a gelo* was, thus, composed before Bussotti's *Diario di tre Stagioni*. The focus on the poems is already evident from the subtitle Sciarrino gives his work. We find three detailed paragraphs in the introduction of the published musical score regarding *argomento* ("subject"), *testo e musica* ("lyrics and music") and *la scena* ("scene").

It is stated in the section titled *Parole e musica* that the two protagonists, Izumi and the prince, alternate between prose and poetry in reading their correspondence. In fact, poems are often sung, while prose is spoken plainly with two flutes accompanying to create an artificial or mechanical timbre. A wall separates the two characters on stage: the woman on the left and the man on the right. Whenever Izumi receives a letter, a spotlight illuminates her, while the prince's side remains in darkness, and vice versa. The voice heard reading the letters always belongs to the writer, emanating from the unilluminated side of the wall. This setting underscores the separation between the two characters, their loneliness, differing sensibilities and social class division. Similarly, in Bussotti's opera the physical and sentimental separation is given by positioning Izumi and Sochi at the two ends of the bridge extending over the orchestra.

Sciarrino's treatment of the original text is particularly interesting. He retains the reading of the poems but reworks the texts (65 in total) to create shorter, haiku-like lyrics. The plot development generally adheres more closely to the Jap-

23 Sciarrino, *Catalogo delle opere*, p. 5.

anese source than Bussotti's. The final scene, for instance, mirroring the book, corresponds to Izumi's abduction to the prince's palace, as she physically moves to the right side of the stage, entering the "male" territory.

The instrumentation in Sciarrino's work includes exotic instruments, i.e. "*sonagli indiani e XIMBAU*" ("Indian bells and Ximbau"), which are put in three different places: in the orchestra pit, behind the scene and behind the audience seats.²⁴ In *Diario di tre stagioni*, as has already been pointed out, these unusual instruments are brought onto and played on the stage by the singers.

It is not my intention to delve further into the analysis of Sciarrino's work. However, one final observation is needed. It remains unclear whether Bussotti was personally acquainted with Sciarrino's version. Nonetheless, in the "*osservazioni generali e pratiche*" added in 2007 – there is a cryptic statement that might allude to an appropriation of subject by others:

[...] l'autore di certo ebbe più volte narrato storia e intento, che alcuni raccolsero e che fecero proprii. Cito Gianpaolo Principe, alias Camille le Prince, sul cui minuto lavoro preparatorio si basano momenti di sboccio dell'opera, ed esprimo rammarico per la sua scomparsa. Biasimerei altre appropriazioni d'argomento ma come recriminare su Giacomo Puccini?! [...] ²⁵

This statement alludes cryptically to what the author would describe as an appropriation of subject and purpose. It is challenging to determine whether Bussotti referred to Sciarrino (not explicitly mentioned) or to Gianpaolo Principe, whose involvement with this topic remains unclear. The subsequent sentence is even more elusive: Bussotti would be disappointed by subject appropriations at the hand of other composers but he cannot be 'jealous' if the contender is 'Giacomo Puccini'. Could the mention of Puccini's name be a placeholder for another composer of comparable stature? In the latter scenario, does 'Puccini' symbolise Sciarrino? Alternatively, is Giacomo Puccini (GP) a nickname for the singer Gianpaolo Principe? In either case, traces of resentment are hardly detectable in this closing remark. On the contrary, the composer's genuine wit and buoyant nature shine through, highlighting his magnanimity. Even though it is highly probable that the première of *Da gelo a gelo* had had an echo in Bussotti's milieu, the composer's authentic reaction to the piece of Sciarrino is to be left to further investigation.

Ancient Japanese culture has been inspiring many musicians and artists all over the world for centuries. In the Italian context, only focusing on the early 2000s, both Sylvano Bussotti and Salvatore Sciarrino realised an operatic version

24 Sciarrino, *Da gelo a gelo*, p. II.

25 Manuscript, f. 2 verso. "[...] The author had certainly told the story and intentions several times, which some people picked up and made their own. I mention Gianpaolo Principe, alias Camille le Prince, on whose minute preparatory work the opera's blossoming moments are based, and express regret for his passing. I would blame other appropriations of subject matter, but how can I complain about Giacomo Puccini?! [...]".

of one of the most famous literary specimens that belongs to the Japanese culture. Two further examples are *Note sul guanciale* (2002) and *La cortina di gala* (2015) composed by Luca Mosca (1957), which take as a subject *The Pillow Book* of Sei Shonagon and *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu, respectively.²⁶ A common feature of these works is not only the Japanese background, but also the fact that the literary sources belong to the same period (around the year 1000 A.D.) and were composed by women in the early examples of writing in the Japanese language during the phase of emancipation from Chinese cultural dominance. This red thread opens a window onto a distant world where women's voices were anything but secondary, narrating stories – whether real or invented, of love or adventure – renowned for their sophistication in a language yet to be invented and liberated from Chinese. The choice of these subjects by contemporary composers is an attempt to make these Japanese authors known, to stimulate curiosity and to break down prejudice against the past, often seen as a dark era, but still hiding teachings and beauty that should illuminate the present.

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26 Luca Mosca, Milanese composer based in Venice, studied composition with Franco Donatoni and Salvatore Sciarrino. Regarding *La cortina di gala*, he collaborated with composer Ernesto Rubin de Cervin and writer Pilar García, both of whom contributed to the libretto based on the original source, *Genji Monogatari*. Origani, *Ernesto Rubin de Cervin: Scenes from His Cultural Biography*, p. 32.

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Contexts and Networks

***I semi di Gramsci*. Communism, Capitalism, Cold War, Avant-garde and the Italian Position**

Vera Grund

I semi di Gramsci, first performed at the Auditorium della RAI Rome on 22 April 1972 under the conduction of Gianpiero Taverna, stands out – at least at first glance – from Bussotti's *œuvre*. The invocation of Antonio Gramsci, the communist mastermind and co-founder of the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI), the Italian Communist Party, seems a political statement of a composer who was accused by his critics for not writing music with political commitment.¹

In the following, the question of the connection between politics and contemporary music in Italy during the Cold War, which formed the background to Bussotti's work, will be explored. The connection in research between Italian politics and avant-garde positions has, so far, mainly been projected onto the composer Luigi Nono as a member of the PCI. However, the fact that the party generally had a strong influence on cultural policy and, thus, on the Italian avant-garde scene and its representatives, such as Bussotti, will be shown below, and how it formed a counterposition to the dominant anti-communist West German avant-garde, with which Bussotti's career was initially associated, before it became primarily national and, consequently, determined by Italian cultural-political conditions. I will examine how Bussotti's work can be located between international and national demands on contemporary aesthetics. In addition, the real political conflicts that formed the background for the creation of *I semi di Gramsci* will be presented to conclude by discussing whether the composition and, in principle, Bussotti's *œuvre* can be understood as political music.

1. THE PARTITO COMUNISTA ITALIANO, SOCIALIST REALISM AND MASS CULTURE

The PCI was one of the strongest political forces in Italy after the Second World War. It had already reached 50 % of the vote in the coalition of left parties in the election of 1953 and, after a short period of weakness in the 1960s, it rose to become the second strongest political party in Italy in the 1970s, alongside *De-*

1 "La critica, di primo acchito, annota che non si tratta di avanguardia 'impegnata' (la parola d'ordine di quella stagione culturale e ideologica)." Crespi Morbio, *Sylvano Bussotti alla Scala*, pp. 15f.

mocrazia Cristiana (DC).² Since the cultural policy of the PCI, unlike that of the *Democrazia Cristiana*, was primarily directed towards general accessibility to art and culture, its influence on cultural life in Italy can hardly be overestimated.

The PCI's cultural policy underwent a reorientation in the first post-war years. As a communist party, it had close ties to the Soviet Union, which is why the confrontation with socialist realism was a decisive factor. When Andrei Zhdanov published his anti-modern party resolution calling for socialist realism in 1948,³ the World Congress of Intellectuals took place in Wrocław, Poland, which was also attended by Italian representatives. The latter declared themselves in agreement with the doctrine of Soviet realism and the struggle for peace and against the "cosmopolitan decadence of American descent" as their common goal.⁴ According to Nicoletta Misler, this "overcame the reluctance of intellectual comrades to engage in anything other than political and organisational activities in order to enter the ideological-cultural terrain".⁵ The PCI's leader, Palmiro Togliatti, already had the link between intellectuals and the working class in mind when he founded the *Commissione culturale*. Large sections of the Italian intellectuals had joined the *Resistenza* before the end of the war, thus, they then also played an important role in the PCI.⁶ The latter's strategy of binding the *intelligenzija* to the party was so successful that almost all Italian intellectuals and artists of the post-war period were, at least for a time, close to the PCI.

Togliatti's integrative concept of culture had already referred to Gramsci's reading of Marxism and his understanding of culture as a means of unifying social classes.⁷ Internal party debates about the '*cultura popolare*' or the '*cultura di massa*' also shaped the cultural policy discussions of the PCI in the early 1960s. A decisive new position was taken by Umberto Eco who, also with reference to Gramsci's theory of culture, accused his party of, nevertheless, representing an elitist concept of art.⁸ Eco pointed to the division into intellectuals and the masses as a category of difference in two articles published in the PCI's journal *Rinascita*.⁹ In the reprint of the texts in *Apocalittici e integrati*, he also explicitly addressed his critique against the Frankfurt School, especially Max Horkheimer and Theodor

2 Mariuzzo, *Divergenze parallele*, pp. 115–117, 154–159; Woller, *Geschichte Italiens im 20. Jahrhundert*, pp. 288–323.

3 Mehner, "Sozialistischer Realismus".

4 Misler, *La via italiana al realismo*, p. 49.

5 Ibid., p. 49.

6 Ibid., p. 19.

7 See e.g. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, pp. 1375–1378.

8 On Eco and Gramsci, see Ruggieri, "Eco and Gramsci", pp. 421–435.

9 Eco, "Per un'indagine sulla situazione culturale", pp. 24–25; id., "Modelli descrittivi e interpretazione storica", p. 25. Reprint in C. Crapis / G. Crapis, *Umberto Eco e la politica culturale della Sinistra*, pp. 84–107, here p. 93.

W. Adorno, and the American New Left and its cultural critique against so-called 'mass culture'.¹⁰

The strength of the PCI in many local parliaments made it particularly possible to directly influence cultural life through personnel and programme decisions and implement the guidelines. The decisive figure in the field of music was Luigi Pestalozza, who headed the music sub-department of the party's *Sezione culturale* for more than twenty years and was involved in almost all matters concerning music. Pestalozza himself described how, especially after the electoral successes in 1975/76, he was able to carry out "political reform work" in terms of organisational structure and content, and how the leadership of the major concert societies was, thus, handed over to composers and musicians, "Sciarrino in Bologna, Testi in Florence, Bussotti in Venice, Lanza Tomasi in Rome, Rattalino in Turin".¹¹

Pestalozza formulated the demands placed on composers in a speech he gave at the PCI conference "Critici d'arte".¹² He contrasted Arnold Schönberg's dodecaphony with Igor Stravinsky's neoclassicism, which he judged to be an inadequate recourse to traditional patterns, with which the Russian composer had reversed the progress achieved by the Austrian colleague. In doing so, Stravinsky had, not least, failed to meet the social requirements of art.¹³ He was similarly critical of more recent positions, such as Pierre Boulez as serialist¹⁴ or Dieter Schnebel and Maurizio Kagel, whom he placed in a "more or less confused tradition of Hegelian philosophy".¹⁵ With regard to the musical theatre focus in Bussotti's work, Pestalozza's assessment of opera as a fundamental part of Italian musical culture is significant. He outlined how the Western European musical avant-garde had declared opera obsolete,¹⁶ and went on to explain that this did not apply to Italian

10 Consiglio, *Il Pci e la costruzione di una cultura di massa*, pp. 37f. On the topic of PCI politics and mass culture see also Santoro, *Musica e Politica nell'Italia unita*, pp. 239–262.

11 Mahnkopf, "Resistenza und die Frage des Ungehorsams.", pp. 91–105.

12 Pestalozza, Untitled speech at PCI congress, p. 23.

13 Ibid., p. 10. On Stravinsky's role in the Cold War scenario and his importance as a representative of American cultural diplomacy at the 1958 Venice Biennale, see Shreffler, "Ideologies of Serialism", pp. 228–238.

14 Pestalozza, Untitled speech at PCI congress, pp. 23f.

15 "In questo caso quella vecchia tesi della fine della musica, che infatti è stata oggi riproposta soprattutto in Germania dove ci sono tradizioni evidentemente filosofiche di tipo hegeliano più o meno confuse, da musicisti come Schnebel, lo stesso Maurizio Kagel, e via dicendo." Ibid., p. 26.

16 "Per cui io intenderei sottolineare la distinzione che c'è fra questa tendenza e una tendenza, che è caratteristica soprattutto in Italia e direi che non trova grandi echi all'estero e forse questo può essere anche in altri paesi, che tende invece a concepire l'oggettività dello sviluppo anche all'interno delle proprie leggi tecniche del linguaggio musicale e delle sue possibilità di espansione e di allargamento dei pochi strumenti di comunicazione, al di là stesso, al di fuori stesso della musica intesa puramente come suono quindi nel rumore, o addirittura se vogliamo nel gesto e nell'oggetto, però sempre come strumenti di una coscienza che è storica, che è ideologica, che è sociale, che non vuole tanto affermare la presenza di una soggettività creativa in senso soggettivistico, ma quella coscienza di cui parlava appunto lo stesso Marx, la soggettività di informatore che sceglie e che determina con una propria consapevolezza storica

composers, however, who remained committed to it because of their national tradition and the claim for *impegno*.¹⁷ With his remark that Italian composers who, nevertheless, wrote operas decided against success in the European avant-garde, he simultaneously formulated a national aesthetic programme.

Socialist realism initially also determined the debates on New Music in West Germany. A group of German intellectuals headed by Adorno positioned themselves politically both anti-fascist and Marxist, but with the intensifying East-West conflict, increasingly sought ways to argue anti-communist at the same time. In his essay “Die gegängelte Musik” (1948, published 1953)¹⁸ Adorno issued a programme of the avant-garde, prohibiting references to tradition as a counterpart to the New Music scene of the German Democratic Republic, which he described as unfree, as dictate against “every unregulated movement, every dissonance, every spontaneous expression of suffering”.¹⁹ The same applies to the discussions about the audience and the accusation of elitism against the protagonists of the contemporary music scene. The representatives of the Frankfurt School particularly emphasised the commodity character of cultural artefacts suitable for the masses and put forward their fetishisation by the culture industry as an argument against mass culture.²⁰ Composers such as Herbert Eimert or Karlheinz Stockhausen agreed and declared the elitist situation as anti-bourgeois, as the “misunderstood thorn in the flesh of capitalist-bourgeois music consumption”.²¹ Creating art that defies traditional systems of communication or existing forms of mediation, thus, became a requirement.

2. *I SEMI DI GRAMSCI* AND ITS POLITICAL REFERENCES

When *I semi di Gramsci* premiered in 1972, the Communist Party in Italy was experiencing the phase of its greatest successes. It became the second strongest

una determinata opera musicale e che così interviene sul linguaggio stesso, sugli sviluppi del linguaggio stesso”. Ibid., p. 26.

17 “In questo periodo l'avvicinarsi dell'avanguardia italiana, in particolare di una certa avanguardia italiana al teatro, viene considerata nella musica d'avanguardia europea un fatto quasi patetico di ritorno alle tradizioni nazionali, una inevitabile caduta di questi melodrammatici italiani nella loro fatale destinazione all'opera”. Ibid., p. 23.

18 Adorno, “Die gegängelte Musik”, pp. 51–66.

19 “Schließlich aber verrät die Kulturpolitik der Ostsphäre Entscheidendes über diese selbst. Während die Kultur, die man da verordnet, keiner ernst nimmt, zittert man doch vor jeder unreglementierten Regung, jeder Dissonanz, jedem spontanen Ausdruck von Leiden. Alles soll positiv, eitel Harmonie, Bestätigung des Daseins sein. [...] Kunst darf nicht frei sein, weil sie als freie ausspräche, daß die Menschen es nicht sind; Kunst darf nicht negativ sein, weil sie sonst von der Negativität der gesellschaftlichen Existenz selber zeugte. Man redet in der Sowjetzone viel vom Erbe, mit dem man den bösen Formalisten zu Leibe rückt”. Ibid., p. 54.

20 See Wellens, *Music on the Frontline*, pp. 93–95.

21 Ibid., p. 141.

force in the parliamentary elections that same year with 27 %, ²² and in 1976, it even received 34 % of the vote. ²³ The difference to West Germany, where an anti-communist threat was erected against the background of the East-West conflict and the strengthening of Eurocommunism, could hardly be greater. ²⁴ However, these were also politically turbulent years in Italy, marked by strikes, demonstrations, and series of attacks by left- and right-wing radical groups, which formed the background to the premiere of *I semi di Gramsci*, as well as other important performances in 1974 in the concert programme of La Scala in Milan, the Teatro La Fenice in Venice and the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena. ²⁵

The reference to Gramsci in the title indicates that *I semi di Gramsci* was a composition in the sense of the PCI party line. However, Bussotti did not use excerpts from Gramsci's main political work, the *Quaderni del carcere*, for his 'poema sinfonico', but excerpts from *Lettere dal carcere*. ²⁶ He chose three letters that Gramsci wrote to his wife during his political imprisonment under Fascism. Instead of passages referring to the imprisonment and prison fate, Bussotti used sentences in which Gramsci describes the garden he had created, the stages of its plants determined by the seasons and the problems of cultivating them. The composer attached great importance to the extra-musical programme in his composition. He expressly requested that the texts with the assignments to the respective movements be printed during the performances and, thus, made recognisable to the audience. ²⁷

The score, composed for a large orchestra with three percussionists and a solo string quartet, consists of 31 pages, which also mark the musical units. These are identified by notes held over when the pages are changed, but without fragmentation into individual movements. The 14-part first section for harps, wind and percussion instruments, which has to be repeated three times and which Bussotti calls a "nube sonora" ("sound cloud") in the performance instructions, ²⁸ consists of tone rows notated without rhythmic information. ²⁹

The appearance of the string quartet, which is directed to enter in groups of two from opposite sides of the stage during the first movement, but without precise instructions as to when in the music, is also left to the musicians. Bussotti,

22 For the election results from 1972, see <https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=07/05/1972&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S> (12.5.2023).

23 For the election results from 1976, see <https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=20/06/1976&es0=S&tpa=I&lev0=0&levsut0=0&ms=S&tpe=A> (12.5.2023).

24 See e.g. Hofmann/Wolfrum, "Zur Einführung. Der 'Radikalen-Erlass'", *passim*.

25 The version for string quartet was performed in Sienna.

26 Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere*; id., *Quaderni del carcere*.

27 Bussotti, *I semi di Gramsci*, p. IV.

28 Ibid., p. IV.

29 On Bussotti as a composer of informal music, see Freund, "Bild und Zeichen in der musikalischen Schrift", p. 149.

on the other hand, provided the conducting part with the instruction to “attacca” immediately upon entering.³⁰

While the programme to the music of the first two units describes the state of the rose bushes of the imprisoned Gramsci as fatal, page 3 corresponds to the more optimistic text part “non è morta almeno finora” (“has not died at least so far”),³¹ thus, also changing the musical character. The cluster sounds are replaced by longer note values in triple *pianissimo*. Section four, in which, according to the programme, the roses begin to sprout again, is characterised by single notes separated by pauses, whose sequence is defined by exact slowing metronome indications. The programmatic change to other types of plants from page 8 onwards is achieved through the change in instrumentation, in which the string instruments take on a greater importance for the first time. Connections between the text and music continue to be clearly recognisable, directly illustrating, for example, the instruction “static” (p. 10) to describe the dormant plant seeds or the composition of the verb “vedremo” (“we will see”) through slow tempo and fragmented musical lines with up to fivefold *pianissimo* (p. 22); affectively, Bussotti set to music the suggestion of the failure of Gramsci’s cultivation efforts on page 15 with the musical instruction “subito d’impeto” (“immediately impetuously”) and fourfold *fortissimo*.

The author related the final part from page 28 onwards to his musical concept of form with Gramsci’s remark about the changed relationship between space and time in imprisonment.³² He composed *solo* parts for the individual instruments to be performed simultaneously, but *ad libitum* to the conductor, with a minimum of three and a maximum of eleven voices at the same time. As he went on to explain that his aim was “materially to dissolve the classical function of the ‘chiusa’, or conclusion, stopping the various detached parts in accordance with the sudden – though conscious – fancy of the players and conductors”.³³

Bussotti, thus, applied serial techniques and open forms to his composition. With his choice of the genre of a symphonic poem, however, he adhered to a tradition that was frowned upon by many representatives of the international, especially the West German, avant-garde. This was noticed at the time of the premiere by Paolo Petazzi, who wrote about it in the programme for the performance at the Teatro alla Scala:

The fact that he calls his composition a ‘symphonic poem’ or program music does not entitle him to reminiscences of Liszt or Strauss, but it is also evidence of the unbiased,

30 Bussotti, *I semi di Gramsci*, p. IV.

31 Ibid., p. III.

32 Ibid., p. V.

33 Ibid., pp. V, VIII.

unconditional willingness with which the author approaches the music and pursues a very personal poetics, largely independent of the 'avant-garde'.³⁴

Adorno also described Bussotti's outsider position regarding the Central European avant-garde on the basis of *I semi di Gramsci* in the same positive sense, by calling him "the only musician" who was able to "formulate phrases like a man of letters".³⁵ Therefore, it is also significant that Bussotti strongly emphasised the togetherness of text and music. Thus, he pronounced the meaning of the work beyond the compositional technique, something that Eimert banished from the environment of avant-garde thinking as "emotional-political works",³⁶ which, on the other hand, corresponded with the claim to *musica impegnata*. Bussotti subsequently criticised the avant-garde movement for breaking with tradition: "With the salty terror of the biblical sculptor looking over our shoulder, we systematically drop the seeds of our predecessors, methodically fill in the open furrows behind us and cut off the lonely flowers with the weeds."³⁷

The author, thus, corresponded to the musical aesthetics formulated by Pestalozza.³⁸ As has been shown previously, the intellectual, following Gramsci's conception of opera as an Italian-national '*romanzo popolare musicato*', had understood the genre as a national mass cultural product and demanded that contemporary composers deal with it.³⁹ In this sense, Bussotti's interest in the music of Giacomo Puccini can also be interpreted, another point in which the author deviated from the common sense of avant-garde composers, as he himself described.⁴⁰ He also repeatedly emphasised his positive attitude towards popular culture, thus, positioning himself in the sense of the conception of culture according to the values of the PCI and against avant-garde aspirations. He expressed in an interview

34 "Che Sylvano Bussotti chiami questa sua composizione 'poema sinfonico' e affermi che si tratta di un lavoro 'a programma' non autorizza evidentemente l'ascoltatore ad aspettarsi reminiscenze lisztiane o straussiane, ma è anch'esso un fatto rivelatore della spregiudicata, assoluta disponibilità con cui l'autore si pone di fronte alla musica perseguendo una poetica personalissima in sostanziale indipendenza dalle 'avanguardie'." Petazzi, "Bussotti. *I semi di Gramsci*", p. 29.

35 "Quando terminai *I semi di Gramsci* e mostrai la composizione ad Adorno, lui mi disse che a differenza dell'avanguardia io ero stato il solo musicista in grado di comportarmi come un letterato che articola delle frasi." Gnoli, "Silvano Bussotti io, amico di Adorno ora farei musica per i Simpson".

36 Eimert, "Von der Entscheidungsfreiheit des Komponisten", p. 12.

37 "Nel salato terrore della statuaria biblica di guardarsi alle spalle, lasciamo sistematicamente cadere il seme dei predecessori, otturiamo con metodo solchi aperti alle nostre spalle, recidendone, insieme alle erbacce, anche i fiori solitari." Bussotti, "Theodor W. Adorno, l'extra e la linea della vita", p. 101.

38 Pestalozza, Untitled speech at PCI congress, p. 23. Similar to fn. 17.

39 Ibid., p. 23.

40 See e.g. Crespi Morbio, *Sylvano Bussotti alla Scala*, p. 11. This describes how Bussotti studied scores by Puccini with Max Deutsch, although he was frowned upon by French avant-garde composers, such as Pierre Boulez. For Bussotti's perspective on Puccini, see Marsico, "Sylvano Bussotti per Giacomo Puccini (1974)"; ead., "Una sorta di padre putativo".

with Antonio Gnoli for the newspaper *La Repubblica* that he held a different view from that of the Frankfurt School and Adorno.⁴¹

That Bussotti had sympathies for communist ideas in the 1960s is clear from an interview with Dacia Maraini, in which, asked about his family, he replied that it was characterised by love and understanding because it was a “poor, proletarian” family. In the same dialogue, he also spoke of giving up “composing to start shooting” for the revolution.⁴²

Bussotti had direct contact with the PCI, as described through his connections with Pestalozza and as the artistic director of the Puccini Festival in Torre del Lago, whose revival was supported by some members of the Viareggio’s PCI, such as Niclo Vitelli.⁴³ That the relationship with the party was a tense one, however, was already evident in the second performance of *I semi di Gramsci*, organised by Paolo Grassi at La Scala in 1974. The accusation of not writing *musica impegnata* was levelled against Bussotti, just as the performance of Nono’s *Al gran sole carico d’amore* had been criticised.⁴⁴ Cultural-political differences even cost Grassi his post a few years later.

Bussotti also described his collaboration with politics as the artistic director of La Fenice in the 1960s as problematic.⁴⁵ As he himself stated, it was the communist party that offered him the position, which he accepted with the assumption of artistic autonomy, but then had to realise how “power is not indifferent to musical creation”, how influence was exerted, for example, by the awarding of commissioned compositions or appointments for political reasons.⁴⁶

41 Gnoli, “Silvano Bussotti io, amico di Adorno ora farei musica per i Simpson”.

42 “Silvano Bussotti in dialogo con Dacia Maraini”, p. 13.

43 Vitelli, *Un bel dì vedremo*, pp. 63–67.

44 Crespi Morbio, *Silvano Bussotti alla Scala*, pp. 15f.

45 For a reconstruction of the inauspicious smear campaign carried out against him in 1977 by the Venetian press, see Marsico, “Scoprire la corrispondenza di Silvano Bussotti nel Centro Studi NoMus”, pp. 130–132.

46 “Vi ho già fatto cenno: nella seconda metà degli anni Settanta mi fu offerta mediante il partito comunista la carica di direttore artistico della Fenice di Venezia e l’ accettai, dunque dovevo sapere chi era che me l’ offriva e in che maniera. Ero in primo luogo sinceramente e scioccamente e infantilmente e pateticamente convinto di essere stato chiamato a questo compito perché ero risultato tanto bravo, e sapevo fare il teatro. Secondo, mentre si parlava moltissimo di pluralismo (era anzi uno dei termini di moda) e di legame stretto fra le cosiddette poltrone e un equilibrio delle forze politiche, vuoi locale, vuoi regionale, vuoi statale, che spingevano questi personaggi, io mi ostinavo a pensare che questa spartizione secondo una rigorosa logica di scacchiere partitico fosse destinata a rimanere nell’ ombra, che nessuno si sognasse di dire che era direttore artistico o segretario artistico perché ce l’ aveva mandato il partito tale o il partito tal altro, perché avrebbero tutti dovuto averne un fastidio profondo. Viceversa non mi accorgevo che era la logica imperante, ben presto fattasi aperta, anzi apertamente contrattata, e che con questa logica – in contesti forse, ammettiamolo, più gravi nell’ immediato per la vita quotidiana di quelli riguardanti i cosiddetti enti lirici – poi si sarebbero misurati governi, ministri e presidenti. Qualunque stato del nostro Stato, e chiedo scusa per il bisticcio, veniva regolato da questo e da nient’ altro. E che anche poteva con una casualità cageana delle più squisite, far giungere persone estremamente interessanti o competenti, stranamente, nel posto giusto; come potrebbe essere stato nel caso mio, ma poteva far diventare presidente di corte

The author and his work were undoubtedly influenced not only by the political mood and situation of the time but also by his cultural roots. This prevented him from pursuing radically avant-garde ideas. Neither, however, did he allow himself to be harnessed as a composer for radically political causes. When he dedicated his 'poema sinfonico' to the communist mastermind Gramsci, it was probably out of a sympathetic attitude. However, his selection of text excerpts, which deal superficially with plants but symbolically negotiate great themes such as the relationship of life and death, time and space or culture and nature, then set a monument to the dedicatee more as a philosopher than as a politician. Regarding the question of whether *I semi di Gramsci* was *musica impegnata*, it can, thus, be stated that a political contingency against the background of time is undoubtedly present. However, Bussotti did not correspond to the idea of music as a means of changing social circumstances, which was shaped by socialist realism, nor to the avant-garde strategy of criticising bourgeois views and ways of life through subversion.

Bussotti had certainly gone his own way as an artist, with an aesthetic that often ran counter to contemporary tendencies. He also assessed Darmstadt accordingly:

The Darmstadt courses fed a contradictory spirit in me. Why stop there? Why adapt and perpetuate one way of making music, when you have the field that the world is so much richer and more diverse? Certainly, it was gratifying to be able to see one's own work on stage. In any case, Darmstadt was much less than the story goes.⁴⁷

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that he did not always receive the attention of the inner circle of the avant-garde music scene. On the other hand, he has reached the highest stages of his career in his home country – and most remarkably – in various roles relating to the art world. The new direction of the PCI's cultural-political influence with its orientation towards an aesthetic that is generally or mass understandable and, therefore, adheres to traditions quite obviously offered a conflictual but also fertile environment for this.

d'appello, o sovrintendente della Scala di Milano, o ministro dai più portafofogli un perfetto ignorante. Va aggiunta un'aggravante, e tu che hai lavorato su Giacomo Puccini devi sapere come il potere non è indifferente nell'orientamento della creatività musicale – vale a dire certa persuasione occulta nei confronti di chi si accinge, avendo avuto la commissione del teatro X, a comporre l'opera Y. Non ci rendiamo conto quanto sia stato schiacciante il peso di questo mostro, e quanto e come sia stato determinante." Girardi, "Colloquio con Sylvano Bussotti", p. 139.

47 "I corsi di Darmstadt hanno alimentato in me uno spirito contraddittorio. Perché fermarsi lì? Perché adattarsi e perpetuare una sola maniera di fare musica, quando hai il sentore che il mondo è molto più ricco e vario? Certamente era gratificante poter vedere in scena i propri lavori. In ogni caso, Darmstadt fu molto meno di quanto si racconti". Bussotti, in: Lombardi (Ed.), *Sylvano Bussotti*, p. 172.

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Bussotti in ‘The Labyrinth’. Friendship and Artistic Relationships with Alain Daniélou and Jacques Cloarec*

Costantino Vecchi

Two figures of great importance in Sylvano Bussotti’s artistic and private life have been the musicologist and orientalist Alain Daniélou and his partner, the photographer Jacques Cloarec. Their friendship and intellectual relationship are here explored through the writings, poems, scores and photographs that the three exchanged and dedicated to each other over the years, many of which constitute unpublished material that emerged from the archive of the *Alain Daniélou Foundation* at Villa Labirinto in Zagarolo, near Rome.¹

The three main topics related to the intellectual dialogue between Daniélou and Bussotti (from which spring interesting connections regarding their ways of approaching art and life) investigated in this text are: Bussotti’s fascination for the ‘Semantic’, the electroacoustic instrument invented by Daniélou, which played an important role in the genesis of *La vergine ispirata*; their shared way of approaching the connections between tradition and innovation in arts; and their mutual understanding through drawing and painting. To conclude, the ‘photographic’ relationship between Bussotti and Cloarec is also discussed – the composer commissioned his friend to provide visual documentation of several of his stagings – in light of an interview conducted by the author with the Breton photographer on 16 July 2021.

1. BUSSOTTI AND DANIELLOU. SIMILAR-DISSIMILAR

Daniélou embodies a unique figure on the European music and intellectual scene of the second half of the twentieth century.² During his lifetime, he published important works on North Indian music traditions, Indian history, myths and religions, and Shivaism.³ Born in France in 1907 (he was, thus, 24 years older than

* This research was conducted in July 2021 also thanks to the crucial contribution of Jacques Cloarec and Sylvain Dumont, whom I want to thank for their valuable help. My special thanks also to Federica Marsico, who suggested its subject.

1 The villa was bought by Daniélou in the 1960s on a hill known as ‘Colle Labirinto’ (‘Labyrinth Hill’) since ancient times. The place became his main home over the years and was much loved and frequently visited by Bussotti.

2 For an in-depth look at his ideas and life, see: Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*; It. trans.: *La via del labirinto*.

3 His best-known writing is *Shiva and Dionysus*, on the two deities mentioned in the title.

Bussotti), he began to develop a passion for music, painting, poetry and dance from a very young age. After a studying period at Saint John's College in the USA, he moved to Paris and began to undertake several trips to North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia and India. He settled with his first life partner Raymond Burnier in Benares (Varanasi) in 1937, where he lived for fifteen years hardly ever returning to Europe. There he studied Hindi, Sanskrit, Hindu religion and philosophy, according to traditional teaching practices; he also studied Hindustani classical music, learnt to play the *rudra veena*,⁴ and converted to Hinduism. In 1960 he returned to Europe and in 1963 he founded with Nicolas Nabokov the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation in Berlin (IICMSD), established for the investigation and dissemination of non-European music traditions. During this period, Daniélou met Cloarec, who became his companion until his death in 1994. Through the IICMSD and its 'twin' institute, the Intercultural Institute of Comparative Music Studies (IISMC), founded in Venice in 1969 the scholar edited important recording series in collaboration with UNESCO and the International Music Council and organised concerts through which Western audiences could encounter for the first time many non-European musical cultures.⁵

There are two conflicting versions regarding how the first meeting between Bussotti, Daniélou and Cloarec took place probably in 1972. The French couple related that they met the composer in 1972 at a party in Paris organised by their mutual friend Henry-Louis de La Grange.⁶ On the other hand, Bussotti asserted that he first met Daniélou at the home of the French publisher François Michel, near Paris, where he had been invited to lunch with Heinz-Klaus Metzger.⁷

Moreover, according to Bussotti, on that first meeting he and Daniélou "treated each other very badly", because the French musicologist "had smelled the avant-garde" on him. "While he himself", he continues, "a painter, a writer, a well-known personality who came from one of the greatest families in France, was a bitter enemy of all this, and there was indeed an initial clash of fake smiles, which was soon followed by a very strong friendship".⁸ In fact, Daniélou had on several occasions expressed himself very severely, with his characteristic frankness, against the musical avant-garde and many contemporary composers. He wrote, for instance, in his autobiography:

4 The *rudra veena* is a large, plucked string instrument belonging to the zither family. It is used in Hindustani music, particularly in the *dhrupad* genre.

5 Giannattasio, "L'Istituto Interculturale di Studi Musicali Comparati"; Cimardi, "Dall'Asia all'Occidente"; ead., "One of the Richest and Most Refined Forms of Art in the World"; Giuriati, "Vent'anni dell'Istituto Interculturale di Studi Musicali Comparati".

6 Daniélou, *La via del labirinto*, p. 264; Esposito, *Un male incontenibile*, pp. 270f.

7 Esposito, *Un male incontenibile*, p. 279.

8 Ibid. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations are the author's.

The vital music of our time is jazz, rock, disco, the popular song. What people call modern music, most often abstract compositions completely devoid of acoustical or psychological meaning only interests a small group of conditioned music lovers. I, for one, find it deadly boring. [...] A gloomy, disquieting silence has fallen upon a modern society that is saturated with the blare of radio music and the images of television advertisements. [...] What the fate of contemporary music may be, I cannot say. I do not believe that it can be leading to anything. People seem to have forgotten that music is a language – the language of the soul, the language of the gods.⁹

We do not know what could have overcome Daniélou's initial suspicion of Bussotti: perhaps the fact of having recognised in the composer a similar figure in terms of the vastness of his interests and talents? Or could it have been his irony (a human virtue much appreciated by the French intellectual)? Or maybe their shared similar existential experiences, as they were both strong defenders of homosexuals' self-affirmation and pride. Cloarec stated about their relationship:

They were both archetypes of artists, which is why they got along so well, because they had the typical attitude of artists, who are a bit ahead of their time, who have an uncommon sensitivity, and therefore the same reactions. You could see this when they talked about music, painting, or other subjects.¹⁰



Figure 1: Bussotti and Daniélou in Villa Labirinto, late 1970s/early 1980s. Photos by Cloarec, courtesy of *Alain Daniélou Foundation*.

9 Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, pp. 315f.

10 Esposito, *Un male incontinentabile*, p. 271.

The two soon became great friends and Bussotti very often visited Daniélou's residence in Zagarolo, where he composed *Sadun*.¹¹ It was through meeting his friend in the Roman countryside that he fell in love with this area of Italy and decided to buy a property in nearby Genazzano. The help of Guerrino Sacco, the cook who worked at Villa Labirinto, was decisive in the purchase, and Bussotti addressed affectionate greetings to him in the letters and postcards he sent to Daniélou and Cloarec in later years and which are preserved in the archives of the *Alain Daniélou Foundation*. The friendship with the French orientalist, thus, represents a key element in the birth of the BOB in Genazzano.

Daniélou showed great and genuine respect for the composer, as reflected in the words he dedicated to his friend's music in his memoirs:

Sylvano is a very engaging man. Beneath a blatant display of paradox and unnecessary drama, which he genuinely seems to enjoy, he conceals a deeply romantic sensibility and great sincerity of character. In the snobbish and fickle world in which he lives, it is the only way he feels he can protect his integrity. What his music reveals is not at all what he wishes for us to see in it; he is like the wise man who pretends to be mad in order to protect himself. His *Racine*, which disconcerted his audience at La Scala in Milan, is a good example of this dichotomy.¹² Sylvano flits through his world of false drama with the airy elusiveness of a will-o'-the-wisp. One must pretend to take his follies seriously in order to gain access to his secret being. As soon as I met him, I immediately sensed and liked the deep and human qualities of this eccentric and whimsical genius.¹³

Bussotti also shows that he holds Daniélou in high esteem as an artist and thinker, as can be seen from the foreword that he wrote in 1989 for his friend's essay *Introduction of the Study of Musical Scale*.¹⁴

The musicological work of Alain Daniélou must be seen in a particular light since he happens to be by nature a musician. This is by no means common. How many musicologists, even the most famous, are not musicians! How many, indeed, are antimusical to the point of embodying the very negation of what constitutes a musician!

This is why I was wondering how Daniélou could be a musicologist, since he is a philosopher, a gifted linguist, a writer, a delightful painter, a composer, and an artist. This last quality is so obvious in him that it includes all the others. [...] Even if such a solution appears an inspiration or a gift of grace, it remains linked to a constant life of study. [...] Daniélou attacks the immobility of the West from the perspective of the Far East. From there, it is paradoxically the West that appears to be a static and contemplative world, one that has been asleep for millennia. The substance of his theories rests on an experience, deeper than one might imagine, of the essence of music as it is found in the East. [...]

11 Bussotti, *I miei teatri*, p. 166.

12 Daniélou and Cloarec attended the opera from one of the tables placed on the stage. See Esposito, *Un male incontenibile*, pp. 206f; Marsico, *La seduzione queer di Fedra*, pp. 147–149.

13 Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, p. 252.

14 Republished as: Daniélou, *Music and the Power of Sound*.

Composers of our time would do well to explore the intricate but transparent routes of the labyrinth of sounds, and study attentively the inner implications of this important book.¹⁵

2. SOURCES OF A FRIENDSHIP

Since they met, Bussotti, Daniélou and Cloarec have never left each other. Their contacts were very frequent and intense from the mid-1970s until the composer moved to Milan in 2003. Even after the end of the Genazzano experience, which made them *de facto* neighbours, long-distance communication between the three friends did not cease, as the correspondence stored in Zagarolo archive demonstrates. Their commonality of many interests resulted in an all-embracing friendship in which music was certainly at the core, but other arts, such as poetry, drawing and photography, also played an important role. Cloarec claims that the philosophy of Daniélou had a great influence on Bussotti, and that for the French scholar “Sylvano was one of those composers destined to remain in history as a great musician, [...] that many well-known names were musicians of ‘the moment’, whereas Sylvano was a musician ‘for all time’.”¹⁶

Bussotti’s deep and genuine fondness for Cloarec can easily be seen in the writings he dedicated to his friend.¹⁷ The composer witnessed the birth and maturation of his photographic talent in close quarters and was certainly one of the first to recognise it and encourage him to persevere on his path. He felt that Cloarec was able to capture the corporeality and the true essence of the stagings¹⁸ and also, most probably, of himself while posing for his lens.

Bussotti composed several pieces for his friends from Zagarolo over the years. An unpublished handwritten graphic score by Bussotti for flute and piano entitled *Variation unique de COUPLE*, dedicated to “Alain et Jacques”, stands above the piano at Villa Labirinto. He started composing it in Paris on 29 December 1972 and completed it in Rome on 3 January 1973 (Fig. 2).

Bussotti composed three of his *Fogli d’album* on photos by Cloarec (*Istantanea*, *Tatuaggio* and *Serie*) in 1983–1984.¹⁹ In honour of Daniélou’s eightieth birthday in 1987, he wrote *Labirinti*²⁰ for harp, played for the first time in October 1987 in Paris at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées by Brigitte Sylvestre.²¹ A series of

15 Bussotti, “Foreword”.

16 Esposito, *Un male incontentibile*, p. 271.

17 Bussotti, *Disordine alfabetico*, pp. 125 (“Impromptus Cloarec. Claviers poétiques”), 248–250 (“Pag. 76 del Diario”).

18 Ibid., pp. 248–250.

19 Bussotti, *Fogli d’album*. On the composition, see Cresti, *Sylvano Bussotti e l’opera geniale*, pp. 156f.

20 Bussotti, *Labirinti*.

21 Esposito, *Un male incontentibile*, p. 272.



Figure 2: Bussotti, *Variation unique de COUPLE*, 1972–1973. Courtesy of *Alain Daniélou Foundation*.

three *Nuovi labirinti* was composed in 1992, which were inspired and dedicated respectively to Daniélou's watercolours (II), Colle Labirinto (III), and his friend's thought (IV).²² The work premiered on 27 September 1992 at the BOB festival with the harpist Claudia Antonelli.²³

The piano piece *Impromptus Cloarec. Claviers poétiques* dates to 1999²⁴ and consists of both musical and textual-photographic components. A picture by the dedicatee Cloarec, portraying Bussotti sheltering under an umbrella and caught in the rain during a walk, constitutes the inspiration for this composition, as the accompanying text suggests. The handwritten drafts of this poetic prose together with the linked photograph are stored in the archives of the *Alain Daniélou Foundation* (Fig. 3).²⁵

²² Bussotti, *Nuovi labirinti*.

²³ Esposito, *Un male incontenibile*, p. 279

²⁴ Bussotti, *Impromptus Cloarec*.

²⁵ This text was later published in Bussotti, *Disordine alfabetico*, p. 125.



Figure 3: Bussotti, *Impromptus Cloarec*. Claviers poétiques, handwritten draft, 31.10.1999, with a photo by Cloarec. Courtesy of Alain Daniélou Foundation.

The deep affection that united Bussotti to Daniélou and Cloarec clearly emerges from the material preserved in the Zagarolo archive. This fondness is revealed by the care devoted to preserving all the materials related in some way to Bussotti that have been collected in Villa Labirinto over the years. In addition to books, printed scores and theatre programmes, many Italian and foreign press clippings about the composer's performances have been stored, as well as the texts and correspondence Bussotti, Daniélou and Cloarec exchanged over the years.²⁶

Cloarec pointed out that when Bussotti lived in Genazzano, they did not need to write to each other so frequently because they had the opportunity to meet in person quite often.²⁷ Letters and postcards written by Bussotti, however, are not lacking in the Zagarolo archive, testifying to the composer's desire to maintain contact with his two friends while his activities took him far from Genazzano. An acrostic poem, for instance, was composed by Bussotti on the name of Daniélou and sent to his friend for his 84th birthday in 1991 (Fig. 4).²⁸ The musician also dedicated the two erotic poems *fitto* and *altri cocchi minori*²⁹ to Daniélou on 29 October and 6 November 1983, declaring him as "his great inspiration" in a type-written copy found in the Zagarolo archive.³⁰



Figure 4: Bussotti, Acrostic for Daniélou's birthday, October 1991. Courtesy of Alain Daniélou Foundation.

The archive attests to their closeness even in the saddest and most difficult moments, such as the death of Bussotti's uncle Tono Zancanaro. "In these moments of great sadness, we think of you with all our affection", Daniélou and Cloarec wrote on 4 June 1985.³¹ With these words, instead, Bussotti and Quaglia expressed their fondness for Cloarec following the death of Daniélou in January 1994: "My

26 All gathered in one box, these materials have not yet been inventoried.

27 Author's interview with Jacques Cloarec, Zagarolo, 16.7.2021.

28 Bussotti, Acrostic poem on the name of Alain Daniélou.

29 The titles appear without capitalisation both in the typewritten copy and the publication (Bussotti, *Letterati ignoranti*, pp. 53f; id., *Prose, sonetti e poesie*, p. 61).

30 Bussotti, Typewritten copy of *fitto* and *altri cocchi minori* (author's translation).

31 Daniélou/Cloarec, Telegram to Sylvano Bussotti (author's translation).

dear Jacques, Alain leaves a great melancholy in our souls. In me who he brought such music and such beauty, in Rocco, whose dances he knew how to observe so well, in both of us which he understood, felt, and filled with affection. We hug you fraternally in the nearness of always.”³²

As we learn from Bussotti’s himself, Cloarec gave him some material after Daniélou’s death, in a “sort of ideal legacy”,³³ including some music written by the French musicologist in his youth. Based on these compositions and as a musical tribute to the memory of his friend, Bussotti wrote *Quatre danses d’Alain* for piano, flute and percussion objects in 1995.³⁴ The piece was performed for the first time on 5 April 1997 in Ville Du Blanc-Mesnil, France, by Mauro Castellano (piano), Gianni Rivolta (flute) and Toni Candeloro (dancer), with the choreography by Rocco.

Four years later, during a car journey, Bussotti is shaken out of the torpor of his summer travel by the name of his friend Daniélou being mentioned on the radio. Moved by this memory, he wrote the homage to his friend and his works entitled *Alain Daniélou The Phallus. Sacred Symbol of Male Creative Power*.³⁵

3. BUSSOTTI, DANIELLOU’S SEMANTIC AND *LA VERGINE ISPIRATA*

Daniélou’s theoretical reflections that most fascinated Bussotti and aroused his interest are those related to the ‘semanticity’ of the musical intervals developed in the essay *Sémantique musicale. Essai de psychophysiology auditive* (1967). As early as 1936, the musicologist had begun working on his theories of octave division and, together with Maurice Martenot, had created an electroacoustic instrument capable of intoning the intervals he identified as mathematically and physiologically ‘naturals’.³⁶ He resumed his speculation on intervals in the late 1960s, and entrusted the construction of a new model of his instrument (the S52 version) to Claude Cellier and André Kudelski (Fig. 5).

Bussotti discovered the prototypes of this instrument during his visits to Villa Labirinto in the late 1970s and early 1980s; impressed by its expressive potential, he baptised it ‘Semantic’ and decided to include it in the instrumental ensemble of his new composition *La vergine ispirata*.³⁷ This 1982 chamber piece for harpsichord and other keyboards, dedicated to Gustavo Malvezzi, was commissioned by the

32 Bussotti/Quaglia, Letter to Jacques Cloarec (author’s translation).

33 Girardi (Ed.), “Colloquio con Sylvano Bussotti”, p. 138.

34 Bussotti/Daniélou, *Quatre danses d’Alain*; Girardi (Ed.), “Colloquio con Sylvano Bussotti”, p. 138.

35 Bussotti, *Disordine alfabetico*, pp. 78–80.

36 On Daniélou’s theories, see Piana, “La scala universale dei suoni di Daniélou”.

37 The composer tells of his intention to write the piece *Applausi* for Daniélou’s instrument in: Bussotti, *I miei teatri*, p. 166. He refers perhaps to a draft of the later *Applauso*, for which, however, there is no information concerning the use of the Semantic.



Figure 5: Daniélou plays the Semantic S52, Rome 1976. Photo by Cloarec, courtesy of Alain Daniélou Foundation.

French State following a proposal by the *Association pour la collaboration des interprètes et des compositeurs* and was first performed by Elisabeth Chojnacka on 21 March 1983 in Paris at the Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics/Music (IRCAM).³⁸

In a letter dated 26 February 1982, Cloarec asked Bussotti to provide him with more precise information regarding his and IRCAM's plans to use the S52, so that he could pass this information on to the engineers who were working on the instrument and urge them to complete the new prototype.³⁹ Bussotti's interest in the Semantic and his intention to use it in concert was certainly an impulse for the implementation of this project and direct its development from an idea of a tool mainly designed to support theoretical speculation to an instrument capable of being played on a stage.

La vergine ispirata was later included within *NYMPHEO, Scartafaccio per operavideo*, which premiered on 8 September 1984 at Castello Colonna, in Genazzano, as part of the first BOB festival. On that occasion, the piece was performed by Castellano entirely on the Semantic.

A fax is preserved in the archives of the *Alain Daniélou Foundation* dated 19 February 1992 written by Bussotti in French and sent to the sound technician Michel Geiss, who had been commissioned by Daniélou to produce the new version of the instrument (the Semantic Daniélou-36), and in a copy to Cloarec. In this document, perhaps aimed at proposing further performances of *La vergine ispirata*

38 Bussotti, *La vergine ispirata*.

39 Cloarec, Letter to Sylvano Bussotti.

with the new instrument prototype, Bussotti provides new important information about the piece, its meanings, its underlying compositional thought and the interpretation of the score:

LA VERGINE ISPIRATA was composed 10 years ago (for a keyboard player; on commission) with the intention of writing a work for ‘keyboard’ – any kind of ‘keyboard’ – trills, chords, sounds bunched up in different ways, a very wide dynamic variability, paths from one stave to another; etc.

The Italian premiere, by Mauro Castellano, was performed in Genazzano on Alain Daniélou’s SEMANTICO instrument. Despite some technical imperfections of the instrument at the time, the result seemed to designate this work as particularly adapted to the ‘philosophy’ of the new instrument: a subtle revelation of the infinite differences between the intervals, which became quite audible when listening.

This dense writing in a sort of ‘*moto perpetuo*’, apparently devoid of silences, does not mean the rapid succession of one pitch after another but rather the presence of a swarm (of pitches) that constitutes each interval; the figures in brackets [in the score] indicate the number of ‘expressions’ within an interval; here the harmonic and/or melodic notion is stripped (reduced to its core) in order to bring its inner constitution to light, made up of MANY MORE SOUND EXPRESSIONS THAN THOSE THAT ARE USUALLY HEARD.

(M. Castellano and Roberto Szidon still propose countless performances of this work; we expect to be able to do this on a large scale, with the SEMANTICO available).⁴⁰

La vergine ispirata is a fascinating piece in whose genesis an episode from the composer’s personal past (a remembrance of his childhood narrated by Bussotti the day before the 1984 performance)⁴¹ is blended with an idealisation of the ‘archaic dimension’ of the Western music tradition, represented symbolically by the use of the “obsolete, anchored in the remote past”⁴² sounds of the harpsichord. The archaic sounds in this composition are ironic about the present by looking at it from antiquity, as Bussotti stated, through the expression of a fully contemporary keyboard technique.⁴³ This continuous dialogue between present and past certainly represents an interesting perspective to read Bussotti’s poetics and it finds very profound connections with Daniélou’s reflections, as highlighted below.

4. BUSSOTTI, DANIÉLOU AND THE *SYNTHESIS* OF PAST AND FUTURE, TRADITION AND AVANT-GARDE

The reflections on the concepts of tradition and innovation in music and the arts occupy a very important place in both Daniélou’s thoughts and Bussotti’s poetics. Through completely different artistic and life paths, the two curiously came to

40 Bussotti, Fax to Michel Geiss (author’s translation).

41 Esposito, *Un male incontenibile*, pp. 312–314.

42 Bussotti, *Disordine alfabetico*, p. 292.

43 Ibid.

share the same opinion and sensitivity on this issue without any verified direct influence from one on the other (at least until Daniélou's death). Both, in fact, oppose the belief that past and future, tradition and innovation, are antithetical concepts.

The deep intersection of tradition and avant-garde, as many have pointed out, is clearly at the core of Bussotti's musical and artistic conception. Giovanna Morelli writes in this regard:

Bussotti is a Futurist who loves that moonlight symbolically abolished by the Futurists, he is a Puccinian Dadaist who overcomes the famous avant-garde/tradition antinomy [...]. Thus, Bussotti uses the extreme gestures developed by the avant-garde [...] but alternates them or even grafts them onto artistic gestures that triumphantly belong to the great tradition.⁴⁴

According to Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, moreover, this intertwined relationship between tradition and modernity is also the main key to comprehending Bussotti's literary production, not only his musical one.⁴⁵ This idea was expressed by Bussotti himself on several occasions; he wrote, for example, for the programme of the first BOB Festival in 1984:

Musical art, like the visual and performing arts, has energies that can be measured against those of the centuries. [...] In fact, there is an obtuse laziness in the usual opposition of the concepts of AVANT-GARDE and TRADITION. In truth, these concepts should be fused and confused in the imperishable notion of man and beauty which [...] makes the work a whole.⁴⁶

On the other hand, Daniélou elaborates his concept through the study of music belonging to the oral tradition, in particular the music tradition of North India, in which the legacy representing the past is always kept alive and, at the same time, brought up to date. The changes and novelties that are introduced in traditional music are never placed in antithesis with the past; they do not reject or repudiate it, but are grafted onto it, embracing it in a continuous dialogue, thereby, avoiding its 'crystallisation'. In his main work on North Indian classical music, Daniélou wrote:

[Improvisation] allows the art of music to be an ever-living and ever-renewing experience without changing its basis, its rules, or its technique. [...] Each performance is a new creation within a strict framework of stringent and inflexible rules. Only this framework is written down and transmitted, and so the weight of the great achievements of the past never paralyses today's creator as it does in countries where music is

44 Morelli, "Primo piano e panoramica", p. 185.

45 Guarnieri Corazzol, "A proposito degli scritti di Sylvano Bussotti", p. 106.

46 Bussotti, "Programme of the first BOB Festival in Genazzano".

entirely written down and where the creative effort is oriented towards novelty rather than perfection.⁴⁷

According to Daniélou, this novelty was very often characterised in twentieth-century Western music as neurotic, exaggerated and an end in itself.⁴⁸

There came a time, however, when Bussotti's and Daniélou's ideas on these issues converged and blended within a kind of 'four-handed' text. Bussotti recounted that among the scattered sheets given to him by Cloarec after his friend's death, the draft of a paper by the musicologist impressed him enormously.⁴⁹ In this document, Bussotti related, Daniélou argued that:

One of the characteristics of Western culture in this century is how the artist, or at any rate the man of culture, lives crushed by the weight of the past, in a way that has never been so vast and clamorous. [...] In the first thirty years of the century there was a rush to the avant-garde, to have to constantly invent and represent something new, and to have to live obsessed with the fear that what was being represented was not new enough [...]. Daniélou, on the other hand, reminds Westerners how in the East [...] millennia-old traditions are renewable at every moment, [...] because the search does not lie in the new to throw off the weight of the past, but on the contrary lies outside time: inside sound.⁵⁰

Bussotti clearly felt a deep communion with the words of this unpublished text by Daniélou, as if he had written it himself. He then decided to rework it and publish it in *Disordine alfabetico* under the title *Il peso del passato e della storia, la sua influenza sulla cultura vivente* (*The Burden of the Past and History, Its Influence on Living Culture*). It prompts a profound reflection on certain contradictory mechanisms, that according to them, perhaps reached a point of exasperation in the European classical music culture, such as an idea of the tradition founded exclusively on the 'sacredness' of the written repertoire, and 'novelty' founded solely on the concept of 'rupture'. A long passage of this thought-provoking writing is reported here:

The accumulation of works from the past paralyses living music, forcing musicians to search for new formulas continuously and to the point of absurdity. RECORDING music, in addition to WRITING it, will make it more difficult not only to compose it but also to perform it; and the performer will increasingly tend to distort the work in order not to appear as a plagiarist. [...]

Civilizations that have maintained culture in the oral tradition essentially perfected art by refining its patterns within the framework of a very free expression of the performer: it was about improving grammar – a language – not literature. The artist's creation is always new, always young, always modern and is expressed in ever more subtle and pro-

47 Daniélou, *Il tamburo di Shiva*, p. 18.

48 Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, pp. 315f.

49 Girardi (Ed.), "Colloquio con Sylvano Bussotti", p. 138

50 Ibid.

found forms. An experience shared by the Master and the Disciple, the Creator, and the Interpreter, and by them with their listeners.

[...] For the plastic arts as well as in music, the burden of the past has become intolerable for us.

It would not be impossible that, freed from that burden, technique in the arts would again know the era of a Great Poetry [...] by striving to impose what has been able to remain creative and living until now, namely the 'sense of history'. Musical writing, literacy – as if they were necessarily synonymous with culture – risk creating a world where the Spirit will be dead, but we will preserve its mummies in mini-Dat. At the end of the 1960s, Alain Daniélou wrote these remarks, reported here in a more direct and even more alarmed linguistic echo, in order to induce the desire for a truly free thought.⁵¹

This operation of re-proposition by Bussotti is very fascinating because, in this way, it is as if his thoughts and Daniélou's had merged intimately, and these words resonate with both of their voices. From this text emerges that they place great importance on researching the elements that make music, first and foremost, an experience of 'sharing' between composers, performers and audience, a dimension that they feel has been largely lost in contemporary cultured music. If this lack had led Daniélou to break away from it and move towards traditions in which he felt this connection was still 'alive', Bussotti, as a fully Western musician, felt the need during his career to find solutions to re-establish this bond within his own cultural world. Before meeting Daniélou, the composer addressed this topic in his paper *Musica e nuova musica*, in which he suggested – as Igor Stravinsky had already proposed – to begin educating music students by starting with current idioms and then going backwards, so as to provide them initially with the tools they need to understand and be able to interact with the phenomena of their contemporariness.⁵²

According to Daniélou, with his works, Bussotti was among the few who had succeeded, at least in part, to reconstruct this lost 'ground' for communication through music in the cultured Western context. In his memoirs he wrote:

With all due respect to Stockhausen, modern music has irretrievably lost its cosmological dimension and can never again reecho the harmony of the spheres. But in its search for a new vocation, oddly enough, it has reverted to a kind of animism. It explores all the sounds around us – the birdsongs, the murmurings of trees, the buzzings of the crowds, the clamors of the cities, the mysterious spirits that enliven machines. In order to be understood, however, music of this kind needs visual support and representation. The music of today can be quite effective as theater, but does not hold up in the arid, severe medium of a concert hall. With his gift for show and spectacle, Sylvano has been able to find a perfect balance.⁵³

51 Bussotti, *Disordine alfabetico*, pp. 282f.

52 Originally written for a conference held on 18 August 1966 at Capo d'Orlando in Sicily, the text was later included in *Disordine alfabetico*, pp. 193–205.

53 Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, p. 252.

Daniélou, therefore, recognises that Bussotti's music is not only to be 'listened to' but also 'seen', as his friend Maurice Fleuret and Giuseppina La Face had already pointed out a few years before.⁵⁴

This strong dramatism and intrinsic spectacularism in Bussotti's music are not, however, seen by Daniélou as a simple and appreciable stylistic peculiarity. These key elements in Bussotti's poetics are identified by him as 'the way', or one of 'the ways', that contemporary music should have taken to save itself from that 'dehumanisation' and, above all, from that oblivion to which, according to him, it was destined. In a letter addressed to Henri Sauguet, Daniélou praised Bussotti's music and wrote:

We went to Florence to see Bussotti's new opera [*L'ispirazione*]. It has been very successful. He seems to me to be one of the few who has overcome serialism and dodecaphony and created exciting and dramatic music avoiding a return to the past. I will try to find a tape and get it to you.⁵⁵

According to Daniélou, Bussotti had the great merit of having restored humanity and warmth to contemporary music that, in his view, had become increasingly icy and mechanical.

5. BUSSOTTI, DANIELOU AND THE 'ARTI BELLE'

[Fig. 6] In addition to music, two of the many talents shared by Bussotti and Daniélou were certainly drawing and painting. Their taste and style were clearly different but shared an essential sensitivity in some ways, such as the importance they both give to the immediacy of the artistic gesture.

Like Bussotti, Daniélou got into the visual arts from an early age, but with a much less 'guided' approach than his friend, who could rely on the experience of his brother Renzo, his uncle Zancanaro and his childhood visits to the pictorial masterpieces of Florence and Padua. Daniélou remembered:

The discovery of painting was an important event in my life. I had found a way to commune with the beauty of the world in a language that expressed feelings better than any words can do. [...] For me, the act of painting soon became a sort of ecstatic semi-conscious rite, and it has always remained so. I would let colours and shapes express themselves through my paintbrush, which seemed guided by a force other than my own. [...] The act of painting caused me such intense emotion that the landscapes have remained forever engraved in my memory. I have painted hundreds, perhaps even thousands of watercolours, and though I remember nothing of the circumstances, the places, or the

54 Fleuret, "Sylvano Bussotti"; La Face, "Teatro, eros e segno nell'opera di Sylvano Bussotti".

55 Daniélou, Letter to Henri Sauguet (author's translation).



Fig. 6: Bussotti painting in Genazzano (1990s) and Daniélou painting in Zagarolo (1970s/early 1980s). Photos by Cloarec, courtesy of *Alain Daniélou Foundation*.

people involved, each scene remains as vivid in my mind as the memory of a first kiss or the raptures of love.⁵⁶

Daniélou's watercolours were certainly much appreciated by Bussotti, who dedicated to them the second of his *Nuovi labirinti*.⁵⁷

The publisher Crescenzi Allendorf dedicated a volume to Bussotti's drawings in 1992, entitled *Codice d'Arti Belle (Fine Art Code)*, which consists of a portfolio containing reproductions of 31 illustrations by the composer ranging from his youth to his, at the time, current production.⁵⁸ This publication was presented in L'Aquila during the inauguration of the exhibition *Le arti belle di Sylvano Bussotti*,

56 Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, p. 50f.

57 Bussotti, *Nuovi labirinti*.

58 Bussotti, *Codice d'Arti Belle*.



opere in musica e dipinte recentemente o nel tempo, held from 7 May to 14 June 1992 at the Centro Multimediale Quarto di San Giusta. The book opens with a very fine text by Daniélou dedicated to Bussotti's visual works. The material preserved in the Zagarolo archive allows us to reconstruct the process that led to the production of this writing, which further demonstrates the deep understanding that united them.

On 3 April 1992, Bussotti asked his friend (who was rather elderly at that time) to write a preface for the publication, as he considered him to be the one who could best penetrate the profound nature of his drawings: "I know that no one better than you can feel the truth, at once existential and artistic, of these drawings, which range from my early youth (perhaps adolescence) to the present day."⁵⁹ Daniélou answered positively and set to work, producing the following text:

Like the other big artists of the past, Sylvano Bussotti expresses himself in all kinds of art. The character of his music, the elegance of his writing, and the sensitivity of his

59 Bussotti, Letter to Alain Daniélou (author's translation).

paintings and pictures are expressions of continuity. Master of his technique, Sylvano uses the ideas of a whole époque, transmitting nothing else, but himself: modern and classic at the same time. The writing of Sylvano is detailed and precise. In his pictures we find all these qualities. Sylvano Bussotti runs skillfully across the aesthetic modes, lighting with his touch the mystery of beauty, or transforming it in elaborated structures, or creating out of nothing the characters of his splendid stagings.

To truly appreciate the pictures, we must understand them as a reflection of the musical inspiration of the author and his poetic vision.⁶⁰

Bussotti thanked his friend on Easter 1992 with the following words, from which emerges the deep affection and mutual respect they also shared through visual arts:

Dearest Alain, I am sending you an ancient 'Sienese' baptismal font to tell you how much I liked your very concentrated PREFACE: I feel a very significant 'baptism' from your words [...] and I will try every day to keep promises as important as your goodness and understanding are.⁶¹

Bussotti himself wrote a text for *Codice d'Arti Belle*, entitled *in Codice* that he considered a key piece of his production. In an interview on 31 October 1998, he said: "In my opinion, the text I wrote for *Codice d'Arti Belle* is a wonderful text, one of the most important, which also deserves to be published separately."⁶² It is, therefore, hoped that some publisher will take up this invitation from the composer and bring back this text, so important and so difficult to retrieve nowadays.⁶³

6. BUSSOTTI AND THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF CLOAREC

Probably the most important discovery that emerged from the archive of Villa Labirinto is the enormous collection of photos taken by Cloarec, relating mainly to operas staged by Bussotti in the 1980s. Cloarec accompanied Bussotti for several years during the 1980s to photograph him and his shows, also 'behind the scenes'; it was possible to identify and date the following stagings which he documented:

- Emilio de' Cavalieri, *Rappresentazione di Anima et di Corpo*, Teatro dei Rinnovati di Siena (1980)
- Giuseppe Verdi, *Simon Boccanegra*, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma (1980)
- Gioachino Rossini, *Otello*, Teatro Politeama di Palermo (1980)
- Georges Bizet, *Carmen*, Teatro Civico di Susa (1980)
- Giacomo Puccini, *Tosca*, Arena di Verona (1984)

60 Daniélou, "Prefazione".

61 Bussotti, Postcard to Alain Daniélou (author's translation).

62 Ricaldone, *Intervista a Sylvano Bussotti*.

63 The only copy of *Codice d'Arti Belle* I could find in Italy is in the library of the Bonotto Foundation in Colcersa, near Vicenza.

- Giacomo Puccini, *Turandot*, Torre del Lago Puccini (1982) and Terme di Caracalla (1985)
- Luigi Dallapiccola, *Ulisse*, Teatro Regio di Torino (1985)
- Amilcare Ponchielli, *La Gioconda*, Teatro Comunale di Firenze (1986)
- Sylvano Bussotti, *Le Racine. Pianobar pour Phèdre*, Villa Medici in Rome (1986)
- Giuseppe Verdi, *Aida*, Terme di Caracalla (1987)
- Sylvano Bussotti, *Fedra*, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma (1988)
- Sylvano Bussotti, *L'ispirazione*, Teatro Comunale di Firenze (1989)

Cloarec provided some information about his photos for Bussotti's works during the interview with the author in Zagarolo in July 2021:

JC: I have never been a good photographer, despite what Sylvano says. Of the thousands and thousands of photos I have taken, a few beautiful ones have of course come out! What I wanted to do was a documentation not only of the show in the strict sense, but I used to spend a week or ten days photographing the costume designers and anything that might be useful. I remember that Maurice Béjart, like Bussotti, looking back at my photos, would find some ideas that they had put aside or details that had escaped them and that they might have thought of repurposing in another performance. That's why I thought it was not useful to select photos, I didn't want to discard any. And I also thought that someone with an 'old-fashioned' experience of photography would make different choices to someone with a more modern approach.

CV: So, you kept them all?

JC: Yeah, pretty much. Maybe except for the completely wrong ones...

CV: But then, for example, after a show, did you show them all to Bussotti?

JC: No, not all of them. Just the ones I thought were the most significant, but I didn't throw the others away. I could see that he always had a different eye to mine, for the cover of a record, a CD, or a score, he immediately saw what could be put together. A kind of vision I didn't have; I only saw the picture, while he saw possible combinations.

CV: So, he has more of the graphic designer's eye?

JC: Yes, exactly!

Over the years there have been some exhibitions of photos taken by Cloarec for Bussotti's stagings, but the photographer did not remember the exact number. Based on the sources preserved at the *Alain Daniélou Foundation*, it is possible to state that at least three exhibitions were held, whose production process can be partly reconstructed through the documents kept there: in Paris at the Galerie Régine Lussan from 12 to 29 November 1986; in L'Aquila at the Centro Multimediale Quarto di Santa Giusta from 19 August to 19 September 1987; and in Paris at the Galerie Régine Lussan from 20 to 30 January 1999. It seems that no catalogues concerning these exhibitions have ever been printed.

The *Alain Daniélou Foundation* produced a photographic album in 2012 which collects a small section of photos from the archive, but the volume has never had a commercial release.⁶⁴ Therefore, most of the huge photographic collection

64 Cloarec, *Sylvano Bussotti – Regie 1980/90*.

preserved in Zagarolo, partly unknown even to Bussotti himself, is currently unpublished and is waiting to be explored and uncovered (around 1500 shots have been digitised but have not yet been sorted and catalogued; see two samples in Fig. 7 and 8). The rediscovery of this material would be of great importance for the study of the author as a stage director, and costume and set designer, and to further explore his relationship with Cloarec through photography, a discipline that, according to Bussotti, seems “to be the art of extraordinary techniques developed especially for friendship”.⁶⁵



Figure 7: A scene from *Le Racine. Pianobar pour Phèdre*, Festival of Villa Medici, Rome, June 1986. Photo by Cloarec, courtesy of *Alain Daniélou Foundation*.



Figure 8: Halina Moretti Pananti in *Fedra*, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, April 1988. Photo by Cloarec, courtesy of *Alain Daniélou Foundation*.

65 Bussotti, *Disordine alfabetico*, p. 250.

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Interpretation and Performance

“Œuvre d’adieu à la musique de concert”.

Julio organum Julii by Sylvano Bussotti

Matthias Geuting

This is a piece of music for organ which is not entirely unknown, but has largely gone unnoticed. It is music that has only been heard a few times since its premiere in Bremen, in northern Germany, on 4 May 1968 (the number of performances is probably in the single digits¹). Sylvano Bussotti’s *Julio organum Julii*, subtitled “liturgia d’organo”, is a piece that has, up to now, never been documented as a published recording and is mentioned only rarely in scholarly publications (including literature specifically about the organ).² This makes it all the more important to take a closer look at this score, which may not be counted among Bussotti’s major works, but contains many aspects that can be considered typical of his composition in this period: among them, various intertextual references, numerous allusions to the private sphere, a theatrical impact that can be felt everywhere, the innovative form of musical writing and, last but not least, the desired permeability of the boundaries between interpretation and composition that is characteristic of Bussotti’s work as a whole since the late 1950s.

The fact that the composer’s organ score³ has caught any attention at all in smaller circles of the organ scene is probably largely due to its equally strange and attractive notation. This is similar to other, more famous examples from Bussotti’s *œuvre*: the scores ‘have an effect’, regardless of whether or not they result in a performance. The iconic quality of its notation speaks for itself, and Bussotti himself may have calculated this effect. His sketchy annotations for the reader of the score (“all’amato lettore”) seem to play at times with the idea of a conceptual music that takes into account the possibility of its own non-performance, for example, when the composer seems to recommend a mere reading of the score in private: “l’autore sarebbe propenso a consigliare d’astenersene affetto – ritenendo sufficiente una lettura singola, in privato (come si legge una lettera)” (the author would be inclined to advise you to abstain from it – believing that a single reading, in private [like reading a letter] would be sufficient).⁴ What is audible or made audible is,

1 Performances in the 1970s by Karl-Erik Welin, Bernhard Foucrolle and Xavier Darasse have been documented. Gerd Zacher does not seem to have performed the piece again after the premiere for unknown reasons (see below).

2 Cf. most recently Celestini, “Sylvano Bussotti”, pp. 68–70. Bussotti’s piece is also mentioned in Zacher, “Musik und Graphik”, p. 214.

3 Bussotti, *Julio organum Julii* (1981).

4 This is the wording in the score; corresponding quotations are not specifically referenced below. – Almost at the same time, Dieter Schnebel conceived his “Musik zum Lesen” (music for

nevertheless, one of the central concerns of *Julio organum Julii*: the organist Gerd Zacher was joined by none other than the composer himself as a ‘vocalist’ at the premiere of the piece (see Fig. 1).⁵ As Jürgen Maehder pointed out, the composer’s presence on stage had already emerged as an important principle of his music-theatrical conception as well as a “constant of his work”.⁶ Bussotti’s voice also became part of the message in the organ piece.

<p>U = urauführung</p> <p>sonnabend, 6. mai, 11 uhr, kirche st. stephani, stephanikirchhof</p>	<p>orgelkonzert</p> <p>ernst albrecht siebeler »betenungen« U</p> <p>gerd zacher »szmaty« U</p> <p>syvano bussotti »julio organum julii« U (liturgia d'organo 1968)</p> <p>luis de pablo »modulos V« U pour orgue</p>	<p>ausführende:</p> <p>gerd zacher, orgel syvano bussotti, vokalist</p>
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Fig. 1: Flyer for the concert of the premiere of Bussotti’s *Julio organum Julii* during the festival *pro musica nova* (1968), detail.

1.

Julio organum Julii was commissioned by Radio Bremen, a small public broadcasting company, and premiered as part of the music festival *pro musica nova* in St. Stephani church in Bremen. The curator was the composer and pianist Hans Otte, who, as a programme director at the radio station, was responsible for an undogmatic and inclusive survey of contemporary music.⁷ The fact that the field of organ music, usually neglected in similar contexts, was also considered is worthy of note: this was certainly due to the fact that Otte himself had studied the organ and knew how to assess its unexploited potential as a serious concert instrument.⁸ On Otte’s initiative, pieces by György Ligeti (*Volumina*), Mauricio Kagel (*Improv-*

reading): *MO-NO* (1969) contains texts – and notes, “admittedly hardly the kind one is used to (playing), but rather those that only become accessible through contemplation and thus lead to the imagination of unreal sounds” (Schnebel, *MO-NO*, p. 354). All translations, if not otherwise indicated, are my own. Special thanks to Philip Saunders, Berlin.

5 Flyer *pro musica nova* (1968), found in the estate of Gerd Zacher (now Akademie der Künste, Berlin). A recording of the premiere is in the archives of Radio Bremen. The author would like to thank the music department (Nordwestradio), namely, Renate Wolter-SeEVERS and Birgitt Schuster, for producing and providing a copy.

6 Maehder, “Zitat, Collage, Palimpsest”, p. 110.

7 Cf. Ahmels, *Hans Otte*, pp. 34–38.

8 With *Alpha:Omega* for dancers, male voices, percussion and organ (various versions 1960–1965) as well as *Touche*s for organ solo (1966), Otte had also presented his own compositional contributions; cf. Geuting, “Otte, Hans”.

isation ajoutée) and Bengt Hambraeus (*Interferenzen*) had already been written in 1962 for an earlier edition of the Bremen Biennale, all of which represented a new approach to the organ and, in this respect, are considered milestones in the instrument's recent history.⁹ Therefore, the offer of the commission to Bussotti fitted perfectly into this series of important contributions to the organ promoted by Otte and, moreover, tied in with earlier connections: Bussotti's *Tableaux vivants* (for two pianos with four hands) had already been commissioned by the radio station in 1964.

Zacher, then 38, one of the rare progressive-thinking protagonists of the German organ scene, was engaged for the Bremen premiere of *Julio organum Julii*. Active since the early 1960s as cantor and organist in a small Hamburg parish, he worked on analysing, de-ideologising and reinterpreting the organ in his numerous concerts as well as in various programmatic articles.¹⁰ Numerous new pieces had emerged from Zacher's collaboration with Hans Otte, Juan Allende-Blin, Giuseppe G. Englert, Isang Yun, Mauricio Kagel and György Ligeti by the spring of 1968 alone, which he premiered in the Lutherkirche in Hamburg-Wellingsbüttel alongside his own works or in suggestive constellations with older music.¹¹ Zacher died in 2014, and materials were found in his estate that can easily be assigned to the time of the Bremen performance.¹² These are essentially documents of his correspondence with Bussotti, as well as parts of Zacher's performance score at the time: his arrangement of the original score with supplementary information on the registration of the piece on the Beckerath organ of St. Stephani, built in 1964.

The surviving correspondence suggests that Bussotti and Zacher had met on various occasions in the 1960s.¹³ Zacher was an active investigator and performer of the latest organ music, and had probably already approached the composer in the spring of 1967 (independently of Hans Otte) with a request to write a piece for the organ. This can be seen indirectly from a postcard message to Zacher dated 24 April 1967, in which Bussotti regrets that, due to time constraints, he would not be able to contribute to the organist's "fête" in October of that year (see Fig. 2).¹⁴ This probably refers to an organ recital that Zacher was planning on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his Hamburg concert series and for which he had requested contributions from various composers in advance. In this anniversary concert, which took place on 14 October 1967, new pieces by Ligeti (*Etude No. 1 "Harmonie"*) and Kagel (*Phantasy for Organ with Obbligati*) were performed, among

9 Cf. Philippi, *Neue Orgelmusik*, pp. 140–170.

10 Cf. e.g. Zacher, "Werkzeug Orgel"; id., "Zur Orgelmusik seit 1960".

11 A chronicle of premieres during Zacher's Hamburg years (and later) can be found at Funtenberger, *Zacher. Interpret und Komponist*, pp. 65–80.

12 My thanks go to Zacher's life and work partner of many years, the composer Juan Allende-Blin, for a comprehensive insight into the relevant documents as well as numerous valuable pieces of information.

13 This was also confirmed by Juan Allende-Blin during an interview in spring 2023.

14 Bussotti, Postcard to Gerd Zacher, Roma, 24.4.1967.



Fig. 2: Bussotti, Postcard to Gerd Zacher, Roma, 24.4.1967, private archive Juan Allende-Blin.

others. The fact that Zacher had apparently also approached Bussotti with the request for a new organ piece for this occasion showed how much he appreciated the composer. An article published a few years later reveals the motives and criteria that guided Zacher when he ordered new pieces from composers of his choice:

First of all, we are not dealing with unsolicited manuscripts – a high percentage of them are unusable – but with commissions that correspond to a precisely defined idea. A performer orders compositions because he may be interested in the following points which did not appear in his previous repertoire: special technical playing problems, unexploited possibilities of his instrument, enlargement of the tasteful and stylistic range in the programming, and wishes and suggestions of his listeners (but these within limits set by his own conscience).¹⁵

In the message to Zacher mentioned above, Bussotti confirmed his apparently long-standing interest in composing an organ piece, referred to appointments with Hans Otte that had already existed for some time and announced the completion of his piece for January 1968. But what was it about the “precious little treatise” that had apparently accompanied Zacher’s request of February 1967 and whose usefulness was specifically emphasised by Bussotti in his reply: “le petit précieux

15 Zacher, “Komponist, Interpret, Kommissionär”, p. 21. Zacher consistently referred to “the selection and compilation of a programme” as “interpretation” (p. 20).

‘traité’ (qui me sera de très grande utilité)”?¹⁶ The answer is obvious: when Zacher ordered compositions for his instrument, he used to include notes on playing techniques, pedal treatment, the nature or tonal potential of the performance instrument, perhaps also on uncharted paths of composing for the organ.¹⁷ In Zacher’s understanding, these were recommendations from a composer and also experienced performer to a fellow composer, which could also address what, in Zacher’s view, was to be avoided at all costs in an engagement with the organ (see Fig. 2).

Bussotti kept his word: on 25 January 1968 he sent his freshly finished score from Bologna to Hamburg. In the enclosed letter (“Mon cher Zacher”), he describes his work as “une pièce qu’en ayant l’aire d’être toute petite et innocente garde pour moi-même beaucoup de mystère et m’a coûté une immense fatigue”¹⁸ (see Fig. 3). Bussotti announces his intention to travel to Bremen for the premiere, notwithstanding an already well-filled calendar: “pour prononcer le texte parlé, qui est très ‘envahissant’ dans cette ‘œuvre d’adieu à la musique de concert’ (du moins dans mes intentions)”.¹⁹ The composer’s diction is typical, revealing that endearing tendency towards ironic (self-)mystification that has been repeatedly noted in Bussotti research wherever the inexplicable or irrational nature of his work is hinted at. It is striking that the composer explicitly wants his music to be understood as an “adieu to concert music” (with an underlined “adieu”), a formulation that was readily taken up in the various reviews of the concert²⁰ and, thus, apparently conveyed to the audience in the programme booklet or an oral introduction (such a programme note, if it existed at all, could not be found in Zacher’s estate). The special function of the spoken text, which decisively shapes the idea of the work, becomes clear: Bussotti sees himself in the composed text as the protagonist of a work enriched with autobiographical references. He is not only a virtual but also a physical actor in the scenario he has devised, which is based on a division of labour, so to speak, and which envisages a dialogue between the human voice and the ‘voices’ of the organ. The addition of language does not only concern the tonal aspect, but is also about an implicitly theatrical element. This observation fits in with a general attitude of the composer that has been expressed by Jürgen Maehder regarding Bussotti’s activities in the field of music theatre as follows:

16 Bussotti, Postcard to Gerd Zacher, Roma, 24.4.1967 (see Fig. 2).

17 Juan Allende-Blin in an e-mail to the author, 23.06.2023.

18 “A piece that seems very small and innocent, retains a lot of mystery for me and has cost me immense fatigue.”

19 Bussotti, Letter to Gerd Zacher, Bologna, 25.1.1968 (to pronounce the spoken text, which is very ‘invasive’ in this ‘farewell work to concert music’ (at least according to my intentions)). Zacher’s estate also contains a copy of his reply letter to Bussotti (dated 8 February 1968), in which he congratulates the composer and expresses his enthusiasm: “je suis ravi de votre pièce” (I am delighted with your piece).

20 Cf. the headline of the *Bremer Nachrichten* (6.5.1968): “Adieu an die Konzertmusik” – 16 Uraufführungen modernster Werke bei Radio Bremens Tagen ‘Pro Musica nova’; similarly Freytag, “Ein Adieu an die Konzertmusik”.



Fig. 3: Bussotti, Letter to Gerd Zacher, Bologna, 25.1.1968, private archive Juan Allende-Blin.

The composer's artifice of becoming himself part of his own theatrical imagination, not only through a virtual identification with the characters of his imagination, but also through his personal presence on stage as actor [...] can be considered as an important ingredient of his creative work.²¹

It was a testimony to the composer's astonishing versatility when Bussotti, as 'maestro di cappella', could be seen on the stage of his experimental *La Passion*

21 Maehder, "Sylvano Bussotti's Music Theatre", p. 4.

selon Sade, but shortly afterwards moved seemingly effortlessly to the gallery of a Protestant church to interact there with the organist Zacher.

A distant model for Bussotti's organ composition could have been Kagel's *Improvisation ajoutée* (already mentioned above) in the first version from 1962, which caused a sensation as an "imaginary end-time theatre".²² In this piece, which features not only the actual player but also two busy assistants with their own score at the stops, linguistic and noisy utterances of all participants are added, which mix with the sound of the organ to create a grotesque, at times threatening, scene on the gallery. Bussotti must have known the piece or at least the score. Kagel's unleashed vocal utterances enter into changing relationships with the organ sound, which they enrich or thwart depending on the situation. The "screaming, howling, laughing and whistling", as Schnebel wrote, "does not enter the music; rather it comes out of it, and squashes."²³ Bussotti's piece for Bremen aimed in a different direction, as can be understood from the recording of the premiere: the composer's speech – which could be soberly objective, emotional, seductive, imperious or exalted, but, in any case, aimed at comprehensibility; his inhaling or exhaling, made audible and vaguely alluding to sexual activities, as well as other vocal actions, probably conveyed the impression of a physical directness, an immediate approach to the audience. This addresses another constant in the composer's *œuvre* at the time: according to Maehder, who examined the various roles and functions of the human voice in Bussotti's work, the vibrant vocal sound has to do with the "general tendency of aesthetic seduction as well as with the physicality of the activity of music-making". The voice is the "most immediate acoustic expression of the human body" and therefore symbolises the "quasi-erotically interpreted process of sound production" for Bussotti.²⁴ The composer's statements to Zacher quoted above seem to support such an interpretation: in the environment of the organ sound, which is perceived by many as machine-like, and in which it is often impossible to trace what is heard back to human procedures, the perception of a physical intensity is to be conveyed by means of the "envahissant" (Bussotti) intervening voice. The latter is in contrast to the clichéd ideal of the neutral or objective organ sound, as it was still widely propagated in the 1960s.²⁵

22 Rebstock, *Komposition zwischen Musik und Theater*, pp. 175–178.

23 Schnebel, "Bericht von neuer Orgelmusik", p. 302. The author further interpreted Kagel's piece against the background of the Shoah: the music registers something "of that apocalyptic horror which people have come to know how to prepare. The horror it inspires is therefore by no means an unholy one."

24 Maehder, *BUSSOTTIOPERABALLET*, p. 190.

25 The spectrum of the possible is shown by Bussotti's own realisation of the speaker's part, as can be heard in the recording of the premiere (see footnote 5). At one point, the voice of the organist is also involved.

Zacher's organ matinee, as can be seen from the considerable press response, was perceived as a central event of the Bremen Music Festival.²⁶ The coherence of the programme was appreciated, as was especially the performer responsible, who had also presented a composition of his own. Regarding Bussotti's contribution, however, reactions were mixed, with the question of the interaction between the organ part and the 'voce recitante' taking centre stage. To mention only two contrary positions here: Wolfgang Burde in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* called "Bussotti's adieu to concert music [...] a most amusing enrichment of the genre". The insertion of the recitation into the sound of the organ would give the impression that "one is witnessing a melodrama that, hidden from one's eyes, is playing in the next room".²⁷ Hansjörg Pauli, on the other hand, spoke of a "failure" in *Die Zeit*: "Language and music run indifferently and undifferentiatedly side by side; the impression of the uncritical complacency remains until the smorzando 'Addio'".²⁸ The same author followed up in the *Weltwoche*, calling Bussotti's piece a "tremendous" collapse and a "true monument to unreflective tastelessness".²⁹ Once again, the vocal part was criticised for running "flatly and haphazardly alongside the richly incoherent organ part".³⁰ Even if the irritated, polemical tone of such reports is surprising – was this criticism, the accusation of an undifferentiated juxtaposition of instrumental sounds and spoken language, possibly a neuralgic point of the composition? In any case, the majority of concert reviews (only excerpted here) show that the complexity of the organ piece, its deeper layers, were not understood, probably not even suspected. The fact that Zacher himself refrained from further performances may have something to do with the close connection between the piece and the composer's person, which is inherent in Bussotti's conception of the work. There are only sporadic mentions of the piece even in his numerous texts.

2.

Paul Attinello has shown that queer perspectives can broaden our understanding of the work of the young generation of composers in the post-war decades. According to him, "the Darmstadt summer courses brought into contact a number of gay composers and writers whose interactions played an important part in the

26 The resonance was so many-voiced that it has become unthinkable today in the case of comparable concert events due to a lack of public interest. Cf. the list of reviews in the regional and national daily newspapers, as well as in the relevant musical periodicals in Weißbach, *Rundfunk und neue Musik*, p. 178.

27 Burde, "Festival der Avantgarde", pp. 245f.

28 Pauli, "Ohne Pendant", n.p.

29 Id., "Addio, addio – adieu".

30 Ibid.

rapidly evolving aesthetic and technical dogmas of the European avant-garde”.³¹ Attinello describes the ambivalence of the situation in which gay or bisexual composers sought orientation:

Although the fifties were an era of deep conventionality and homophobia, artists and composers were expected (as so often throughout history) to reach into unnamed, and often unnamable, realms of private desire and gratification, both in their lives and in their art. However, the relatively closeted social situation allowed gay men to construct their public personas without explaining any aspect of their sexuality. Such cultural forces were brought into particularly sharp focus in the Darmstadt Ferienkurse; the situational implications of a large number of young people meeting during the summer in a town far from anyone's home, plus the attitudes imposed on the post-war avant-garde from within and without, engendered eroticized personal relations that have appeared in anecdotes and gossip shared over subsequent decades among many of the participants and their friends.³²

In the protected, largely male space of the Summer Courses, as well as in comparable contexts, Bussotti's openly gay appearance stood out, in contrast to some colleagues who remained discreet. Large parts of Bussotti's work since 1958 were devoted to his self-presentation as an artist, but also, at the same time, to the staging of his sexual identity (which must be seen against the background of stigmatising anti-homosexual legislation, that in West Germany, unlike in the Netherlands or Switzerland, could lead to arrest at any time³³). The *Pièces de chair II*, a song cycle that was completed by 1960 and can be heard as a hymn of praise to Eros and the flesh due to its sensual sound language, stands for a transformation of the composer's own homoerotic desire into aesthetic practice. The literary text material used, for example, by Jean Genet or the Marquis de Sade, point in this direction; additional clues are provided by the cloistered headings of the individual movements dedicated to various friends or lovers.³⁴ Well-received in this phase, Bussotti increasingly moved into music-theatrical territory in the 1960s. The frivolous *Pasion selon Sade* is the first example of the composer's interest in staging a musical performance. The “Mystère de chambre avec Tableaux vivants”, so designated in the subtitle and dedicated to Heinz-Klaus Metzger, was seen by its composer as an enlightened reinterpretation of a liturgical musical genre – with barely disguised allusions to sado-masochistic practices. “The approximate heterosexuality of the original text is modified in the stage version by an emphatic pan-eroticism among

31 Osmond-Smith/Attinello, “Gay Darmstadt”, p. 105.

32 Ibid., p. 106.

33 Gammerl, *Queer. Eine deutsche Geschichte vom Kaiserreich bis heute*, pp. 127–155.

34 Cf. Ulman, “The Music of Sylvano Bussotti”, p. 189. On the *Pièces de chair II*, see also Osmond-Smith/Attinello, “Gay Darmstadt”, p. 112: “Many of those texts are somewhat pedophilic, and they inevitably emphasize bodies as erotic objects to be enjoyed or dominated, rather than any kind of emotional communion; some idealize desire itself, as an operating force for which bodies are merely the tools. All of this is heavily embedded in a classical tradition, and in fact many of the texts are translations from ancient Greek and Latin.”

the performers, not to mention the voyeuristic stance of the composer in regard to everyone involved.”³⁵

Fittingly, as has already been pointed out, Bussotti’s work on the *Passion* is linked to the idea of including the organ for the first time. The Swedish organist Karl-Erik Welin took part in the first staged performance of the piece in Palermo³⁶ in the form of a solo that emblematically invokes the sphere of the religious, right from the start: “Of course, the sacred component of organ-like instruments, played an essential role in Bussotti’s imaginary sound world; the use of the instrument at the beginning of his *La Passion selon Sade* obviously constitutes an allusion to the instrument’s religious connotations”.³⁷ The fact that Bussotti had the organ part performed parodically by a player with a hairy club foot added to the richness of the overall picture.³⁸ As a compositional counterpart to the *Passion*, the *Rara Requiem* followed at the end of the decade, and was also staged; its title was formed from the initials of the dancer and long-time partner of Bussotti, Romano Amidei. It is, therefore, no coincidence that in the context of “Passion” and “Requiem”, there is Bussotti’s “little liturgy for organ”, which, at first glance, seems to strip away everything that is liturgical in the narrower sense, but in its combination of organ sound and spoken language, evokes a situation that can be found every day in the Catholic liturgy of the mass and in every church service. One could even think here of the Parisian tradition of the *mass basse*, the “silent mass”, since the end of the 19th century, which is sonically characterised by the barely intelligible murmur of the celebrant, underpinned by organ sounds. Of course, the fact that Bussotti’s organ liturgy, according to his own information in the score, wants to be understood as a “liturgia secolare”, marks a difference all round. What does this mean for a composer who professed to love “the ceremonial” from religion alone in this period?³⁹ First of all, the fact that the composer does not pursue a decidedly spiritual concern in the organ piece, but, instead, indulges in worldly things and, once again, celebrates a personal muse, cannot be surprising, certainly not in the context of the two major projects *La Passion selon Sade* (for Heinz-Klaus

35 Ibid., p. 113.

36 Cf. Esposito, *Un male incontenibile*, p. 131, footnote 1. Welin had premiered not only the aforementioned pioneering works by Hambræus, Ligeti and Kagel since the early 1960s, but also pieces by Giuseppe G. Englert, Jan W. Morthenson and others; later, he worked on an independent form of instrumental theatre, probably influenced by Kagel and Bussotti.

37 Maehder, “Sylvano Bussotti’s Music Theatre”, p. 6.

38 Cf. the review of a performance of the *Passion selon Sade* in the late 1960s at the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, in: *Der Spiegel* 23/5 (1969), p. 107.

39 Bussotti, “Cinque frammenti autobiografici”, p. 13. – The words of Cardinal Baccio Valori in Alfred de Musset’s *Lorenzaccio* of 1834, which the composer took up in his 1972 opera of the same name, albeit reinterpreted in terms of art-religion, probably also provide a trace of Bussotti’s conception of religion: “La religion n’est pas un oiseau de proie; c’est une colombe compatissante qui plane doucement sur tous les rêves et sur tous les amours” (religion is not a bird of prey; it’s a compassionate dove that hovers gently over all dreams and all loves); cited after Maehder, *BUSSOTTIOPERABALLET*, p. 189.

Metzger) and *RARA Requiem* (for Romano Amidei), which are located entirely in this world. The title of the organ piece provides a clue: “Julio”, as a Latinised form of Giulio, undoubtedly refers to a certain Giuliano Darra, who is explicitly named in the score as the dedicatee (“dedicato a Giuliano Darra, per un anniversario”) and about whom the composer said he was closely connected during this phase of his life: “particolarmente vivace nel ballare e nello sdilinquirsi” (especially lively when dancing and lying down).⁴⁰ One does not have to do much research to find out that the young Giulio Darra (or Giulio “da Rara”) was involved as one of the performers in *Per ventiquattro voci adulte o bianche* (1968) as well as an actor in the *RARA Film* (1967–1969).

An earlier piece by Bussotti, *Siciliano* for twelve male voices (1962), had become part of a so-called informal service (*Informeller Gottesdienst*) in the Pauluskirche in Stuttgart on 11 November 1967, immediately before or parallel to the work on the organ piece. The idea of these informal services, initiated by Clytus Gottwald, the cantor of the Paulus congregation in collaboration with Dieter Schnebel, aimed at a new, dynamically open format with free interaction of theological language and contemporary music.⁴¹ Whether Bussotti travelled to Stuttgart for this occasion is questionable and rather unlikely; it would certainly have been an opportunity to meet with one of the musicians involved, Zacher, and to talk about the planned organ piece for Bremen. Zacher’s task in the Stuttgart service project was to place individual sections from Ligeti’s *Volumina* at various points in the liturgical sequence.⁴² While the concept of informal services has to be seen within the context of a massive critique of religion and the church and aimed to change the consciousness of a larger public, Bussotti’s approach in the organ piece is less clear. To what extent he was interested in the pronounced political thrust of the Stuttgart service (which was to be followed by a second one only two years later) must remain open. However, the topic of his “secular organ liturgy” was obviously not faith or theology; the focus was to be on a celebration of life, a retreat into the sphere of the private, certainly also on a kind of search for identity that does not generate political dynamics, but can, nevertheless, be understood as a basic prerequisite for political action.

The path from the private to the political in Bussotti’s *Julio organum Julii* leads via a poem by Aldo Braibanti, whose recitation brings a special additional ‘tone’ to the composition. Braibanti, nine years older, had been a close friend of Bussotti’s for a long time. The case of the literary figure, philosopher, artist and communist, who since 1964 had been trying to defend himself against the abstruse, politically and homophobically motivated accusation of “brainwashing”, mobilised significant sections of the Italian cultural and intellectual scene in an already heated

40 Bussotti in a programme for the *Festival Internazionale di Musica contemporanea* in Venice (1967); here quoted after Turba, “[...] *Sprofondate sponde*”, p. 372, footnote 69.

41 Cf. Beck, *Neue Musik im kirchlichen Raum*, pp. 174–197, especially the overview pp. 178–181.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 166.

political climate for solidarity actions.⁴³ It is hardly surprising that the composer repeatedly used texts or letters by the poet in his work, especially under the impression of the social struggles⁴⁴ that had been intensifying since the early 1960s. In the case of the organ piece, Bussotti chose one of Braibanti's earliest surviving poems from 1941, the poetic reminiscence of a young man standing in front of the grave of his father, who died at an early age. The poem is part of the collection *Il circo* (1941–1951), published in *Frammento frammenti* in 2003.⁴⁵

3.

The astonishing score of *Julio organum Julii* comes at the end of a whole series of pieces in which Bussotti had tried out numerous innovative forms of writing since the end of the 1950s.⁴⁶ Some of them – such as the *Sette fogli* of 1959 – could be described only in a broader sense as a reproduction of his own sound ideas; instead, the aim was to incite the performer(s) to all kinds of interaction processes. According to Erik Ulman,⁴⁷ in contrast to John Cage, Bussotti's indeterminate and, simultaneously, suggestive notations were aimed precisely not at a withdrawal of the composer from his responsibility but, on the contrary, at an attempt to communicate directly with the audience with and through the performer.⁴⁸ Entirely in

43 Nevertheless, it could not be prevented that Braibanti, who had been repeatedly arrested in his younger years as a member of the banned communist party and as an activist of the Resistenza, was sentenced to several years in prison by a Roman court in July 1968. Shortly before, i.e. just four weeks after his performance in Bremen, Bussotti had also testified unsuccessfully in Braibanti's favour in Rome as part of the criminal proceedings and with the consequence of his own outing. – Cf. Ferluga, *Il processo Braibanti*; Eco, *Il costume di casa*.

44 Renner, *Die Linke in Italien*, pp. 64–85.

45 Braibanti, *Frammento frammenti*. Other pieces with Braibanti references are: *Lettura di Braibanti* (1959; no. 4 from *Sette fogli* for voice solo) and *Torso. Letture di Braibanti* (1960–1963).

46 However, Julia Freund has recently shown that Bussotti's thoughts in later years also occasionally revolved around conceptual expansions of musical writing, using the example of *Autotono* (1977). It is no coincidence that his 7+7 sheets, designed together with the painter Tono Zancanaro, refer back to corresponding attempts in the late 1950s. Cf. Freund, "Von japanischen Steingärten und Pariser Geschichten", pp. 435–464.

47 Ulman, "The Music of Sylvano Bussotti", p. 192. However, this claim experienced a kind of disillusionment in the course of the 1960s, possibly also encouraged by the fact that Bussotti experienced inadequate or all too convenient interpretations of his graphic scores.

48 In his study on *La Passion selon Sade* Charles A. Rudig (p. 45ff.) discusses the aesthetic divergences between Bussotti and Cage, especially with regard to the question of notation and the role of the composer. In contrast to Cage, for example, "Bussotti aestheticizes notation as a technology of control by varying the amount of freedom given to performers at different points in a piece. The degree of notational prescription itself becomes a musical parameter [...]. [...] In *La Passion selon Sade*, Bussotti presents pages of instrumental and vocal music that are more or less notated in the way a conductor is used to seeing music laid out. These are juxtaposed with pages whose notational unconventionality lends them the character of a partial improvisation: materials where the performer is tasked with a high level of interpretive input not unlike the graphical scores that the work [of] Bussotti is often grouped with." Rudig, *The Music of Sylvano Bussotti and Its Interpretation*, p. 47.

this sense, Bussotti's score of the organ piece, which is at the end of what Maehder has called his "graphic phase",⁴⁹ contains a sentence that sums up the aspirations of the late 1950s and 60s and, in the formulation chosen, is one of the most challenging ever in the history of modern performance: "l'eccezionale interprete può abbondanarsi perduto al gioco del comporre; gareggiare con l'esile proposta della pagina: sarà più arguto, intelligente, ricco della pagina ..." (the exceptional performer may give himself completely over to the game of composing, compete with the meagre model of this sheet: let him be more perceptive, more intelligent, richer than this sheet ...). This aims at a competition between the interpreter and composer, both on an equal footing, and both with the addressee of all efforts, the audience, in mind: what makes the music richer for the listener, what would tend to diminish its effect? Bussotti's formulation is deliberately addressed to Zacher, who by no means recognised a strict separation of composing and interpreting in his work.⁵⁰ Bussotti must have known that his colleague had gained experience with indeterminate scores early on and had performed, for example, various realisations of John Cage's *Variations I* in 1966 and 1967. Bussotti's notation in the organ piece does not allow the composer to disappear; it contains fixed and motile elements in balanced mixtures. It offers a circumscribed space of possibility, which the performer can shape playfully ("gioco del comporre") in the act of co-composition, perhaps even – without being considered presumptuous towards the composed – responsibly expanding it. The performer's thus expanded field of competence may be understood as a reverence to the premiere organist, the performer-composer Zacher. The latter's meticulous elaboration of the original (see Fig. 4) takes this fact into account; it is necessarily a 'composition about a composition'. In any case, as Zacher must have suggested to his composer colleague in advance, Bussotti's score does well to delegate everything specific to the organ: all decisions, for example, about the distribution of the writing on manuals and pedals, and about the choice of stops, must be worked out and taken responsibility for by the player on the respective instrument.

Julio organum Julii was probably conceived in the last weeks of 1967. The notation on a single large-format sheet does not allow any conclusions to be drawn about the process of composition.⁵¹ It can be assumed that the score was written in one go, as is said to be the case with Bussotti's compositional work.⁵² The visual

49 Maehder, "Zitat, Collage, Palimpsest", p. 111.

50 "As a performer, I always look at the compositions to be played through the eyes of a composer. When I have a new composition in front of me, I ask myself: 'What is still missing for it to be complete music?' I find that the work of the performer is a supplementary work in the transfer of a manuscript into audible reality" (Gerd Zacher in: Lück, *Werkstattgespräche*, p. 133).

51 In the manuscript copy given by Bussotti to Zacher (found in his estate, see footnote 5), there is a handwritten dedication by the composer in the upper right margin: "premier exemplaire pour Gerd Zacher, Janvier 1968".

52 See Esposito, *Un male incontenibile*, p. 154: "D'altronde, lo sappiamo, Bussotti così concepisce la sua arte, la sua musica: manoscritti creati di getto, compilati direttamente in bella".



Fig. 4: Excerpt from Gerd Zacher's playing score for *Julio organum Julii*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

appeal of what the composer called the 'small sheet' (*paginetta*) results from a relatively evenly distributed juxtaposition of scattered fragments of notation and small handwritten text sections freely grouped around them. The interpreter is supposed to create a 'space of movement' from this. A rough reading direction, starting in the upper left corner ("Play? Yes?") and ending in the bottom right ("Game!") is suggested. The path in between, however, is intricate and rarely clearly defined by the composer; the performer's task is to find his own course through the score. Dotted lines indicate possible, but hardly ever alternative, connecting paths from one event to the next. The largely conventionally notated fragments (unless otherwise indicated: to be read in treble clef) distinguish between large and small note heads: the small ones stand for a certain casualness, tend to be of very short duration and are dynamically restrained (the rhythmic shaping otherwise remains open or is indicated by the proportional representation). There are also smaller or bigger black triangles everywhere which symbolise individual notes or smaller tone aggregates in different pitch regions that are to be defined by the performer. Longer or shorter solid lines indicate the approximate duration of such freely cho-

It is not unusual for a notation to present itself as a mixture of graphic representation and verbal additions; here, however, there is the further circumstance that large parts of the text material are given a double function: on the one hand, it is a key to understanding what is written, thus, providing, not exclusively, but to a considerable extent, clues to the interpretation and sonic realisation of the notation. On the other hand, the text itself is to be performed, i.e. to be included in the musical reproduction. So the surprising point of the organ piece is to make the legend added by the composer itself an integral part of the composition and, thus, the subject of an interpretive approach. The text material has different levels: it clarifies how certain elements of the notation are to be read; it communicates the composer's conceptual or aesthetic considerations; makes suggestions regarding the attitude with which the interpreter should play; contains biographical allusions; quotes an early poem by Aldo Braibanti as a highlight of the piece. It is a playing instruction, an explanation of signs, a reading aid, an offer of understanding, a coded message, a poetic quotation, a self-disclosure and probably much more. It is by no means unusual for Bussotti to note the instructions for handling his scores not separately, but in direct reference to what is notated. Bussotti offers various options for the performance of the speaker's part: it can be the voice of an additional speaker (as in the premiere); the organist himself can play and speak at the same time, amplified by a microphone or not. But it is also possible to play a pre-recorded voice over the loudspeakers – or a mixture of all these. Translations into other languages are not ruled out, but it is essential, says Bussotti, to ensure that what is said is acoustically intelligible. The spoken language is on an equal footing with the organ part, each word is to be heard and understood, placed between the splinters and fragments of the organ sounds. The composer is not aiming for a precisely defined relationship between the spheres of word and sound; it is enough that both are in a certain neighbourhood, and that occasional references to meaning appear or not.

If one looks for the sounding monograms of important people of reference to the composer in *Julio organum Julii*, one will have no trouble finding them; BACH motifs, for example, abound. The fusion of the four-tone formulae 'BACH' and 'SADE' to form the cryptic double monogram, quoted two times in *Julio organum Julii*, makes a telling connection with the organ SOLO of *La Passion selon Sade* (see Fig. 6a–d). The cluster in fifths, with which the piece is supposed to begin in the upper left-hand corner, refers to the dedicatee Giulio Darra with its frame notes *g* and *d*; the composer even explicitly draws attention to a similar situation at the end of the piece. The opening cluster itself is explicitly referred to as the only cluster in the whole piece ("unico cluster di tutto il pezzo"). One is reminded of the omnipresent cluster *d–a* in the *RARA Requiem*, whose frame notes stand for the initials of Romano Amidei. In the organ piece, Bussotti's remark is quite obviously a request to make no further use of the cluster technique in the following, even in the free parts, which should possibly be understood as a statement against a fash-

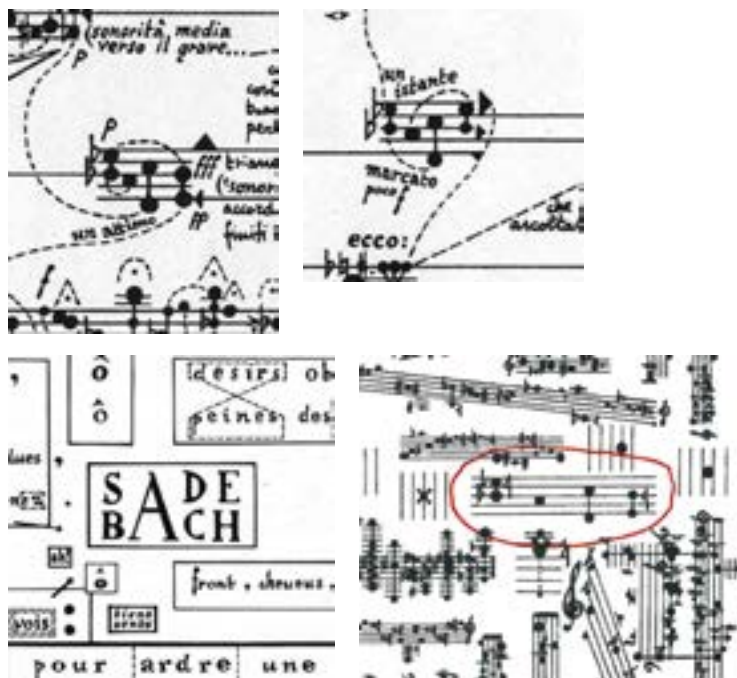


Fig. 6a–d: “BACH-SADE motif” in *Julio organum Julii* (a, b) and *La Passion selon Sade*, SOLO und Libretto (c, d).

ionable epigonal “voluminism” (as Zacher used to call it in allusion to tendencies of an unreflective succession to Ligeti⁵⁴). In Bussotti’s case, this single cluster at the beginning seems like a musical quotation; measured against the state of organ music at the time, the decided transition to pure pitch music can certainly be understood as a statement. Whatever the case may be: Bussotti has the organ part begin with a cluster, as in Ligeti’s *Volumina*, in order to immediately reject any suspicion that he is, thus, “proving himself to be a composer ‘at the height of the times’”.⁵⁵

“Play? Yes! – Game!” The English beginning and end of *Julio organum Julii* are marked by reminiscences of Erik Satie, namely, of the last piece of the *Sports et divertissements* from 1914 (*Le tennis*). To be played according to the score: “avec cérémonie”. Bussotti’s motive is clear: Satie’s calligraphically notated piano pieces, enriched with Charles Martin’s drawings and the composer’s grotesque play-

54 Linke, “Gespräch mit dem Organisten Gerd Zacher”, p. 95. In Ligeti’s *Volumina*, a pure cluster composition, huge sound masses and sound spaces unfold, for the representation of which not only an independent notation method but also a new playing technique was required (among other things, stationary and moving clusters are to be played with palms and forearms). It is not impossible that Bussotti and Zacher came to an understanding about such questions in advance: the aforementioned Stuttgart ‘informal service’ in October 1967, in the course of which Ligeti’s organ piece played a prominent role, could have provided a suitable opportunity. The use of clusters in Zacher’s own compositions for the organ generally played a subordinate role.

55 Ibid.

ing instructions, refuse to meet the demands of normal concert music. The Satie reminiscence (“Sport, estremo DIVERTISSEMENT” – thus, Bussotti’s slightly distorted rendering of Satie’s title) also wants to be not only homage but memory, a sentimental recollection of a smiling beginning, of an intimate game or pleasure (“citazione che non è solo omaggio ma ricordo, patetico richiamo a un sorridente esordio, intimo gioco”). Satie’s indifference to artistic heroism is likely to have appealed to Bussotti, even if, paradoxically, it can only be obtained through an act of artistic self-presentation. But the Satie quote can just as well be understood as a subtle hint to the premiere organist Zacher: in the years before, Zacher was probably the only one to have (re)performed or recorded Satie’s completely forgotten *Messe de Pauvres* from 1895 and the *Douze petits chorals*, which renounced all outward adornment.

4.

“Adieu, adieu ... addio”: this is how Bussotti let himself be heard at the premiere in Bremen.⁵⁶ But to whom does this “adieu”, bracketed in the notation, apply? Firstly, quite obviously, as the score shows, to the sounds of the organ, which, according to the composer, first interpenetrate (“i suoni compenetrati”), then detach themselves from each other, one after the other (“con le sonorità sciolte l’una dall’altra”). Is this a musical image for Bussotti’s detachment from his amorous relationship with the actor Giuliano Darra, the very Giulio who is given a tender memento in this piece? Another interpretation seems more persuasive. In the letter to Zacher quoted at the beginning, the composer calls his piece an “œuvre d’adieu à la musique de concert”, which makes the music a farewell gesture towards ‘concert music’. According to Bussotti scholars, the 1960s mark a gradual reorientation in the composer’s *œuvre* towards a *théâtre instrumentale*, which seems to have more perspectives than a *musique de concert*. The opera projects since the early 1970s speak for themselves: “The almost seamless transition from the experimental music theatre of the *Passion selon Sade* [...] to his adaptation of the tradition of the romantic grand opera in *Lorenzaccio* [...] can only be understood in the context of Bussotti’s activity as stage director, stage and costume designer which has always been an integral part of his musical creativity”.⁵⁷ While the theatricality of the performance act had long been the focus of Bussotti’s compositional thinking, at the end of the decade, Bussotti clearly no longer saw the future in concert music but in stage music – or, as Gianmario Borio put it, in the intensified examination of the “visible components of music”, which since 1968, included activities “as director and stage designer for numerous performances of the traditional opera

⁵⁶ See footnote 5.

⁵⁷ Maehder, “Sylvano Bussotti’s Music Theatre”, p. 4.

repertoire as well as his own works”.⁵⁸ As early as 1967, Bussotti had signed a *Manifesto di un nuovo teatro* together with other well-known representatives of the Italian cultural scene.⁵⁹ The commission for an organ piece, thus, seems to have come at a time when Bussotti’s compositional intentions pointed in a completely different direction. Is it not, therefore, logical that *Julio organum Julii* is dedicated to “Giuliano”, an actor?

Of course, there was nothing (or not much) to see at the Bremen premiere: at first glance, the concept of the theatricalisation of music, the examination of its ‘visible components’, seems unfruitful in the case of the organ, since the performers in the gallery, the organist and his assistants, normally remain hidden from the audience’s view. In this respect, it is not without a certain irony that the composer wants to celebrate the ritual farewell of the “musique de concert” in the church, high up in the organ loft – and, thus, without visual reference to the audience. With his back to the audience, the organist acts in secret. An instruction in Bussotti’s organ liturgy seems to consciously take this into account: “seduto all’organo il musicista esegue assorto come per sé medesimo” (sitting at the organ, the musician plays absorbed or turned inwards – as if he were playing for himself alone). The evocation of an image of the egocentric organist playing only for himself or for God, recognised by Bussotti in its latent theatrical potential, could, therefore, be important for a comprehensive understanding of *Julio organum Julii*. When, for example, the people carelessly and noisily leave the church for the final music of the mass, the performer himself becomes the sole listener; the music-making becomes a soliloquy. The situation was exactly the opposite, but in a related context, only a few years earlier at the beginning of the *Passion selon Sade*, where the title *SOLO* alone indicates the isolation of the organist: his submerged playing has long since begun when the listeners enter to gradually take their places – before the actual *Passion* performance begins. The complementary situation in the *Passion* casts a significant light on the organ piece and broadens the perspective. The connection between the *Passion* and the organ liturgy is underpinned by motivic adoptions or self-quotations and is, thus, renewed evidence of the composer’s general working method, which, in the pointed formulation of Maehder, calls into question the “aesthetic unity of the individual work through numerous cross-connections in such a way that Bussotti’s œuvre ultimately appears as a single continuum of music”.⁶⁰

The organ has always been the instrument for hearing; no listener can escape its centripetal, immersive power in the resonant space of the church. It, therefore, seems unsuitable for anything theatrical but not for what one might call “imag-

58 See Borio, “Bussotti, Sylvano”, col. 1412 and 1410.

59 Guardenti, “À propos de Sylvano Bussotti, acteur”, p. 142.

60 Maehder, “Zitat, Collage, Palimpsest”, p. 112.

inary theatre”.⁶¹ In the “seamless transition from the experimental music theatre of *La Passion selon Sade* (1966) to the adaptation of the romantic ‘Grand opéra’ in *Lorenzaccio* (1972)”,⁶² *Julio organum Julii* from 1968, thus, has its well-defined place, not to say a hinge function. The piece still embodies ‘pure concert music’ and, simultaneously, its farewell and transgression, because it experiences a decisive move into the gestural, imaginary theatrical through the expressive charge of the voice that enters, which also points the way forward here. The aim is to draw attention to the ‘other’ of pure music, i.e. its movement, its visibility, its affective charge that points back to the everyday aspects that began to be of interest to many composers of the 1960s and brought about a new understanding of the performative parts of musical performance. That the turn to a ‘spiritual’ or inner music, to nostalgically transfigured memory, on the one hand, to the physical and erotic, to the intimate and mundane, in short: to life, on the other hand, that all this takes place at the organ, in the space of the church, proves to be an eminently plausible punch line in *Julio organum Julii*. Apart from the fact that the piece marks a critical point in Bussotti’s creative biography, it should be clear that it is an important contribution to recent organ music history that has yet to be rediscovered. The numerous traces laid out by the composer in his music should be pursued further. Incidentally, it is not without subtlety that the date of the composition’s conclusion is New Year’s Day 1968: this is also meant as a symbolic transition from the old to something new. Once again, Bussotti shows himself to be a master of progress and self-transformation.

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61 Some (few) pieces from the 1960s have performative elements aiming at visibility more or less clearly composed into them, especially obvious in the *Phantasy for organ and obligati* (1967) by Mauricio Kagel: here, towards the end of the piece, the performer is supposed to leave the organ bench, while an assistant continues to play, and go into the nave of the church, silently, without shoes and with bowed head, through the central nave, finally taking a seat in the front pew row.

62 Maehder, “Zitat, Collage, Palimpsest”, p. 110.

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Between (Pre-)Fluxus and New Music. Reflections on the Performance Practice of Sylvano Bussotti's Scores of the Early 1960s

Anne-May Krüger

New Music performance practice has come a long way since the famous historical éclats around the 1913 performance of Arnold Schönberg's *Kammersymphonie No. 1* (the so-called 'Watschenkonzert') or the world premiere of John Cage's *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* in 1958. Young musicians specialising in the performance practice of New Music today are trained to follow the score scrupulously, obey page-long instructions, and submit to the authority of composers, conductors and dramaturges. This text will argue that an understanding of fidelity to the text (*Texttreue*) in terms of a submission to authorities falls short as the central maxim of interpretation. Instead, a 'work'-centred approach, drawing on a work-ontological model by Paolo de Assis, will be proposed as a key to unlock so-far unused potentials in music performance. Applied to Sylvano Bussotti's compositions, this approach highlights the emergence of pieces such as his *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* in specific historical contexts and the potential impulses performance practice could receive from those historical constellations.

If one were to look for a sharp-tongued critique of present-day performance practice, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's writings would be an adequate place to do so. Comparing our dealings with what he calls Western Classical Music (WCM) to liturgical practices, he draws on undeniable etymological roots of the notion of 'interpretation', not without purposefully exaggerating his case:

[T]he composer is as a god, the critic is a prophet (judging how the word of god is to be applied), the performer a priest, and listeners the humble and obedient congregation. [...] [A]s in Christianity (which inevitably is the main source for WCM thought about composers), we affirm our love of our musical gods by performing their wishes, obeying their instructions, revering their works, in return for which they love us and look after us, rewarding us [...] when, and only when we achieve these aims most faithfully, with intense experiences of deep quasi-spiritual feeling.¹

Not altogether new, Leech-Wilkinson depicts a hierarchical arrangement of protagonists that centres around a text (the 'holy scripture') and in which the concept of the 'music itself' suggests that there is an unchanging, quasi-eternal essence to a

1 Leech-Wilkinson, *Challenging Performance*, p. 81.

musical work that exists independently from temporal or material conditions. It is this essence that a performer must adhere to faithfully, do they not want to betray the work or the composer's will or both. In the musicologist Suzanne Cusick's words, the "immersion in and identification with 'the music itself' provide us with a sonic experience of the middle-class self [...], a sonic model of the middle-class's image of god".²

The views above portray the so-called WCM as a strictly hierarchical (if not patriarchal³) and classist activity – and it is, in fact, hard to refute those characterisations completely. They seem to stand for a number of similar accounts that make the increasing frustration with the *status quo* of the thinking about and making of WCM palpable. Authors such as Nicholas Cook or Paolo de Assis⁴ have expressed the need for a change in view of the lack in variety both regarding the repertoire and interpretational approaches of often rigid power as well as money-driven structures, of shrinking audiences and, not least, of the waste of potential regarding scores, performers and audiences.

It is this last observation that this text will be using as a springboard into the performance practice of some of Bussotti's compositions, based on the assumption that the problematic aspects of music-making sketched-out above also concern the realm of New or Contemporary Music, even if the protagonists in this field have often seen themselves as opposing the classical music establishment.

I will try to make my point, firstly, by laying out de Assis' work-ontological model as one possible answer to the shortcomings of performance practice as identified by, for example, Leech-Wilkinson or Cusick. Secondly, I will show that Bussotti's compositions around 1960 were rooted in two contrasting environments: the New Music world centring around the Darmstadt Summer Courses, on the one hand, and the atelier of the artist Mary Bauermeister (1934–2023) in Cologne, on the other, the latter making Bussotti the most frequently performed composer⁵ in her events. This twofold rooting is important since it suggests that Bussotti's compositions were already being performed in contrasting ways at the time of their creation, which, as will be argued here, aimed for very different ends. This, thirdly, will lead to developing an understanding of the potential those compositions offer and how different approaches necessarily prioritise different features.

2 Cusick, "Music, Gender, and Feminism", p. 495.

3 See *ibid.*, p. 493.

4 See Cook, *Beyond the Score*; *id.*, *Music as Creative Practice*; de Assis, *Logic of Experimentation*.

5 See von Zahn, "Refüsierte Gesänge", p. 110. In the Contre-Festival alone, six out of 13 compositions were Bussotti's.

The question of what defines a specific musical work and what the answer to this question implies for performers is at the heart of a number of research projects of pianist and researcher Paolo de Assis.⁶ Departing from a discontent about the unquestioned solidification of performance practical approaches in the case of Luigi Nono's ... *sofferte one serene* ... (1976) and the search for performative frameworks which encourage a higher degree of interpretational creativity as well as diversity of the experienced results, de Assis came to propose an approach that is linked to the idea of *assemblage* and understands the musical work as a metastable entity:

Musical **works** cease to be conceived as a set of instructions or as an ontologically well-defined structure. They become reservoirs of forces and intensities, dynamic systems characterised by metastability, transductive powers, and unpredictable future re-configurations. Not only have they been the object of changes in the past (as music history overwhelmingly demonstrates), they will continue to observe mutations and transformations in the future. With a logic of assemblage, music practitioners and theoreticians gain new tools to grasp these changes and take an active part in them. Crucially, the new image of *work* as assemblage has the capacity to include the old image of *work* within it [...]. A logic of assemblage has several consequences: the overcoming of *unity* in favour of *multiplicity*, of *essence* in favour of *event*, of *being* in favour of *becoming*, of elusive certainty in favour of informed inconsistency.⁷

Since de Assis' multiplicities do not seek to replace more conservative work concepts altogether but are able to incorporate them as special cases, a continuum of possibilities for action arises for interpreters and researchers between acting in the context of what de Assis calls a "strong work concept"⁸ and the work as an "exploded continuum made of innumerable objects and things in steady interaction with one another".⁹ De Assis assigns these "innumerable objects and things", with reference to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, to different strata: the categories substrata, parastrata, epistrata and metastrata refer to things of the past, present and future.¹⁰ (Fig. 1)

Based on this stratification, de Assis designed a three-step procedure (Fig. 1), which he describes with the terms *archaeology* (research of sources, documents, 'things'), *genealogy* (historiography, analysis, interpretation) and *problematization* (research in and through practice, experimentation, "exposi[ng] [a selection of the

6 See de Assis, "Con Luigi Nono. Unfolding the Waves"; id., "Rasch X".

7 De Assis, *Logic of Experimentation*, p. 100. The use of "**works**" refers to the now destabilised characteristics of the term.

8 Ibid., pp. 45, 190–193.

9 De Assis, "Towards Aesthetic-Epistemic Assemblages".

10 See also de Assis, *Logic of Experimentation*, p. 65; Krüger, *Musik über Stimmen*, pp. 34–36.

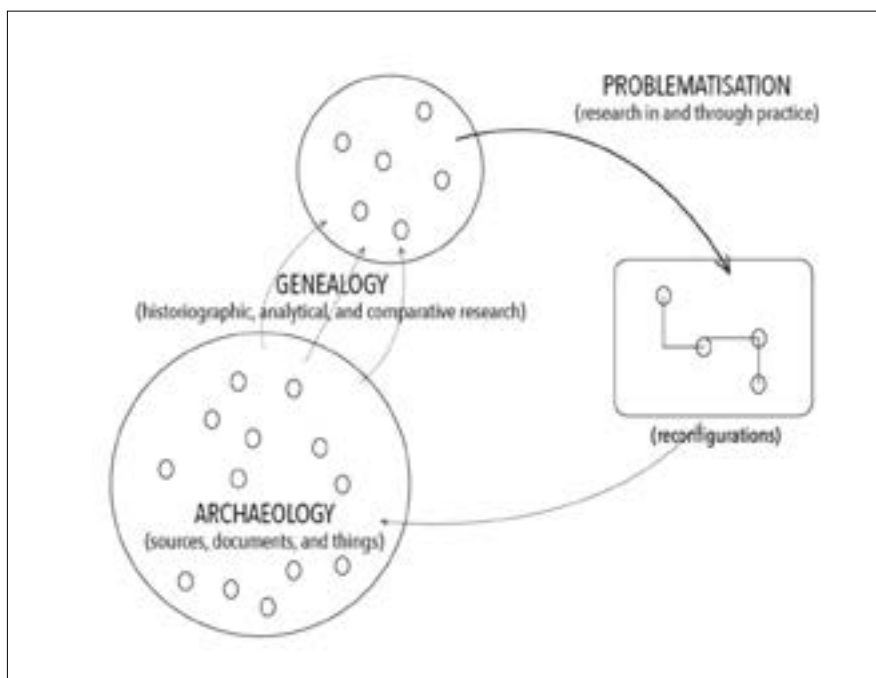


Fig. 1: *Archeology, Genealogy, Problematization*. Paulo de Assis, *Logic of Experimentation*, p. 110. Reprinted by permission of Paulo de Assis.

identified material] in unprecedented reconfigurations and arrangements”).¹¹ It is the aspect of *problematization* which explicitly addresses musical practice:

The notion of problematisation can be understood in two ways: (1) as a highly elaborated form of *interpretation* of historical data, and (2) as a critical act of *experimentation* upon such data. In the first sense, it looks backwards, toward the past. Applied to music, it is perfectly recognisable in disciplines such as music history, music analysis, music theory, historical organology, music philology, and biographical studies – in fact, in the majority of all musicological sub-disciplines. In the second sense, however, it opens up new modes of problematising things, modes that, rather than aiming to retrieve what things *are* or *were*, search for new ways of productively exposing them within a contemporary situation. These are modes of acting upon the available materials, which instead of critically looking into the past, creatively project things into their possible futures.¹²

Applying this model to Bussotti’s compositions, which emerged in the double-rootedness mentioned previously, could mean to highlight historical contexts which have a bearing on performance practical approaches and, brought into novel reconfigurations of materials defining the respective ‘work’, might shed a new

11 De Assis, *Logic of Experimentation*, p. 110.

12 *ibid.*, pp. 131f.

light on those pieces. Introducing this reconfiguration into a concrete performative situation (*problematisation*) can be understood as the first step in an iterative process: The sounding results emerging from this last step are never endpoints of a creative process, but merely momentary stabilisations of a creative potential inherent in all actors involved (meaning here primarily the score, the performer and the audience) – hence the adopted concept of the musical work as metastable.

HISTORICAL CONTEXTS: BUSSOTTI AT THE DARMSTADT SUMMER COURSES AND THE ATELIER BAUERMEISTER

Bussotti was introduced to the Summer Courses in 1958 by Heinz-Klaus Metzger,¹³ probably one of the most brilliant and ambitious students of Theodor W. Adorno, and met there and then artists such as John Cage, David Tudor and Karlheinz Stockhausen for the first time. He attended the Summer Courses for each of the following three years, leaving an aesthetic trace with his graphic scores – rather bluntly physical and eroticising works, which stood in clear contrast to the abstractions of composers such as Pierre Boulez. He also made an impression through his flamboyantly displayed homosexuality, a heretofore exceptional conduct.¹⁴

Bussotti has certainly not been one of the frequently performed composers in Darmstadt,¹⁵ but regarding the relevant time span, he had at least three official appearances at the Ferienkurse: in 1959 within Karlheinz Stockhausen's lecture series *Musik und Graphik*, Tudor played the world premiere of no. 2, 3 and 5 of the *Piano Pieces for David Tudor* (1959) from *Pièces de chair II*. Next to John Cage's scores, Bussotti's compositions served as examples for the emancipation of the graphical aspect from the acoustical, the image becoming autonomous. Or as Barthes put it: "Un manuscrit de Sylvano Bussotti est *déjà* une œuvre totale".¹⁶ Already a year later, in 1960, Bussotti's *Breve pour Ondes Martenot* (1958) was performed in Darmstadt. And finally, *Mit einem gewissen sprechenden Ausdruck* für Kammerensemble (1961–63) saw its world premiere in 1964 under the direction of Bruno Maderna.¹⁷ Wolfgang Steinecke, founder and director of the Darmstadt Summer Courses, had even considered the performance of some of the ensemble parts of

13 Bussotti and Metzger were a couple between 1958 and 1963.

14 See Osmond-Smith/Attinello, "Gay Darmstadt".

15 Attinello argues that Bussotti's relevance in Darmstadt should, nevertheless, not be underestimated, his *Piano Piece for David Tudor no. 3* being one out of only two 45 RPM recordings that were "distributed as a publicity gesture for the Ferienkurse by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk". Osmond-Smith/Attinello, "Gay Darmstadt", p. 112.

16 Barthes, "La partition comme théâtre".

17 The piece was programmed next to compositions by Isang Yun, Mauricio Kagel and György Ligeti within the second concert of the Hessischer Rundfunk on 13.7.1964, 8.15 pm. See also Andreas Meyer/Wilhelm Schlüter, "Chronik", in: Borio/Danuser (Eds), *Im Zenit der Moderne*, pp. 625f.

Bussotti's cycle *Pièces de chair II*, but the composer initially refused anything but a complete presentation of the piece.¹⁸

At about the same time, Bussotti's scores were performed and exhibited in Mary Bauermeister's atelier in Cologne, thereby not accidentally underlining a certain fluidity that characterises the Atelier Bauermeister's activities and protagonists: scores could be performed as sheet music or looked at as visual artworks or they even transgressed the border to literature,¹⁹ composers were performers and *vice versa*. Within the three-day-long *Contre-Festival* in June 1960, the performances of Bussotti's *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor*, the twice performed *Pearson Piece*, song for voice and piano on a poem of William Pearson (1960, world premiere), and pieces from *Sette fogli* (1959) – no. 2 *Coeur pour batteur*, no. 3 *Per tre sul piano* and *Lettura di Braibanti* per voce sola (world premiere) – stood, thus, not only quite 'naturally' next to pieces by Cage (*Water Music* (1952) and *Variations I* (1958)), but also to events that were later to become part of a corpus of Fluxus works, such as George Brecht's *Card-Piece for Voice* (1959) and *Candle-Piece for Radios* (1959) or La Monte Young's *Poem* (1960) for chairs, tables, benches, etc. (or other sound sources). The *Contre-Festival* was created by Bauermeister as a counter event to the World Music Days of the *Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik*²⁰ (IGNM) which was hosted the same year in Cologne, as she states in a letter draft to David Tudor:

Please could you write me, when you are coming to Cologne and what date this concert could be. I would like to make it in June, when here is the IGNM and there will be so much 'terrible music' (except the one good concert with Stockhausen + Kagel + Nono and the one or other pousseur, boulez, berio, ligeti?).²¹

The festival programme included a great number of illustrious guests and could, at least in this respect, almost have been copied from the programme of the Darmstadt Summer Courses of the same year, were it not for the one or other name that we associate today more with Fluxus circles, or the fact that it comprises a number of composers figuring here as performers. Among those mentioned are Cornelius Cardew, Christoph Caskel, Hans G. Helms, Mauricio Kagel and his wife, the artist Ursula Burghardt-Kagel, Aloys Kontarsky, Kurt Schwertsik, Benjamin Patterson, William Pearson, David Tudor and Christian Wolff. Bussotti, of course, played his own pieces, while Nam June Paik filled three entire concert slots, performing his *Hommage à John Cage*, *Musik für Tonbänder und Klavier* (1958/59).

18 See Berberian, Letter to Wolfgang Steinecke, 31.5.1959. Since some of the *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* were performed in Darmstadt, Bussotti obviously did agree to a performance of parts out of *Pièces de chair II* in the end. See also Freund/Marsico, "Bussotti's Notes on *Pièces de chair II*", p. 191.

19 See von Zahn, "Refüsierte Gesänge", p. 113.

20 Today: International Society for Contemporary Music.

21 Bauermeister in an undated handwritten letter draft to David Tudor, March/April 1960, in: Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln (Ed.), *intermedial, kontrovers, experimentell*, p. 24.

The difference of atmosphere compared to places such as the Darmstadt Summer Courses whose performance practice was shaped, at least in part, by figures like Rudolf Kolisch and his aversion to what he saw as unnecessary, if not intolerable, subjective interventions by interpreters, is quite tangible in Cornelius Cardew's invitation to a piano recital a year after the *Contre-Festival*.²² Cardew was a central figure in the organisation of the festival events, which is why his statements can be understood not merely as the personal positioning of a performer, but rather as the expression of a general and shared attitude within the given context. Far from being modest, Cardew depicts an emancipated performer image and directs his critique at the formalisation of music, thereby, clearly intending to destabilise the position of the composer:

The work of these composers – from amongst whose pieces I will choose what I will play – shifts the performer into a slightly but decisively different position. They have given him something which is loosely termed 'freedom', 'responsibility', etc.; they have given him an active hand in the shaping of their music. He is still an interpreter, but in a more comprehensive sense of the word. [...] I realise that formalisation has *become* essential to the working process of many composers; and this is a situation which the interpreter sets out to save (this is his responsibility). I realise that a notation leads to sounds; but sounds also lead to sounds, and their connection is implicit, and evades the qualitative jump (from sign to sound) which lends modern music its 'profound obscurity'. Item: the interpreter can do what he likes. (It is only the composer who is limited.) Item: I am not seeking your criticism or admiration, but rather your sympathy – or despite. Item: let us cook our sounds, blend them, heat them up, eat them warm, even let them get cold, if they taste better that way. Item: I am doing nothing that has been done already, nor get anything new.²³

Part of the *Contre-Festival* programme was the reading of Heinz-Klaus Metzger's *Kölner Manifest* by the "*music kritizen*"²⁴ himself, as Bauermeister, the initiator of the text, calls him in a letter draft to Tudor. In his manifesto, the author advocates for an abolition of art that he sees without purpose, at least in the form that it presents itself at the time, while also deploring a lack of able performers for the, as he states, more advanced composers.²⁵

The following reflections will shed a light on some of the most active performer figures of the time in question. David Tudor (1926–1996) and the brothers Aloys (1931–2017) and Alfons Kontarsky (1932–2010) not only rank among the most im-

22 This recital did not take place at the Atelier Bauermeister, but at a closely related venue, the Galerie Haro Lauhus. Lauhus was in a relationship with Mary Bauermeister from about 1955 to 1961 and organised concerts and other events at his gallery.

23 Cardew, invitation brochure to a concert at the Galerie Lauhus on 15, 16, 17 and 18.6.1961. According to the invitation, the programme consisted of pieces by Morton Feldman, John Cage, Christian Wolff, Earle Brown, La Monte Young, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Mauricio Kagel, Sylvano Bussotti and Cardew himself. See Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln (Ed.), *intermedial, kontrovers, experimentell*, p. 63.

24 Bauermeister, Letter draft to David Tudor, March/April 1960, see *ibid.*, p. 27.

25 See Metzger, "Kölner 'Manifest'", p. 12.

portant performers of New Music in the 1950s and 60s and shared the stage at the Darmstadt Summer Courses as well as the Atelier Bauermeister,²⁶ they also earned praise, for different reasons, for their musical excellence. The examination of their differing interpretational strategies highlights the impact these performance decisions bear on making distinctive features of Bussotti's compositions tangible.

DAVID TUDOR – “MINOTAURUS OF THE PIANISTICAL MYTHOLOGY”²⁷

It is very unlikely that Metzger had Tudor in mind when reading out his acrid critique of the New Music establishment. Tudor, the “emissary”²⁸ between the US and Europe, had already acquired legendary status as both an accurate performer of scores by composers like Stockhausen or Boulez and as the creator of authoritative interpretations of Cage's compositions.²⁹ In his relationship with composers, the “minotaurus of the pianistical mythology”,³⁰ as Bussotti called him admiringly, was not the subservient executor of a score but, instead, an interpreter personality to whose interests composers felt they had to appeal.

‘What you had to do’, Cage said, ‘was to make a situation that would interest *him*. That was the role he played.’ And Earle Brown put it candidly: ‘What can we do next that he *can't* do? I think we all felt he had a low threshold of boredom; he just breezed through these pieces, then seemed to ask, “What's next? Give me something *really* to do.” In an illuminating phrase, Brown recalled how he and the other New York composers responded to this challenge: ‘We felt that we could present him with scores and possibilities.’³¹

Praise also came, according to Tudor, from Luigi Nono – even if inadvertently whilst ranting against the creators of graphic scores during the Darmstadt Summer Courses in 1959:

‘[Y]ou see that pieces for flute & pno. are growing like mushrooms, because they hope that they will be performed by Gazzelloni and Tudor; they see that they only have to spit on the paper & these artists will make something beautiful’.³²

26 Of the Kontarsky brothers, only Aloys verifiably performed at the Atelier Bauermeister.

27 Bussotti, Letter to David Tudor, 22.5.1959, cited in: Roth, “I allow myself to think of you not as of somebody playing the piano”, p. 53.

28 Tudor/Hultberg, “I smile when the sound is singing through the space”.

29 The paradoxical fact that Tudor's interpretations were seen as authoritative or ‘correct’ renderings of Cage's scores underlines both the position Tudor had as a quality reference and the problems the European avant-garde showed in dealing with Cage's compositions. See also Krüger, *Musik über Stimmen*, pp. 67–71.

30 Bussotti, Letter to David Tudor, 22.5.1959.

31 Holzaepfel, “Tudor Performs Cage”, p. 111.

32 Nono cited by Tudor in a letter to Cage, 8.10.1959, in: Iddon, *John Cage and David Tudor*, p. 106.

Bussotti, indeed, trusted Tudor to an extent that he wrote to him in the context of his *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor*:

By the title piano pieces for David Tudor [...] I did not intend a dedicacy [sic] or an exterior 'homage'; but I consider you rather as an instrumental means, just as you could call another work 'pieces for big orchestra'. [...] I should be glad to know that you glance only once and with one single eye over these notes, because everything you will discover yourself when studying the musical notation will be more interesting for me, and more important for my further work.³³

It is not easy to reconstruct Tudor's interpretational methods since he was known for hardly ever annotating his scores. In a late interview with John Holzaepfel he states:

I do it [practicing technical aspects] on a separate piece of paper. I don't want to be encumbered by that when I'm performing. In other words, I have to memorize any special maneuvers that I have to make as a keyboard player. [...] That's the point with contemporary music: you don't want to memorize it, because if you do, you'll be missing something, because you're creating it. [...] If [I'm] trying to realize somebody's idea, and [I] read the music, I don't want to read anything else. It's a very simple notion. But it worked; nothing else could work. When you're looking at graphic notation, how are you going to do it? Either you make the realizations, the way I did, or you decide that whatever happens at the moment is the music.³⁴

The existing materials seem to confirm this statement: any technical and organisational work – at least for the Bussotti scores in question – was done almost exclusively on separate materials which were not used during the performance.³⁵ Tudor's understanding of interpretation as a creative act seems to preclude an organisation of the material for the purpose of reproducing it as identically as possible every time it was performed – especially in the case of graphic scores. At the same time, however, it is known that Tudor played from written out versions of Cage's *Variations I* and Bussotti's *Piano Piece for David Tudor 3* in his Darmstadt appearances in 1958 and 1959,³⁶ thereby creating the realisations which he talks about in the interview cited above. It can, therefore, be concluded that Tudor's interpretative approaches are not to be regarded as fixed procedures, but, instead, they obviously diverged – possibly depending on the respective performance context – and also changed over the period of his pianistic activities.

33 Bussotti, Letter to David Tudor, 22.5.1959, cited in: Roth, "I allow myself to think of you not as of somebody playing the piano", p. 53.

34 Holzaepfel/Tudor, "Reminiscences of a Twentieth-Century Pianist", pp. 633f.

35 There are still a great number of those working materials in the Getty Research Archive that have yet to be analysed and understood in terms of their function. Some of them can undoubtedly be connected to the work on Bussotti's *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor*. The performance scores in the David Tudor Papers are almost completely free of annotations. See also Krüger, *Musik über Stimmen*, pp. 96f.

36 See Roth, "I allow myself to think of you not as of somebody playing the piano", p. 53.

What seemingly did not change over time was the consciousness with which Tudor took his interpretational decisions and the fastidiousness of his approach. The pianist was known not only for his insatiable appetite for new pianistic challenges, but also for his meticulous preparation of new repertoire – a fact that was, as James Pritchett argues in the context of Cage’s *Variations I* and *II*, anticipated by the composers working with Tudor.³⁷ The creativity of his interpretational work, praised by so many, was, it seems, far from being connected to a self-indulgent virtuosity, but rather to a painstaking lecture of the musical text and what he saw as ‘faithfulness’ to the score:

I always wanted to be a faithful interpreter and my whole early training was for absolute realization of a score which is a very complicated[]proposition. For instance, nowadays, I feel that many people don’t read John Cage’s score in the sense that they don’t realize why the instructions are difficult to understand. Now, when you look at a score that somebody presents to you and you see that you are following the instructions and the way they are laid down, you are the composers’ helper. If you have to select a medium for yourself in which to realize those materials, then you have to think about how far you have to go in order to realize it.³⁸

So, the decisive question seems to be: what end does this analytical approach serve? Talking apropos his decision to realise *Variations II* with an amplified piano and the limitations this decision brought with it, Tudor makes an underlying interpretational attitude or mindset tangible that informed his decision-taking. Applied to interpretation in general, this position can be read as: interpreters have to think how far they have to go in order to strive for the realisation of the creative potential inherent in the encounter between a performer and a score. It is this that could be called ‘faithfulness’. Before discussing what this means regarding Bussotti’s composition, let us turn to a very different example altogether.

SYNONYMS OF PRECISION: THE BROTHERS KONTARSKY

The brothers Aloys and Alfons Kontarsky count among those musicians whose artistic ‘socialisation’ is closely connected to the Darmstadt Summer Courses. Attending the courses as participants for the first time in 1952, the “Gebrüder

37 Pritchett argues that Cage was expecting Tudor to work on *Variations II* in the way in which Tudor had approached all such compositions in the 1950s: “to produce a very detailed performance score using the technique of precise measurement”. Pritchett, “David Tudor as Composer/Performer in Cage’s *Variations II*”, p. 2.

38 Tudor/Hultberg, “I smile when the sound is singing through the space”.

Kontarsky”³⁹ were contestants of the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis⁴⁰ in the same year and kept returning to Darmstadt almost every year⁴¹ until, in 1960, they took over the piano courses as teachers themselves. Aloys Kontarsky subsequently taught piano in Darmstadt almost continuously⁴² until 1980 and was a member of the programme advisory board from 1972 to 1980 as well as a member of the jury for the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis. One of their special merits is to have established the piano duo as a fixed instance of New Music from the mid-1950s on.

While Tudor’s singularity consisted especially in what was seen – also in Darmstadt – as an extraordinarily creative approach to interpretation, critics characterise as the foremost quality of the Kontarsky brothers their capacity to intellectually penetrate a composition. In 1964, Brigitte Schiffer writes: “Auch dieses Jahr beherrschten sie mit ihrer phänomenalen Technik und Vielseitigkeit, ihrem einzigartigen Verständnis und ihrer Anpassungsfähigkeit die Szene.”⁴³ It is on just this analytical aspect that a review of their recording of Boulez’s *Structures* in *Der Spiegel* focuses: “Ihr exaktes Spiel entspricht der genauen Analyse des Werks.”⁴⁴ Almost 30 years later, Volker Scherliess resumes on the occasion of Aloys Kontarsky being awarded the August-Halm Prize:

Sie spielen analytisch in dem Sinne, Strukturen hörbar zu machen und nicht darüber hinwegzugehen. [...] ‘Die Kontarskys’ – das wurde zum Synonym für Präzision, rationale Kontrolle und analytische Interpretation. Bei ihnen ließ sich erfahren, was mit modernem Duospiel gemeint ist: es ist ja nicht allein eine Frage des Repertoires, sondern der interpretatorischen Einstellung.⁴⁵

39 The term ‘*Gebrüder*’ is an old-fashioned version of ‘*Brüder*’ and alludes to the famous ‘*Geb Brüder Grimm*’. The use of the name for the Kontarsky brothers goes back most probably to their teacher Eduard Erdmann.

40 The Kranichsteiner Musikpreis used to be a competition exclusively for interpretation within the Darmstadt Summer Courses. Today, the prize is awarded to both composers and performers in the field of contemporary music.

41 According to their application slips, they participated in the piano courses in 1952, 1954, 1956, 1957, 1958 and 1959.

42 Aloys Kontarsky taught piano and piano/keyboards alone in 1968, 1972, 1974 and 1976, and together with his brother Alfons Kontarsky in 1969 and 1970 (in 1970 he also taught the course “Instrumentalpraxis der Tasteninstrumente für Komponisten”). In 1986, Aloys Kontarsky’s name appears for the last time in the list of lecturers with the note “Michaël Levinas Piano, avec Aloys Kontarsky coordonné d’honneur”, cf. programme of the 33rd Summer Course for New Music 1986.

43 “Also this year, they dominate the scene with their phenomenal technique, their unique understanding and their adaptability.” Brigitte Schiffer, “Wie die Neutöner harfen”, in: Borio/Danuser (Eds), *Im Zenit der Moderne*, p. 454. Author’s translation.

44 “Their exact playing parallels the precise analysis of the work.” [Author unknown], “Schallplattenspiegel”, p. 153. Author’s translation.

45 “They play analytically in the sense of making structures audible and not passing over them. [...] The Kontarskys’ became synonymous with precision, rational control, and analytical interpretation. With them, one could experience what is meant by modern duo playing: it is not only a question of repertoire but also of interpretative attitude.” Scherliess, “Hommage an ‘die Gebrüder’”, p. 37. Author’s translation. It is telling, that Kontarsky was awarded a prize named after a music theorist.

A rather differing view is held – maybe not surprisingly – by Cornelius Cardew. Under the title “Modern Music Has Found Its Feet but on What Low Ground”, he describes the very concert which Schiffer highly praised, particularly the interpretation of Stockhausen’s *Klavierstücke* no. 7 and 8, as “loveless”.⁴⁶ Cardew may judge negatively here what Scherliess describes positively by the expression “rationale Kontrolle und analytische Interpretation”: an interpretive approach that is based essentially on the cognitive penetration of a work. It is reminiscent of Adorno’s plea for musical analysis in the context of interpretation, whereby he explicitly emphasises the theoretical debate as a reflection that begins with the work and subsequently informs the interpretation:

[A]lthough analysis is certainly of decisive help in questions of performance and interpretation, it is not actually from interpretation that it is derived, but from the work itself. You could put it this way: analysis is itself a form in its own right, like translation, criticism and commentary, as one of those media through which the very work unfolds. Works need analysis for their ‘truth content’ [*Wahrheitsgehalt*] to be revealed.⁴⁷

The Kontarskys’ interpretative work seems to have corresponded – at least in terms of perception – entirely to the Darmstadtian ideal of interpretation, which was not to a small extent informed by Adorno or, maybe more precisely, by how his positions were understood. An approach that first uncovered the truth of a work through analysis to allow its emergence in the interpretation. The apparent performance-theoretical premise, that interpretation must make an objectifiable statement codified in the musical text tangible – Dunsby writes of “musical idealism”⁴⁸ – proves to be a decisive criterion for the appreciation of the Kontarsky brothers. But can we establish this analytical approach in the Kontarskys’ interpretative work? And what bearing would this approach have on the performative manifestation of Bussotti’s compositions?

The annotated scores by Aloys Kontarsky, stored in the archive of the Akademie der Künste Berlin, prove to be of some interest here. In fact, the performance materials of, for example, Boulez’s *Structures II* (1956–61) for two pianos (Aloys Kontarsky apparently playing piano 2) seem to confirm the image we can gather from the reviews cited above: the handwritten material shows numerous entries and arrangements. It has been greatly enlarged and the pages halved so that two systems of four staves are visible per sheet. Entries have been made in several colours: tempo indications, bar numbers, double barlines and verbal performance instructions already notated in the score have been highlighted in red for better legibility. In addition, Kontarsky uses numerals above the bars to mark beats, counting modes (whether counting in two or three beats) and transformations of original time signatures into ones that he apparently found more practical. Lines

46 Cardew, “Modern Music Has Found Its Feet but on What Low Ground”, p. 674.

47 Adorno, “On the Problem of Musical Analysis”, p. 176.

48 Dunsby, “Performance and Analysis of Music”, p. 7.

in red, some of them dashed, also serve to co-ordinate with piano 1. All bar lines have been traced in red with a ruler in the *Structures' chapitre II*, which has been enlarged even more and arranged on smaller sheets. He also highlights indications regarding dynamics, clefs, page turns, pedal changes, notates chords for better legibility at the margin and retraces pitches or even writes them out in words.

These entries point to a close reading of the materials regarding their practicability: the very dense handwritten score becomes more manageable through the coloured entries. Similar annotations can be found in other materials, albeit mostly in much lower density (e.g. in Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes* for prepared piano, Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke* I–IV or Earle Brown's *Corroboree*).

Kontarsky's entries in Sylvano Bussotti's *Tableaux vivants* for two pianos, which was premiered by the Kontarsky duo in Bremen in 1964, are of particular interest here, as the different approaches from Aloys Kontarsky and Tudor respectively become very apparent. In 1967, the piece was taken on a lecture-recital tour (presumably in the US) on the notation and performance practice of New Music. The typescript of this event, which is stored in the Aloys Kontarsky archive of the Akademie der Künste, therefore, provides explicit information about the interpretative approach of the piano duo, in addition to Aloys Kontarsky's performance material (Fig. 2 and 3).

Tableaux vivants, such as Bussotti's cycle *Pièces de chair II*, can be described as a (calli)graphically notated score: the conventional notation is expanded by quasi-ornamental elements and graphic score parts. Notated for two pianos, the two players, however, are sometimes required to play four-handedly on the same instrument. Except for part IV, the two piano parts are not presented conventionally in two double systems but in one densely notated system without exact assignment of the parts.

The composition consists of four parts – Kontarsky also speaks of 'movements' in the lecture mentioned above – whereby parts I and III are almost identical in terms of notation, but the performance instructions diverge and are designed to achieve the greatest possible contrast between the performance as part I compared to that as part III. Thus, in the second interpretation of the score (as part III), passages are omitted, supplements in smaller notation which were suppressed in part I are now performed and previously muted clusters are played with sound. Bracketed dynamic indications apply only to the interpretation as part III, as do all performance indications notated in capital letters. The previously extremely calm tempo ("quasi al di fuori d'ogni idea di 'tempo'"⁴⁹) changes in part III to *rapidissimo* (cf. Fig. 2). Furthermore, part I is to be performed four-handedly on one piano, while part III is executed on two separate pianos.

The parts marked I/III are printed on a double page in the score. After part I had been played, both pages were to be opened further in the manner of a tryptic,

49 Bussotti, *Tableaux vivants*, sheet 1.

so that part II *libertino* could now be read on a total of four pages. The two outer pages had to be folded shut again for the performance of part III (four-handedly on one instrument), and the right-hand page is turned to the left for part IV *mortale*. This last part is notated in high density on only one page.

As in *Structures II*, Aloys Kontarsky's score of *Tableaux vivants* shows coloured entries in red, green, blue and pencil writing. I will focus on the red entries, which, on the one hand, predominate and, on the other hand, are of particular interest because they structure the score in the sense of an approximation to conventional notation. Kontarsky, for example, redraws the bar lines that were dotted in Busotti's score and recombines bars – probably to facilitate counting (cf. Fig. 2, third system, new bar lines and time signatures in blue). Notes in different systems are connected with each other in red dotted lines, for example, supplements notated above and below the main line, which was most probably intended to allow for a better co-ordination between the players.

With the ruler, Kontarsky also draws lines parallel to the system over individual figures, for example, eighth-note sequences, and marks on them beats for the respective section (cf. Fig. 2, fourth system). He divides the larger printed passages in the main system into three units of six, five and four beats each. In parts I and III, which in Kontarsky's performance materials figure both on the same page (Fig. 2) as well as in the form of a separate sheet for part I, these divisions prove to be identical. The same applies to the bar divisions mentioned above (cf. Fig. 2, third system).

In part II *libertino*, in addition to the structuring of the score in bars with an indication of the respective number of beats (cf. Fig. 3, sheet 4), Kontarsky also notated or re-notated rhythms, for example, at the end of the third sheet of part II, regrouping units of 8, 11 and 5 beats above the double system (cf. Fig. 3, sheet 3). A less detailed notation of rhythms can be found on the last page of the piece in part IV *mortale*.

It seems to follow from Kontarsky's entries that an in-depth reading of the musical text is at the heart of his interpretation. By rhythmising the graphic parts, he transforms the score into conventional notation, which then becomes the basis for a relatively stable interpretation that aims for repeatability. This reading of his approach is further supported by statements made by Kontarsky himself in the lecture-recital:

The composer has notated the result here as in a particell [sic] but it is left to the players to decide who plays what. [...] It is apparent that one cannot improvise such a passage. On the contrary, one has to reach exact agreement as to which player plays which specific notes as otherwise it may happen that both players choose the same groups and other groups are consequently not played at all.⁵⁰

50 Lecture-Recital Kontarsky Brothers 27.9.1967, "Notation and Practices in the Performance of New Music". Kontarsky is referring to part II *libertino*.

(Two dark lines) colpi di spugna

g. latifolia con aria metallica
E' un poco metallica della cassa

latifolia all'incirca per essere
dalla cassa

gemmae con aria metallica, appena cominciano a svilupparsi
si vede che la cassa
è di colore giallo-rossastro

gemmae con aria metallica, appena cominciano a svilupparsi
si vede che la cassa
è di colore giallo-rossastro

● **Indicate un'azione nella unità**

⁴ *campione a scelta parentale nella serie*

15. *gratia, gratuita, gratis*

Arctostaphylos *quadrifida*

1. *unlike* *unlike* *unlike* *unlike*
 2. *unlike* *unlike* *unlike* *unlike*

Q. *And the other way around?*

...the whole of the ...

→ **corde percutée avec la main**

1888

A page of handwritten musical notation on aged, yellowed paper. The notation is dense and complex, featuring multiple staves with notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The paper shows signs of wear, including creases and discoloration. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, time signatures, and accidentals. The overall appearance is that of a historical manuscript or a composer's draft.



Fig. 3: Sylvano Bussotti, *Tableaux vivants (avant La Passion selon Sade), II libertino*, sheet 3–4, performance score of Aloys and Alfons Kontarsky © Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

From this statement we can deduct that, without the fixation of the score, be it in the form of oral agreements or, as the entries in his score indicate, through transformation of the less conventionally notated sections into conventional notation, the numerous decisions that have to be taken whilst performing *Tableaux vivants* appeared to him as improvisation. The actually sounding material would, in this case, be almost completely unpredictable and, therefore, could not result in an ‘appropriate’ performance of the score. In fact, however, this aspect seems to be at the core of the conception of part II *libertino* of *Tableaux vivants*. Bussotti writes in the performance instructions:

È, questo, il ‘quadro’ piu’ *libero* – sulla linea di un *solo* che i due interpreti si distribuiranno a piacere dall’uno all’altro strumento – salvi i casi in cui è evidente la necessità di servirsi simultaneamente di tutti e due – si inseriscono, o sovrappongono o anche vengono a integrarsi alcuni episodi d’incontinenza strumentale per i quali delle riserve di segni allusivi sono scritte in calce [...]. Queste brevi esagerazioni, da effettuarsi secondo l’improvvisato capriccio degli interpreti, non dovrebbe comunque sommergere o spezzare irrimediabilmente la malinconica linea ‘senza parole’ del *solo*.⁵¹

The improvisational aspects which, according to Kontarsky, had to be avoided at all costs seem, indeed, to be quite intentional. It can be derived from the instructions that, for the passage in question, the focus lies on the dynamic interplay between the lyrical solo and an exuberant pianistic virtuosity. The negotiation of this relationship in real time is likely to lead to a heightened concentration on communicative aspects between the players and, consequently, on the process of interpreting, rather than on a specific sounding result. It can, therefore, be assumed that the decision to use procedures which organise this relationship in advance – orally or through notation – focuses precisely on the latter: The resulting interpretative processes are fixed in order to enable a stable and repeatable performance result.

INTO THE FORCE FIELD

What is to be concluded from the picture developed above? Perhaps Aloys Kontarsky’s interpretations – since it is mainly his materials we have been examining here, less his brother’s – were not so analytically informed after all? Or was the

51 “This is the freest ‘picture’ – following the line of a solo that the two interpreters will pass at will from one to the other instrument – except in the cases where they evidently need to use both simultaneously – some episodes of instrumental intemperance are inserted, overlapping or even integrating, for which a supply of allusive signs are written at the foot of the page [...]. These brief exaggerations, to be carried out according to the improvisational whim of the performers, should not, however, irreparably submerge or break up the melancholic ‘wordless’ line of the solo.” Sylvano Bussotti, *Tableaux vivants*, sheet 2, performance indications for II *libertino*. Author’s translation.

need for efficiency so strong that the instability resulting from the application of the instructions was simply not acceptable? Both might be correct to a certain extent. However, it is more likely that there is an underlying issue here. Paul Attinello identifies a problematic standardisation of interpretational approaches in the specific context of the performance practice of Bussotti's graphic scores:

The received wisdom we usually employ to read the more canonic works of the Darmstadt 'school' is inadequate to the aesthetic and cultural implications of these pages [Bussotti's graphic scores like *Pièces de chair II*]. That received wisdom is, of course, rooted in our cultural understanding of music and of notation, which is still remarkably normative in its insistence on notation as a transparent instrument of objective communication.⁵²

I contend that the main factor why Kontarsky's work stands in contrast to Tudor's approach was due to a difference in their self-image as interpreters. This means, in a further development of Attinello's reflections, the difference lies not only in the understanding of what a musical work is in relation to a score, but particularly in the definition of the role of interpretation – from which, in turn, the function of analytical procedures in interpretative contexts is derived.

Tudor seems to understand the work as emerging from the encounter between the score and performer. This stands in clear contrast to Aloys Kontarsky, as can be seen in the comparison of performance materials and statements from both pianists, at least, in the context of the compositions examined. Kontarsky's transcription of graphic components into conventional notation indicates that, for him, the graphic aspect needs to be transferred into a reproducible interpretation template which can then be accessed through an efficient and thorough performance routine. In this way, the interpretation focuses on the work as a relatively stable entity that is characterised by, and remains recognisable as such in every following performance through a fixed constellation of the parameters pitch, rhythm and dynamics – even in the context of a (calli)graphic score, which, by its nature, counteracts this kind of stabilisation. Tudor's approach, on the other hand, suggests an understanding of the work as something that emerges anew in each performance, which is created in the unique encounter between notation and interpreter – hence, his rejection of playing by heart. Or else, the performer creates a version, a momentary determination of an indeterminate composition, that allows for more focus and precision without claiming to be the only possible or even an authoritative interpretation of a piece.

So, it is not, as we have seen, an opposition to analysis that is characteristic of this interpretational concept which, therefore, does not contradict the Adornian analytical approach to the work – quite the contrary. Tudor's performance practice might rather explain an understanding of the musical work that Adorno tries to capture with the term "force field":

52 Attinello, "Hieroglyph, Gesture, Sign, Meaning", p. 220.

Its [analysis'] task, therefore, is not to describe the work – and with this I have really arrived at the central issue concerning analysis generally – its task, essentially, is to reveal as clearly as possible the *problem* of each particular work. 'To analyse' means much the same as to become aware of a work as a *force-field* [*Kraftfeld*] organised around a *problem*.⁵³

Adorno's understanding of analysis as a process in which a musical work is recognised as a force field organised around a problem and, consequently, as an examination of this problem, can indeed be linked to Tudor's self-understanding as an interpreter. By describing a musical work as a force field, Adorno suggests a dynamic rather than a static or stable state of the work. This seems to indicate that interpretation when dealing with this, as de Assis calls it, metastability⁵⁴ has to consider each composition's unique disposition. In Tudor's approach, analytical approaches serve to define this framework, based on which, interpretation as a creative practice unfolds between two forms of reading: on the one hand, as a deep reading and working through the material as well as dealing with technical aspects of a musical work, transferred into a material space separate from the score and, on the other hand, as a spontaneous confrontation with the notation in the moment of performance.

L'IMPROVVISATO CAPRICCIO

Coming back to Bussotti and the doubly rooted performance practice of the compositions⁵⁵ of the early 1960s – how far is it of any interest (and particularly to performance practice) that his pieces were played both in the Atelier Bauermeister and in Darmstadt at the same time? Were not the differences in interpretational approach that we have seen rather individual choices of two (or rather three) different pianists, which could most probably be recognised in any comparison of two or more diverging interpretational practices?

The point I would like to make is that with the compositions in question we are dealing with the very interesting case of a repertoire that illustrates the short-lived overlap of New Music and (pre-)Fluxus. If one were to apply an approach based on the idea of historically informed performance practice, performances of pieces such as *Pièce de chair II* or *Tableaux vivants*, one could claim, would have to take into account, for example, the specific practices of the protagonists at the

53 Adorno, "On the Problem of Musical Analysis", p. 181.

54 See de Assis, *Logic of Experimentation*, pp. 99f., 198.

55 *Tableaux vivants* was not performed in Bauermeister's atelier, but it bears strong traits of (pre-) Fluxus characteristics. On the last page, the composer asks the performers to put down the music and to play what they remember from the performance. The performance ends when they have exhausted their memory of the score ("solo a memoria completamente estinta l'esecuzione potrebbe aver fine"). An indication very much reminiscent of a certain type of Fluxus scores which focuses on the imaginary and/or utopian. See Bussotti, *Tableaux vivants*, sheet 7.

Atelier Bauermeister of which we have taken notice through Cardew's invitation text, the idea of the *Contre-Festival* as opposing the New Music establishment (the World Music Days of the IGMN 1960) and its doings, and the fluidity of roles and genres (propagating the concept of intermedia⁵⁶ *avant la lettre*).

We could also leave out historically informed performance practice altogether and with it, the subtext of a somewhat 'authentic' interpretation, and come back to the question of realised or not realised potentials. Taking the connection to Fluxus practices seriously would not mean to primarily adopt those in order to create more 'correct' renderings of a composition, but to use them as a plausible backdrop for an interpretational approach which focuses on the aspect of metastability and, therefore, explicitly on the potential for widely varying interpretations of Bussotti's composition, as well as, subsequently, on the role of the interpreter.

Adopting de Assis's model as unfolded above, this would mean to activate the materials constituting pieces such as *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* or *Tableaux vivants* after having gone through the first two steps of his research process (*archaeology* and *genealogy*) in a performance practical setting (*problematization*). The main difference to a 'conventional' interpretation would be what de Assis calls the focus on how a work works or Adorno highlights when talking about the *force field*: "Beyond representing a work, the performances [...] investigate how those works *work*, suggesting a fundamental move away from musical works (noun) toward the *work* (verb) of performance."⁵⁷

A performative investigation could, therefore, focus on the specificities of Bussotti's compositions which, more often than not, seem to challenge performers regarding the conceptual approach and the resulting working processes – as shown, for example, in the Kontarsky brothers' need for stabilising the score of *Tableaux vivants* in order to reach a, for them, acceptable sounding result. Drawing on the intermedial characteristics of Bussotti's scores, an alternative approach could investigate the communicative processes resulting from the graphic aspect, which must take place in real time when the interplay is not defined beforehand. A framing of those communicative processes would shed a light on Bussotti's score as a basis of performative discourse – including all possible gradations from affirmation to dispute – rather than using it solely as a pragmatic performance tool. This approach connects with Erik Ulman's understanding that "any performance [of Bussotti's scores] would be more a commentary on the written page than that page a prescription for performance".⁵⁸

In Bauermeister's atelier, pieces such as Bussotti's *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* were performed alongside event scores like Brecht's *Card-Piece for Voice* and

56 See Higgins, "Intermedia", pp. 1–3.

57 De Assis, *Logic of Experimentation*, pp. 30f.

58 Ulman, "The Music of Sylvano Bussotti", p. 190.

Candle-Piece for Radios, which feature both performances based on a set of rules beyond musical conventions and the appearance of the performers not only as a musical executors, but, through the use of their voices (in *Card-Piece for Voice*) or technical devices (as in *Candle-Piece for Radios*), as distinct personalities. Adopting the rule-based play to the performance of graphic scores such as *Five Piano Pieces* or *Tableaux vivants* (both to the completely graphic parts as to those passages that are closer to conventional notation), one might open up a wide spectrum of realisations – depending on the chosen rule set. It would also allow for solutions which are not predominantly fixed (as it appears to be in the Kontarskys' case), nor as indeterminate as the composer wishes for in his performance instructions. David Tudor's proceedings in the interpretation of Cage's *Variations II* could be inspirational in this context: confronted with the extreme openness of the material, Tudor decided to develop a qualitative notation, his *nomographs*, which allowed for a preconfiguration of certain parameters, while hanging on to the piece's central characteristics of indeterminacy.⁵⁹ This rule set could also integrate performative actions beyond those needed for sound production – a potential translation of the ornamental characteristics of Bussotti's score into live performance.

A question that often arises in the context of graphic notation is, indeed, the communication of just this feature to the audience. While it changes the working process for the performers substantially, it usually remains hidden from the listeners, who will, necessarily, receive the performance as that of any determinate composition. One solution could be the visualisation of the score – be it in terms of a rather technical projection or an artistic investigation on a visual level, depending on the general concept of the performance.⁶⁰ The almost understated way of dealing with the intermedia aspect of Bussotti's scores in the Atelier Bauermeister events – being exhibited as graphic artworks as well as played in the concerts – might be a valuable backdrop for future performances. Assuming that the framing of a musical work of art – like that of any artwork – has a significant impact on its reception, the general choice of the concert format and venue can highlight the visual specificities of Bussotti's scores. Performing them in a gallery space in which visual artworks interact with the musical performance and the audience moves freely will, therefore, be a very different experience from that in a concert hall with fixed seating and the focus on their auditive aspects. The curation of the compositions in question is, thus, specifically because of their intermedial characteristics, a creative realm in which the score's graphic potential can be explored

59 See Pritchett, "David Tudor as Composer/Performer in Cage's 'Variations II'"; Krüger, *Musik über Stimmen*, pp. 94f.

60 One such example can be found in the author's own dealing with Sylvano Bussotti's *Voix de femme* (1959) for voice and ensemble, in which one page of the score had been printed on a 2 x 3 m banner, turning it into something in between a stage set and a walkable score. See Krüger, *Musik über Stimmen*, pp. 339ff.

and transformed into a performative experience. Repetitive performances of the same pieces in the same concert, but within diverse framings, would contribute to making the potential diversity of realisations perceptible.

As a last point of access into Bussotti's scores, I would like to propose the aspect of virtuosity. Bussotti writes in a general remark on the interpretation of *Tableaux vivants* not only about the intentionally incomplete score⁶¹ but also about the fact that the composition, at times, borders or even surpasses the physically possible.⁶² As a solution, he asks the performers to employ all their virtuosity and their inventive power (*tutto il virtuosismo e l'inventiva immaginabili*) in order to stay as close to the text as possible. These suggestions, including concrete technical hints, Bussotti claims, serve the general purpose of giving the performers the opportunity to "recite" (*recitare*) the text spontaneously and with active involvement (*con attiva partecipazione*), while preserving a "serious and reserved attitude" (*atteggiamento corretto e riservato*). One might be reminded of other severe performance indications such as Schoenberg's iconic preface to *Pierrot lunaire*, the foundation to the famous *Sprechstimme*-*'Enigma'*, if it was not for the aspect of empowerment with which Bussotti balances the strictness of his indications. The virtuosity asked for is, no doubt, not one that focuses solely on breathtaking speed or brilliance of sound in the service of a predefined result, but also on a playful and engaged inventiveness – be it to cope with the density of the music, to find solutions for unplayable passages or regarding the co-ordination with the second player. One might interpret this score – as well as other compositions by Bussotti with similar characteristics – as an investigation of virtuosity, understood as a creative and inventive approach to music performance. In this sense, these scores could be seen as pieces with an educational effect, encouraging the reflection on the role of the performer as a virtuoso both intellectually and technically and, thereby, fostering the empowerment of performers as creators.

The point this article is making is not to disregard the musicianship of the Kontarskys or of any musician who – for pragmatic or musical reasons – organises complex graphic notation into efficiently manageable writing. It merely emphasises that this is but one way to deal with unconventional notation as can be found in Bussotti's *œuvre*, since this approach highlights only certain features of those scores. The few suggestions I have made above, far from being complete, try to encourage performers to tease out some of the other potentials these pieces harbour. Returning once more to the question Tudor once brought up mentioned above regarding how far one had to go in order to realise an indeterminate score, we

61 "La scrittura dell'intera composizione è frequentemente incompleta in molti particolari." Bussotti, *Tableaux vivants*, sheets 2 and 3.

62 "Frequentemente il testo tocca, anche, ed oltrepassa i limiti dell'ineseguibile." Ibid.

could ask ourselves: How far do we have to go as interpreters in Bussotti's scores? How far in order to not only be faithful to a text, but also faithful to our and each individual composition's creative potential?

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Notational Transformations

“Adventures of Writing”. On Bussotti’s Practice of Freehand Line-drawing

Julia Freund

In his introductory letter to Sylvano Bussotti’s text collection *I miei teatri* (1982), Umberto Eco describes Bussotti’s sheets of music as “adventures of writing”: as a form of writing that refers to something other than itself (i.e. to the dimension of the auditive or performative), while it also affirms itself (i.e. its own visual aesthetic presence) as “a play of white and black on a blank surface”.¹

Eco’s expression of “a play of white and black” may easily be associated with some of the more familiar graphic scores of Bussotti’s, such as *Sensitivo* from *Sette fogli* (1959), *Piano Piece for David Tudor 3* (1959) or the fourth *foglio* from Bussotti and Tono Zancanaro’s collaborative music-theatrical piece *Autotono* (1977) (see Fig. 1a–c). In these examples, the lines of the five-line staff have been multiplied and made dynamic in such a way that they seem to oscillate or fluctuate. In some places, they are interrupted by white breaks, and these white interruptions can form shapes by themselves, as can be vividly seen in the excerpt from *Autotono* or the *Piano Piece for David Tudor 3*. There is, indeed, a playful interaction not only of black and white but also of the basic graphic elements: of point and line on a two-dimensional plane.

In the case of the *Piano Piece for David Tudor 3*, the parallel arrangement of lines – which Bussotti has described as “‘frequencies-time’-lines”² – can provide, in all its obvious ambiguity, some orientation to the reader and performer: of, for example, sound register, the relative duration of events and possible ways to navigate through the score. The parallel lining activates a visual-spatial mode of representation (central to Western staff notation³), in which musical relations are depicted as spatial relations.⁴ To give an example: the form of notation in the *Piano*

1 Eco, “Lettera di Umberto Eco”, p. 8: “[...] partiture che non sono tali, avventure della scrittura che finge di preludere al suono ma che si afferma di per se stessa, come gioco di bianchi e di neri sulla superficie bianca.” All translations into English are the author’s unless otherwise specified. Eco’s rather elusive statement that Bussotti’s (most probably graphic) scores “pretend to be suggestive of the dimension of sound” (“finge di preludere al suono”) is disputable; a different view is taken in this paper, outlining ways in which Bussotti’s scores do refer to the dimension of sound.

2 Freund/Marsico, “Bussotti’s Notes on *Pièces de Chair II*”, p. 213 (orig.: “linee ‘frequenze-tempo’”, *ibid.*, p. 212).

3 This already holds true for Western medieval notation; cf. Nanni, “Musikalische Diagrammatik”.

4 For the multidisciplinary relevant research on visual-spatial, diagrammatic modes of representation, see particularly Krämer, *Figuration, Anschauung, Erkenntnis*.

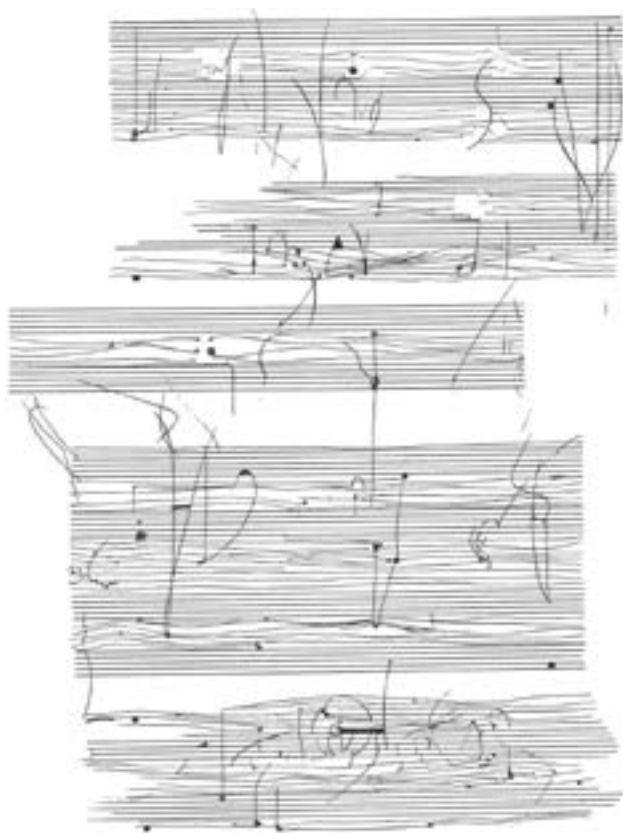


Figure 1a: Sylvano Bussotti: *Sensitivo* from *Sette fogli*, Milano 1963, n.p. Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

d) piano piece for David Tudor 3

PI. 001



Figure 1b: Sylvano Bussotti: *Piano Piece for David Tudor 3* from *Pièces de chair II. Pour piano, baryton, une voix de femme, instruments* (1958 '59 '60), Milano 1998, p. 28. Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.



Figure 1c: Bussotti / Tono Zancanaro: *Autotono. Un divertimento. 7 + 7 fogli a 4 mani, bianco e nero per una vita d'artista (come concerto in danza in scena)*, Milano 1978, foglio 4, n.p. Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

Piece for David Tudor 3⁵ suggests that the event in the very upper left corner (i.e. the rhombus-shaped white note head with the downwards slur) will be played earlier than the sound event with the fermata going beyond the line grid on the far right side (i.e. the cluster of dots), and that it is probably either in a higher register or produced on a different location on the piano (see Fig. 1b). To rephrase Eco's statement from above: while the lines have a referential function – we could also say: a poietic one, as they are involved in the creation of musical meaning – there is also a surplus. The lines, dots and figurations establish an interplay that is not only notational but iconic, asserting – or, to be a bit more dramatic, unleashing – music notation's own medial, visual presence. It is this self-affirmation as a visual medium that enables and facilitates a fascinating 'adventure' of musical writing in Bussotti's scores: its transfer into the realm of the scenic.

While Bussotti's graphic scores are mentioned regularly in studies on twentieth-century music and music notation, they are often referred to in a rather generic manner. Next to examples from John Cage, Earle Brown or Roman Hauben-

5 For a more detailed analysis and interpretation of this piece, see Freund, "Bild und Zeichen in der musikalischen Schrift", pp. 173–179.

stock-Ramati, they serve to illustrate a neuralgic point in the history of Western music notation: the notational changes and debates in the avant-garde(s) of the 1950s and 1960s,⁶ in which the conventions of Western staff notation were questioned and challenged from many artistic angles, and the question of appropriate forms of notation for contemporary music practices was raised and discussed. What is often pointed out is the genuine pictorial quality of Bussotti's graphic scores,⁷ the notational ambiguity and the resulting shift with regard to the concept of the musical work⁸ – which, to different degrees, holds true for many graphic scores of that time. Contrary to these recurring references, the characteristics that essentially shape Bussotti's musical writing, also in relation to his multidisciplinary artistic work, are far from being accounted for and spelled out.⁹

This paper offers thoughts on one certainly very prominent characteristic of Bussotti's writing: his technique of freehand line-drawing and ruling. The first part looks at the potential of the line to move between and interconnect different art forms. The second part, by contrast, focuses on an aspect specific to the art of music, namely the music-historical traces in the composer's meandering lines. The paper closes with reflections on what insight can be gained from Bussotti's scores into the nature of the cultural technique of writing.

1. THE LINE AS AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN NOTATIONAL AND SCENOGRAPHIC PRACTICES

Do graphic scores affirm their own visual presence, it is not surprising that they have been displayed in various exhibitions.¹⁰ The example of Bussotti's ballet *Og-*

6 In Darmstadt, for instance, a congress on *Notation Neuer Musik* was held during the summer courses for new music of 1964. The proceedings enclose contributions by Carl Dahlhaus, Györgi Ligeti, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Mauricio Kagel, Earle Brown, Siegfried Palm, Aloys Kontarsky and Christoph Caskel: Thomas (Ed.), *Notation Neuer Musik*. The increased use of graphic forms of notations in the 1950s and 1960s was reflected not only in exhibitions of scores, but also by lectures and seminars on that topic. See e.g. Karlheinz Stockhausen's seminar on *Musik und Graphik* during the Darmstadt summer courses in 1959 (Stockhausen, "Musik und Graphik").

7 See e.g. Magnus, "Aurale Latenzen", pp. 116f.

8 See e.g. Gutkin, "Notation Games", pp. 180f.

9 One aspect of Bussotti's work that has been pointed out several times is also central to the composer's writing practices: the reuse of already existing material. See Maehder, "Sylvano Bussotti's Music Theatre", p. 20; Stoianova, "Lobrede an die Offenheit", p. 309.

10 See e.g. Universal Edition's *Musikalische Grafik*, curated by Haubenstock-Ramati in Donaueschingen 1959, or *Musica e segno* in Roma 1962, co-ordinated by Sylvano Bussotti and Giuseppe Chiari. For a more recent exhibition, see the project *Fresh Yorkshire Aires*, curated by Jacob Thompson-Bell, in Yorkshire (UK) in 2016, <https://freshyorkshireaires.wordpress.com/> (21.8.2023).

getto amato (*pièce de chair*)¹¹ from 1975 shows that musical notation can even enter the space of the scenic.

Oggetto amato ('beloved object') was premiered together with the '*dramma lirico*' *Nottetempo*¹² in the Teatro Lirico in Milano on 7 April 1976 (as a production of the Teatro alla Scala).¹³ The subject of the ballet – or 'danced mythologies' (*mitologie danzate*), as the subtitle states – is based on the Ancient Egyptian myth of the murder of Osiris (here 'Osiride'): Tifone betrays and kills his brother Osiride, who has been seeking reconciliation, and places his corpse in a basket to sink into the Nile. Osiride's wife and sister Iside searches for and finds the 'beloved body' (*l'amato corpo*) and prepares a funeral. Tifone, however, steals the corpse, cuts it into pieces and scatters them in all four directions. Iside, together with her son Oro and Tifone's son Anubis, look for the remains and find his 'flesh' (*la carne*, French: *chair*) undecayed. Finally, the new body of Osiride is 'reassembled' (*si ricompone*).¹⁴

The music of *Oggetto amato* – for piano, baritone, mezzo-soprano, spoken voices and percussion – has to be pre-recorded on tape and played back during the performance.¹⁵ Interestingly, the score is based directly on the score of the collection *Pièces de chair II* for piano, baritone, female voice and instruments (1958–60), which consists of several pieces of different lengths, arranged in 14 parts numbered with Roman numerals. Bussotti reused most parts¹⁶ of *Pièces de chair II* for *Oggetto amato*, left out their numeration and title,¹⁷ made some compositorial adjustments¹⁸ and partially changed their order of sequence.¹⁹ With the *Piano Piece for David Tudor 1* at the very beginning and the *Piano Piece for David Tudor 5*

11 The score is a reproduction of the autograph, published under the signum "BUSSOTTIOPERA-BALLET".

12 Cf. Federica Marsico's contribution on *Nottetempo* in this volume.

13 Choreography: Amedeo Amodio. Also see the information on the premiere given on the website of the *Archivio Storico* of the Teatro alla Scala, https://www.teatroallascala.org/it/archivio/spettacolo.html?guid_=dcbc75bc-b369-4801-8497-2df9d67989f0&id_allest_=2321&id_all_est_conc_=22492&id_evento_=66&mode=EVENTI (10.8.2023).

14 The storyline is summarised in the section "per argomento" in the score, written (and signed) by Romano Amidei, which is to be recited at the beginning of the performance: Bussotti, *Oggetto amato*, "per argomento", n.p. (also published in Degrada (Ed.), *Sylvano Bussotti e il suo teatro*, p. 21).

15 According to Bussotti's notes in the scores, the following musicians were involved in recording the music for the 1976 premiere: Cathy Berberian (mezzo-soprano), Claudio Desderi (baritone), Antonio Ballista, (piano), Andrea Pestalozza (percussion), Sylvano Bussotti (spoken voice; *regia di sonora* ["sound direction"]). Bussotti, *Oggetto amato*, p. 42.

16 III J.H-K.S., V a) *le nègre*, VIII b) *fiordaliso*, VIII c) *oppure* and XIII a) *voix d'homme* are omitted. All of these pieces include string and/or wind instruments that are not featured in *Oggetto amato*.

17 The exception are the five *Piano Pieces for David Tudor* which do appear with their title and, other than in *Pièces de chair II*, in ascending order from 1 to 5.

18 In the *Piano Piece for David Tudor 5*, for instance, the voice is left out.

19 To what extent the new arrangement of the pieces correlates to the mythological story is addressed by Mastropietro, *Nuovo Teatro Musicale*, p. 426.

closing the ballet piece, the instrument of the piano has an even more prominent role than in the original cycle. Furthermore, Bussotti changed the vertical format of the score into a horizontal one and added new instructions in handwriting directly on the score. These gloss-like instructions include explanations of symbols, information on the musical performance and the sound recording, as well as suggestions on scenographic and choreographic aspects, the co-ordination of music and dance, and how the single pieces might relate to the mythological story. This second layer of inscription results in a hypertextual, palimpsest-like²⁰ form of notation and, in this recomposed²¹ form, a new work. The subtitle in brackets “(*pièce de chair*)”, thus, does not only refer to the torn-apart body of Osiride within the mythological story, but also to the reused and transformed score of *Pièces de chair II* which – similar to Osiride’s body – has been taken apart and put together anew.

The last part of the score (pp. 33–42) contains sketches of stage and costume designs as a separate section. That these drawings are included directly in the score – as Bussotti has already done in the scores of his music-theatrical works *La Passion selon Sade* (1965–66) and *Lorenzaccio* (1968–72)²² – is certainly related to the fact that he was also responsible for the stage and costume design at the premiere of *Oggetto amato*.

The first numbered page of the score (p. 1) shows the *Piano Piece for David Tudor 1*, with handwritten annotations from Bussotti mainly above but also below the pre-existing notation, concerning the musical realisation, recording, scenic action and scenography (see Fig. 2). Towards the end of the third part of the score – i.e. the systems for the left (“MS”: *mano sinistra*) and right hand (“MD”: *mano destra*) following the number “3” – there is a very distinctive passage of serpentine lines passing into a five-line set. This passage can be played – as Bussotti himself suggests²³ – as glissandi on the strings inside a grand piano, followed by a high, clustered pizzicato sound, plucked on individuated strings (*g*, *a* and *b* in the third octave above middle *c*). At the end of the score, in the section containing scenographic and costume designs, the notational figure reappears: page 33 shows the

20 Cf. Genette, *Palimpsests*, p. 5. The first page of the autograph of *Oggetto amato* – a digitised version of which can be seen on the website of the *Archivio Storico Ricordi* – also has the quality of a collage, insofar as the lines of the cut-out score of the *Piano Piece for David Tudor 1* are – other than in the reproduced (published) version – clearly visible. See <https://www.digitalarchivioricordi.com/it/partiture/778> (14.10.2023).

21 Bussotti himself uses the phrase “recomposed” in the score of *Oggetto amato*, which is signed with the note “ricomposto a Milano nel novembre 1975”. Bussotti, *Oggetto amato*, p. 32.

22 In these two cases, costume and stage designs as well as theatre props are drawn into the score and interwoven with the musical notation. In some parts of the *Lorenzaccio* score, the musical notation is actually interrupted by Bussotti’s sketches of costumes and props, with direct implications for the dimension of sound. See Freund, “Geschlechterperformanz in der Partitur”.

23 See Bussotti’s annotations in the score (Bussotti, *Oggetto amato*, p. 1) and, for a more detailed version, his performance instructions for *Pièces de chair II*: Freund/Marsico, “Bussotti’s Notes on *Pièces de Chair II*”, p. 211.

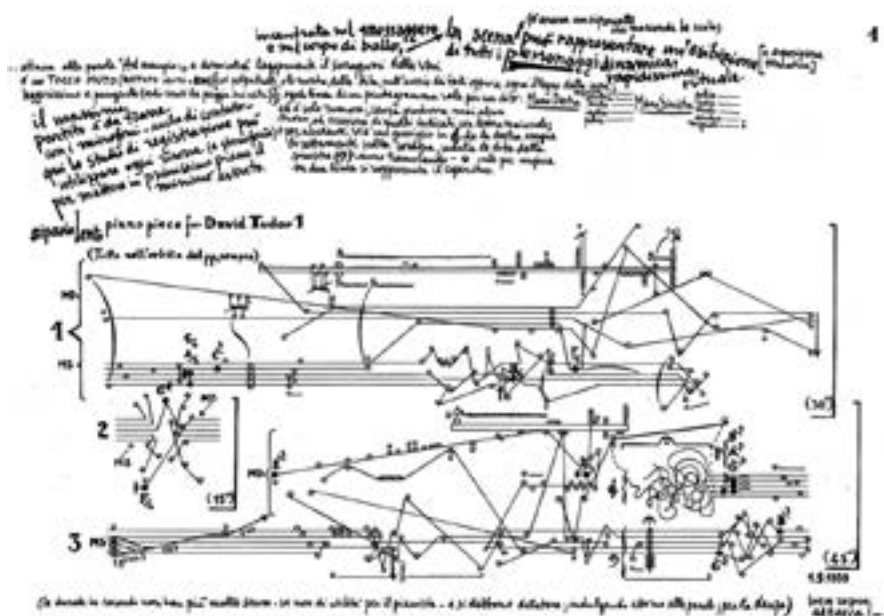


Figure 2: Bussotti, *Oggetto amato (pièce de chair)*, *mitologie danzate, da un'idea di Romano Amidei*, Milano 1976, p. 1. © Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

design of a stage curtain (*idea di un siparietto*), with the figure of the serpentine tangle and the staff as its central motif (see Fig. 3).²⁴ Bussotti suggests in the handwritten note below the drawing of the curtain that the latter could be positioned directly behind the proscenium and backlit in such a way that the serpentine tangle in the centre is clearly highlighted.²⁵

What happens here is of great theoretical interest: a music-notational configuration becomes part of the stage design and is, thereby, transferred into a different art genre. In philosophical terms, we could say that the mode of how it aesthetically comes into appearance has changed: it is not (only) visually presented to be read and performed, but put on stage, displayed as part of the scenery. A photograph of the premiere in Milano (see Fig. 4) gives an impression of what this scenery can

24 For the curtain design, Bussotti has added – quasi as a frame – flocks of black dots of various sizes (up to triangular and quadrangular shapes) and white note heads. Furthermore, he has removed the bracket next to the fermata and added another fermata below the serpentine tangle. On the left side, the flocks of dots are divided by dashed lines – an element that is already present in the visual design of the score of the *Piano Piece for David Tudor* 1.

25 Bussotti, *Oggetto amato*, p. 33: “idea di un siparietto che potrebbe calare immediatamente dopo il boccascena [...], con la possibilità di venire illuminato in controtuce di modo che il grande intreccio serpentino rilevato al centro si stagli netto con grande rilievo”.



Figure 3: Bussotti, *Oggetto amato (pièce de chair)*, *mitologie danzate, da un'idea di Romano Amidei*, Milano 1976, p. 33 (extract). © Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

look like: here, indeed, the notational figure of the serpentine interweavement connected to the staff forms the central visual backdrop for the scene, being depicted on a (presumably half-transparent) stage curtain. The dancer is positioned in front of the curtain.

This transfer is not limited to the first *Piano Piece*. Bussotti, in his handwritten annotations, also proposes using the *Piano Pieces for David Tudor* 3 and 4 as models for scenographic elements. The rhizomatic fourth *Piano Piece* is suggested to be realised as a stage curtain (*siparietto*; possibly on a blue background, as Bussotti writes²⁶) or as a “filamentary metallic mobile”.²⁷ Bussotti’s annotations for the third *Piano Piece* (see Fig. 1b) indicate that another stage curtain could be made from it, suggesting a rose background. Interestingly, the notational design of the latter with the grid of multiplied and fluctuating lines is linked to the mythological story by Bussotti. When the third *Piano Piece* appears in the score, he proposes a

26 Ibid., p. 24.

27 Ibid., p. 33 (“l’idea di un *mobile* metallico filiforme”). The italicised word is underlined in the original.



Figure 4: Photograph from the premiere of *Oggetto amato* in Milano.
Photo by Erio Piccagliani. © Teatro alla Scala.



Figure 5: Bussotti, *Oggetto amato* (*pièce de chair*), *mitologie danzate*, da un'idea di Romano Amidei, Milano 1976, p. 34. © Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

central dance solo of Tifone stealing Osiride's corpse and breaking it into pieces, and connects it to the dissolution of musical texture in the score.²⁸

The following page (p. 34) contains the draft of a different stage design. Barely visible dashed lines indicate the outlines of grey tulle curtains in the background. According to Bussotti's handwritten annotations, the "main scenic object" (*l'oggetto scenico principale*) is the grand staircase in the centre of the page, richly decorated with floral and tendril patterns. The free-hanging staircase-like element on the upper left side is to serve as a model for further decorative elements of the scenery at various heights (see Fig. 5).

Most interestingly, the staircase and staircase-like object have an astonishing resemblance to the notational configuration of the serpentine entanglement connected to the five-line staff, which is depicted on the *siparietto* draft on the preceding page (p. 33, Fig. 3). The similarity lies in the playful visual configuration of straight lines (of the steps and, respectively, of the staff) and meandering lines (of the tendril ornamentation and, respectively, of the serpentine lines) – a similarity which is also suggested to the reader of the score through the adjacent display on the layout of a double-page.²⁹

Considering the facts that Bussotti's artistic work included, among other things, composition and scenography, and that he often wrote music and drew stage designs in the same frame: the two-dimensional inscription surface of the score, it is not surprising that a certain parallelity, a similar visual aesthetics, can be witnessed in his practices of notational and scenographic line-drawing.

From a media-theoretical point of view, it can be stated that in both practices, a two-dimensional space is structured, here: scaled, with similar graphic elements. Music notations and scenographic designs are, of course, two very distinct forms of representation and both preceded by different medial translation processes, i.e. the processes through which sound and musical performance, on the one hand, and three-dimensional stage objects, on the other hand, have been transferred and reduced onto a two-dimensional plane. But once transferred onto that surface, even heterogeneous practices and materialities become comparable, and the two-dimensional inscription surface with its homogenising effect³⁰ can become a space for medial transfers and interactions.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from the preceding observations on the score of *Oggetto amato*: Firstly, there is a certain permeability between Bussotti's notational and scenographic practices; a permeability that allows for a notational figuration – or even a complete graphic score – to become the design

28 Ibid., p. 17.

29 Contrary to expectation, pages 33 and 34 in the score of *Oggetto amato* form a double page, since page 28 takes up two pages.

30 Krämer, *Figuration, Anschauung, Erkenntnis*, p. 78.

of a stage curtain.³¹ With scores being transformed into constitutive scenographic elements, the boundary between music notation and scenography is not only blurred but indeed crossed.³² This crossing is facilitated by the fact that besides its referential functionality, music notation has (and can, indeed, ‘assert’) its own visual presence.³³

Secondly, in the example at hand, the graphic element of the line serves as an intermediary between music notation and scenography. It comes into view as a form of articulation that can connect two very different art genres.

Given this intermediary status of the line, and the fluid boundaries between music notation and scenography, the question arises whether we witness something like a ‘return’ to a non-differentiated ‘graphism of the line’ in a score such as *Oggetto amato*. The term ‘graphism’ has been coined in prehistoric³⁴ and anthropological studies to denote a human form of articulation before the differentiation of drawing and writing. It is based on the ancient Greek verb γράφειν (‘graphein’), which can have the meaning of carving, and of both writing and drawing. More recently, the term has been taken up in the interdisciplinary research on writing. According to the German philosopher Sybille Krämer, “graphism arises from the interaction of point, line and plane, constituting the common root of drawing and writing”.³⁵ Furthermore, she has highlighted the “creative potential of graphism, understood as a force of articulation emanating from the body before it is enclosed in a disciplined, consciously controlled graphic forming”.³⁶

Indeed, the example of *Oggetto amato* – and, in fact, much of Bussotti’s *œuvre* – makes it very evident that there is no hard and unbridgeable distinction between writing (here: writing music) and drawing (here: drawing set designs).³⁷ However, the permeability mentioned between those practices in Bussotti’s work should not be misconceived as a tendency towards a pre-institutionalised, non-differentiated

31 This permeability extends to other forms of visual art, e.g. to painting. Bussotti’s music-notational practice of freehand-ruling is taken up, for instance, in his drawing *Giallo* (1960, printed in Bucci, *L’opera di Sylvano Bussotti*, p. 83), the music-diagrammatic practice of line drawing, thus, entering the art of painting. See Freund, “Zwischen bildender Kunst und Musik(notation)”.

32 For a recent example of this kind of disciplinary crossing, see Simone Spagnolo’s work *Touch-less: Wearable Graphic Scores for One Acting Singer* (2015), the score of which (printed on two oversized foam hands) features simultaneously as a theatrical prop, for which the composer has coined the term “score-prop” (Spagnolo, “*Touch-less*”, p. 150). Since the hand-shaped score invites theatrical actions, Spagnolo conceptualises his musico-theatrical piece as “score-theatre” (ibid., p. 159).

33 See Celestini/Nanni/Obert/Urbanek, “Zu einer Theorie der musikalischen Schrift”, p. 5. Cf. also Martin Seel’s remarks on the ‘constitutive intermediality of the arts’, i.e. the inherent relations of one art genre to others: Seel, *Ästhetik des Erscheinens*, p. 179.

34 Cf. Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, pp. 187–192.

35 Krämer, *Figuration, Anschauung, Erkenntnis*, p. 68.

36 Ibid., p. 69.

37 Cf. the reflections on the fluid boundary between writing and drawing in Ingold, *Lines*, chapter 5: “Drawing, Writing and Calligraphy”, pp. 123–155, and in Gray, *Lettering as Drawing*.

graphism of the line – as if an immediacy of articulation could be excavated that is untouched by the historical developments of the arts and somehow revokes the gradual historical differentiation between writing and drawing. In order to substantiate and follow this line of thought, the next part of the paper presents an interpretation of Bussotti's meandering and vibrating lines that presupposes the differentiation of the arts and is based on aspects particular to the material and historical dimensions of music.

2. SEDIMENTED HISTORY IN BUSSOTTI'S FREEHAND LINE-DRAWING

Without doubt, Bussotti's practices of musical writing are highly individuated, personal and expressive. At the same time, Bussotti's writing practices are situated in specific music-historical traditions and contexts, which, in turn, can manifest themselves in concrete music-notational forms. The *Piano Piece for David Tudor 1* is a wonderful example. A striking visual feature of its score is the fact that individual lines break out of the traditionally immovable, often pre-ruled staff; they deviate from its straight course (Fig. 2).³⁸ The five-line set, formerly an irreducible basis of Western staff notation bearing traces of control and standardisation, is visually presented by Bussotti as a flexible and variable structure. This holds true especially for the passage mentioned already of serpentine lines passing into a five-line set: the glissando lines seem to solidify into, to turn into the five-line system, as if the idea – much discussed in the 1950s and 1960s – that staff notation is historically contingent (and not a naturally given fact) has sedimented into an image.

Taking into account the debates of the 1950s and early 1960s on the limits of traditional Western staff notation,³⁹ it is plausible to interpret this passage as a kind of commentary on traditional notation: liquifying and deconstructing the five-line set, Bussotti's musical writing seems to question the inevitability of staff notation. His writing, thus, appears as a medium for reflection on the visual-spatial conditions of previous notational practices. In this self-referential figure (mu-

38 In the *Piano Piece for David Tudor 1*, the five lines of the staff refer to the fingers of the right (MD) and left hand (MS). The black note heads stand for actual pitches, while the white note heads require a specific mode of attack Bussotti refers to as 'battuto muto', which means to 'silently hit' the keyboard and the lid with fingernails or fingertips.

39 Criticism was raised, for instance, on its 'rigidity' (see e.g. Brown, "Notation und Ausführung Neuer Musik", p. 68) and its 'inadequacy' in conveying certain contemporary compositional ideas, playing techniques and performative actions (see e.g. Kagel, "Komposition – Notation – Interpretation", p. 57). Furthermore, and in more general terms, the interdependence of composition and notation has been made subject to collective reflection (see e.g. Haubenstock-Ramati, "Notation – Material und Form", p. 52).

sic notation reflecting on its own conditions⁴⁰), Bussotti's score shows aspects of what is often called 'meta-music'.⁴¹

There is crucial point to be made from these considerations which is also relevant to other forms of graphic notations: while the meandering lines in Bussotti's musical scores may suggest something like an increased 'immediacy'⁴² that comes into play both in the process of writing and reading the notation, at the same time, the lines are highly mediated. They bear traces of a specific music-historical configuration, and this kind of historicity is legible.⁴³

The same holds true for Bussotti's specific technique of freehand line ruling. To pursue this thought further in a broader cultural-historical context, an observation on the history of lines and "line-making",⁴⁴ made by British anthropologist Tim Ingold, is cited here:

[In Western societies], the straight line has emerged as a virtual icon of modernity, an index of the triumph of rational, purposeful design over the vicissitudes of the natural world.⁴⁵

The hegemony and ubiquitousness of the straight line has been, as Ingold argues, accompanied by certain metaphors and attributions: straightness has been associated with rationality and dignity (as in 'thinking' or 'standing straight'), while phrases such as 'stepping out of line', or having a 'wandering', 'twisted' or 'devious mind' hold rather negative connotations.⁴⁶ As a result, Ingold says:

In place of the infinite variety of lines [...] with which we are presented in phenomenal experience, we are left with just two grand classes: lines that are straight and lines that are not.⁴⁷

In light of this cultural-historical context, the grids of multiple, fluctuating lines in Bussotti's graphic scores can be seen as a break with the modern, rationalised straight line, which is a standard not only of modernity but also of Western staff notation. Bussotti's oscillating lines challenge the authority of the straight, pre-

40 This conceptual explication differs from David Gutkin's approach, who has described Bussotti's *Piano Piece for David Tudor 1* as a "drawing about notation": Gutkin, "Drastic or Plastic?", p. 268.

41 See e.g. Danuser, *Metamusik*.

42 In the present context, 'immediacy' refers to the importance of the here and now in the act of expression, in the marginalisation of the processes of coding and decoding signs.

43 This is an argument against the view that graphic scores such as Bussotti's can be read *only* associatively and that they are primarily drawings – a view that has also been articulated by contemporaries, e.g. by György Ligeti ("Neue Notation", pp. 38–41) and Cornelius Cardew ("Notation", p. 23).

44 Ingold, *Lines*, p. 1.

45 Ibid., p. 156. Chapter 6 of Ingold's book is entitled "How the line became straight".

46 Ibid., pp. 157–159.

47 Ibid., p. 159.

ruled line and, by extension, the hierarchical value system and discursive attributions connected to it.

In terms of music, this subversion of the straight line can entail a shift away from principles that are closely connected to the notational standard of the five-line staff: from clearly defined pitches and intervals; from major-minor tonality and other forms of systems that give order to the sound material; from the privilege of pitches and durations over other sound and performance parameters; from the notion that musical works should have definite forms; and, possibly, even from the very idea of standardising music and music notation.

If, in Bussotti's freehandedly drawn linings, the straight line is negated, or rather: suspended, it is suspended in the sense that some aspects of its former notational functions are still effective: some sense of linearity and spatial orientation are preserved in the horizontal, parallel arrangement.

3. MUSICAL WRITING AS A SCENOGRAPHIC ACT

We have seen that there is a permeability between Bussotti's music-notational and scenographic practices, which becomes particularly visible when music-notational configurations, or entire scores, are taken up in stage designs. The graphic element of the line has come into view as an intermediary, connecting music-notational acts of writing and scenographic acts of drawing (part 1). Despite the disciplinary permeability outlined, there are music-specific interpretational and historical contexts manifest in the meandering and oscillating lines of Bussotti's graphic notations (part 2). Therefore, while there are intermedial interactions at play in the score of *Oggetto amato*, the differences between the heterogeneous representational orders of music notation and scenography are not levelled out. Their interconnection rather creates frictions which can be made productive in interpretational processes and can shed light on the conditions of each dimension.

To give an example: When the scores of the *Piano Pieces for David Tudor* are turned into stage curtains, they will have a *visual* impact on the scenery – through their specific visual design and aesthetics –, yet they will still invite to be *musically* read. The scores (or score parts) might be related, or contrasted, by the audience to the music heard in that or a previous moment; they might even be performed 'mentally', in an act of silent reading, adding a layer of 'imagined' sound to the pre-recorded music. Furthermore, they might be associated with the plot of the ballet. Does the notational figure of the serpentine tangle turning into the five-line staff not appear as a 'beloved object' itself, reappearing on stage in different media?⁴⁸ This line of reading – in light of which the title *Oggetto amato* could be associated

48 As a stage curtain, on a costume (Bussotti, *Oggetto amato*, p. 35), and – as has been suggested above – within the design of the grand staircase.

with an aestheticisation (or even a fetishisation⁴⁹) of music notations – is supported by the fact that the aforementioned notational figure is depicted repeatedly in the score.⁵⁰ Moreover, as has already been outlined, the *Piano Piece for David Tudor 3*, with its liquidation of the staff into a grid of dynamic lines innumerable to the naked eye, might mirror and be mirrored in the idea of the dissolution of Osiride's body. On a more general level, perceiving what happens on stage against the backdrop of a music-notational stage curtain could have an anti-illusionistic effect, the attention being drawn to the action on-stage in its sign character.

The interconnection of scenographic and music-notational elements can also have an effect in the other direction: having seen the *Piano Pieces* being put on stage visually, the experience of *Oggetto amato* can change our perception of the *Pièces de chair II* cycle from the 1950s, suggesting a much more radical theatrical interpretation of the pieces.⁵¹ In fact, there have been theatrical renderings of instrumental scores of Bussotti's, such as *Sette fogli*.⁵²

Oggetto amato is of a specific relevance for the theory of musical writing, since it makes explicit and, thereby, allows us to uncover an aspect of musical writing that is often overlooked and can be described as its 'scenographic'⁵³ dimension. To different degrees, a scenographic impulse is always inherent to an act of musical writing: not only is something created through writing and shown to us, it is being 'staged' as meaningful.⁵⁴ It is accompanied by the gesture of putting something on-stage.⁵⁵

To varying degrees, this holds true for a printed score by Maddalena Casulana, for a Beethoven autograph and, most explicitly, for contemporary intermedial music phenomena: the score in Federico Reuben's *On Violence* for piano, live electronics, computer display and sensors (2009–12), for instance, is an integral part of the work and exhibited on stage; musical writing in Claudia Molitor's *You Touched the Twinkle on the Helix of My Ear* (2018) is depicted on a screen during the instru-

49 Cf. e.g. Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*, p. 234.

50 Bussotti, *Oggetto amato*, pp. 1, 33, (34), 35, 41 and 42. The notational figure is also depicted on the pages that contain the title information and the "argomento", both without pagination.

51 Giuseppina La Face has pointed out the inherent dimension of theatricality in Bussotti's instrumental music: La Face, "Teatro, eros e segno", p. 254.

52 See the information on the homepage of Sylvano Bussotti, http://sylvanobussotti.org/composizioni_da_camera.html (17.8.2023). Also see Mastropietro, *Nuovo Teatro Musicale*, chapter "Sylvano Bussotti. Totalità del/nel teatro musicale", pp. 411–472, esp. pp. 420–423.

53 The term 'scenographic', as it is used here, is not restricted to the institution of the theatre or the theatrical arts, but has been transferred to other cultural expressions such as writing. See Gerhard Neumann's remarks on the inherent scenographic moment of language and writing, drawing on Barthes's notion of *scénographie*, regarding the field of literature: Neumann, "Einleitung" and id., "Theatralität der Zeichen".

54 This insight is encapsulated in Roland Barthes' famous words on Bussotti's scores: "The theatre [...] begins with the graphic apparatus" ("le théâtre [...] commence à l'appareil graphique"). Barthes, "La partition comme théâtre", p. 10.

55 Cf. Gerhard Neumann, "Einleitung", p. 11.

mental performance. An example from popular music cultures is the practice of Live Coding, in which the code that is being written to generate electronic sounds is displayed on a screen, visible to the (dancing) audience.

The scenographic dimension of musical writing is particularly noticeable in Bussotti's graphic scores. The freehandedly drawn, oscillating lines (with their inherent notational self-reference) are a vivid example: by blurring the conventional musical sign system of Western music, making its lines tremble and, thus, producing irritations,⁵⁶ the score forms the stage on which something is brought to our awareness that usually fades into the background: the visual-spatial disposition of traditional Western staff notation and, in fact, the act of musical writing itself.

POST-SCRIPTUM: THE TWO-FACETED MODERNISM OF BUSSOTTI'S FREEHANDEDLY DRAWN LINES

Pursuing the latter idea further, a second reading suggests itself that adds a further layer to the reading of Bussotti's freehandedly drawn lines as a subversion, negation and alienation of traditional Western notation. This second reading is based on an important facet of Roland Barthes' concept of *écriture*, namely his re-accentuation of writing in light of its connection to the writing hand and body.⁵⁷ Regarding Bussotti's graphic scores, we can say that musical writing comes into view in the refined and meticulously drawn deviations and vibrations of the lines as a trace of a physical activity; here, the materiality, sensuality and corporality – or, to cite another notion of Barthes', the 'grain'⁵⁸ – of musical writing becomes visible.⁵⁹ The tremors and fluctuations of the lines seem to follow not only a logic of negation but also a 'logic of the body'.⁶⁰ Thus, two manifestations of modernism are interconnected in the phenomenon of Bussotti's meandering lines that often appear far apart or even irreconcilable: the disintegration and critical reflection

56 This, again, has an impact on the musical interpretation: While Bussotti's graphic scores, with their lines suggesting gestural movements, can evoke a mimetic and associative ad-hoc reading, at the same time, the dynamic of estrangement creates a distance that interferes with the appearance of immediacy, allowing – or provoking – plurivalent interpretational processes that take into account the inherent negational impulse of Bussotti's 'trembling' (staff) lines.

57 See e.g. Barthes: "Roland Barthes contre les idées reçues", p. 73: "L'écriture, c'est la main, c'est donc le corps: ses pulsions, ses contrôles, ses rythmes, ses pensées, ses glissements, ses complications, ses fuites".

58 Cf. Barthes, "Le grain de la voix".

59 Bussotti's scores with handwritten linings especially seem to revoke the division of labour between composer and scribe, i.e. between a composer producing some sort of (immaterial) musical text and a scribe producing the material signs and lines.

60 In his famous text *La partition comme théâtre* ("The Score as Theatre"), Barthes refers to Bussotti's handwritten scores as "an ordered tangle of impulses, desires and obsessions that express themselves graphically". Barthes, "La partition comme théâtre", p. 10: "c'est [un manuscrit musical de Sylvano Bussotti] visiblement un fouillis ordonné de pulsions, de désirs, d'obsessions, qui s'expriment graphiquement."

of established musical traditions, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, an aesthetics of corporeal expression that is permeated by aspects of pleasure and beauty.

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Outlook

Towards a Rhizomatic Future. Directions for Sylvano

Paul Attinello

Graphic scores, experimental musics, modern and postmodern, Deleuze and Guattari, alliances between ideas from the 1950s and 1960s and our hypermodern, interconnected 21st-century world, which seems to be rediscovering and reevaluating many things – I have had a dense long-term relationship to all these discourses.

The organisers of a 2021 conference on Bussotti, which unexpectedly became a memorial celebration, kindly asked me to give a keynote presentation. This surprised me – my work on Bussotti in the 1980s and 1990s was a core element in my becoming an academic, a musicologist, as well as in realising that those professions could (and should) involve work that is exciting, meaningful, that opens up a wider world. But I wrote most of it thirty years ago; in it is embedded a wide range of ideas and possibilities, many of which now exist only as pages of notes for unwritten texts.

Fortunately, I have lately entered a third phase of life as a psychoanalyst, so mining memory and imagination has become a daily professional activity. Becoming a psychoanalyst was itself a response to the desert of confusion I fell into in 2001, at a time when my circumstances and hopes changed a great deal. At that point, much of this material and its associated ideas seemed to recede into the past; they all looked like lost opportunities for research and teaching, for creativity and productively fluid cultural and aesthetic boundaries, for...

There was a lot that I wanted to do, that I wanted to encourage others to do. Fortunately, the past thirty years have also seen extraordinary changes in structures of communication across the world – it is far more possible to exchange materials and ideas in an internet culture than it once was. It no longer seems absolutely necessary to write published texts or explain to students in a classroom in order to communicate a given idea or interpretation. It is now possible to throw out a large range of approaches in the reasonable hope that younger musicologists, composers, artists, and others who may not define themselves in a given category or function might take such ideas and create, communicate, discuss – and generate larger futures, for themselves and for those who are interested.

You are probably acquainted with rhizomes, and with the famous first page of *Milles plateaux* (*A Thousand Plateaus*) by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,¹ which uses Bussotti's *Piano Piece for David Tudor 4* (1959) as illustration and inspiration.

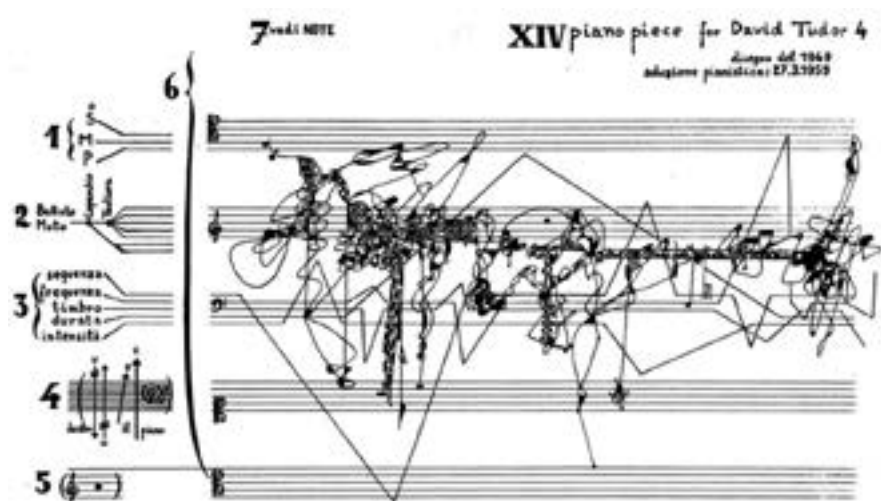


Figure 1: Sylvano Bussotti: *Piano Piece for David Tudor 4* from *Pièces de chair II. Pour piano, baryton, une voix de femme, instruments* (1958 '59 '60), Milano 1998, p. 55. Published by Casa Ricordi Srl, part of Universal Music Publishing Classics & Screen. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted by Permission of Hal Leonard Europe.

This piece is, of course, maddening in any number of ways. It was originally drawn in 1949, and he 'adopted' it for piano in 1959, probably in Karlheinz Stockhausen's Darmstadt workshop on graphic scores. So, at first there was a drawing that used, toyed with, distorted, and split a set of musical staves, all in a context of playful freedom: it was not originally designed for use, nor to communicate particular musical information – though it does play with ideas of musical information, exploding and reorienting the rigid space of a blank set of staves.

Then, ten years later, he created the instructions on the left of the score, which bring it into a field of performance activity – except that the instructions are themselves frankly bizarre: a notation for pedalling at the top, a set of struck and muted notations for the second stave, the third stave listing sequence or string, frequency, timbre, duration, intensity – elements that are musical but also completely incommensurate, they do not line up or fit together, and they are not notated similarly, especially on stave lines. The fourth stave presents scraping up and down inside

1 Deleuze/Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 1.

the piano, while the fifth has a single sardonic *a'* on it, as though pitch is... well, perhaps pitch is no longer *central*, sound qualities are no longer peripheral. We have entered a contingent, destabilised world, a deconstructed world....

One of the reasons Deleuze and Guattari were excited about this was that it was an amazing example of the world they wanted to talk about, create. As an illustration it is brilliant: the material includes elements of music notation that many non-musicians find somewhat intimidating – the precision, the layered aspects – thus grounding it in an ordered world (though, of course, one that is in itself fairly inconsistent – most of us have had some experience in teaching notation and have faced the maddening problems of explaining why *b-flat* is treated the way that it is). This score tears that world apart, gives us ordered elements in a disordered and indeed impossible fashion.

These fractures and what they represent have appeared in aspects of my own work, and of course in many people's relationship with ideas of modernism, the avant-garde, musicology, art, history, performance, and everything else. Our histories from the 1950s and 1960s give us many stories around these topics – who argued with whom, who seemed to win, who got performed and who did not.

By the time I arrived in Newcastle upon Tyne in 2002 – but this is complex knot in the story of my research, and it has a long prehistory. I wrote about Busotti in the late 1980s and early 1990s while full of excitement at the mysteries of such strange works, but being diagnosed HIV+ in 1987 plunged me into years of depression and waiting for death. I went to Darmstadt and Berlin in 1993–94, and was excited to meet composers, see manuscripts, sit in concerts and archives... but I still knew that my time to do such work would soon end. But when new medications appeared in 1996, optimism reappeared: I started teaching in Hong Kong, finished an apparently unfinishable PhD....

In Hong Kong I was given, for the first time in my life, a lot of money and support, which was of course wonderful. I could travel, buy books and scores, meet people I had not met on earlier visits; really dig into some archives, take many pages of notes... There was a job in Sydney, a city I already loved, plus the prospect of working with Richard Toop on a vast range of experimental scores and musics. Before this point, when I moved to Hong Kong to teach there, I made phone calls to make sure that I could enter the country while being HIV+; unfortunately, I did not do that for Australia (I do not know why it did not occur to me). On landing in Sydney, I was told I could not stay – the job vanished, my books were in storage, money started to evaporate... at the end of a jobless year between countries I was in debt, and my engagement with this research collapsed into a time of resentful despair.

Ultimately, I was relatively lucky – in 2002 I managed to get another job in northern England. At that point I assumed that student interest in the avant-garde was a thing of the past. All the things I loved from the later 20th century seemed increasingly historical, embedded firmly in a forgotten past. Students were not

fascinated; in northern England they wanted to do personal expression, folk musics, electronics, so a music created through experimental notation seemed beside the point, as if I were to ask film students to study how to film in black and white.

But that was twenty years ago, and the rapid changes of the internet age have continued to impact every aspect of knowing and understanding, as well as creating. Almost every aspect of musical experimentation – as well as other kinds of experimentation, earlier styles, skills, and specialisations that seemed to have fallen into history – have been revived in varied forms. For much of history, innovative or experimental work in the performing arts has required large urban centres, not only to gather the needed performers but also so that there might be an audience. That is one reason that the history of artistic experimentation is so fractured, so intermittent, why things grow and fade, why things happen in a few locations but not in others. But in an internet culture, these problems change form, or evaporate entirely. People who want to play with musical notation can do so, can get their work performed – and increasingly there are a lot of them, in fact considerably more than there were in 2002.

Foucault once said that the 21st century would be a Deleuzian century, a century where rhizomatic thinking would become familiar and exciting. This work is written with that in mind, in the continued hope that we are going towards a culture where we can follow many paths with freedom and fluidity.

PERFORMERS

A lot of Bussotti's work demands exceptional skill, but also a willingness to do things very differently. That happens, of course, with many experimental/avant-garde artists, but not with all of them. Consider, for example, a generally successful professional classical musician, who is feeling a bit bored with the prospect of another rehearsal of Beethoven, or perhaps Verdi...

This remains a problem in today's world. Susan McClary has told me about working with one of the most respected and, inevitably, most competitive orchestras in North America. Many fine musicians work in that orchestra – and, apparently, a lot of them drink; and then there are drugs. There are, of course, reasons for this – it can be a difficult life: what do you do with a great deal of polished skill, built on exceptional ability and perhaps exceptional intelligence – yet your employers want you to perform the same pieces over and over? My experience managing dancers in the 1980s suggested parallel problems – modern and show dancers seem to enjoy their work and its range of unpredictable techniques and changing repertory, but ballet dancers are on the one hand extraordinarily honed, disciplined, but also too often trapped into a disappointingly narrow, repetitive repertory. And some of them do not like that.

So, under such circumstances, what can you do next? As we know, many of those who so marvellously performed experimental scores were people who had done a great deal with the traditional repertoire. The creators of premieres and recordings of experimental music became a small but specialised coterie, not quite classical, but framed and respected in the culture of classical music. Has such a cultural construct fallen into the past? If we are no longer mesmerised by a famous Berberian, a Tudor, a Kontarsky, as we live in a more fluid musical culture, does it become easier for any skilled or curious performer to *play* with these works, to see what they can create out of these scores and ideas? They can play with the repertoire and see what they can create without having to make a specialised career out of it, without having to choose it as their life. And, perhaps – just as we make sure a music student knows at least something about baroque performance practice – this could be part of a normal musical education?...

SICILIANO

As you may know, my writings on Bussotti focused largely on his earlier works from the 1950s and 1960s, beginning with the *Siciliano*.² Their impact on me was associated with the complex, the experimental, but also the ‘transcendental’: the way these works cross lines of understanding and communication, sound and being, and all of their implications. They contain nonlinear, noncontinuous, non-contiguous notation, thought, and creation; they are fluid crossing of apparent boundaries, transformations across various systems, which can melt into... bodies.

BODIES

The bodies in *La Passion selon Sade*³ are visceral, sensual, clothed in fabric...

You will know the gorgeous books of photographs of Bussotti’s stage costumes, which appear in three languages.⁴ They have different covers, but they are the same book, with fabulous designer photographs – and fabrics, sometimes with other materials, but with a clear emphasis on fabrics that belong on bodies.

Of course, in *La Passion*, these same bodies are also covered in scores – they *are* scores... so how can we recreate that in performance? Are there various ways to do it? He is showing us that when he sees bodies, he can see scores – and when he sees scores, he can see bodies. It is a vision that creates a visceral, powerful

2 Bussotti, *Memoria*. See also Attinello, “Signifying Chaos. A Semiotic Analysis of Sylvano Bussotti’s *Siciliano*”.

3 Bussotti, *La Passion selon Sade*.

4 Morini/Premolo, *Träume in Samt und Seide; Mode et musique dans les costumes de Sylvano Bussotti*.

relationship to the sensual world. I find that fascinating, perhaps partly because, in systems of Jungian personality typology, those visions are not easy for me – I am fascinated with Bussotti, as I am with Meredith Monk, because he shows me deep connections I cannot easily see for myself – and therefore I am excited, disoriented, fascinated. How can we imagine an interpenetration of bodies and images and fabrics, of ideas and letters and signs, and make it happen onstage? It is not easy, but I think it can be done, and we have to allow for the fact that one might do it more or less, at different moments, in different performances. I might think of a performance that paints directly onto bodies, as in the film *The Pillow Book*.⁵

Of course, this also fits well with dancers, much more than with musicians. Dancers already know that they are beautiful, that desiring them is *part* of their art. Musicians often seem a bit awkward in their physical presentation; vocalists are usually aware of themselves as bodies, even as bodies of desire, but many instrumentalists sidestep their own images and any prospects of being desired, at least while on stage. Some instrumentalists are comfortable with being seen acting, vocalising, though that can be unpredictable – how much work is needed to make instrumental theatre, not professionally polished (that should not be necessary, and may even go against a good performance), but at least confident, energetic, something that has life in it?

Bussotti was, of course, willing to see his performers as living bodies – this shows up in many approaches to performance including a great deal of performance art, and in music by Dieter Schnebel, George Crumb, and many others. This contrasts with other approaches, what seem to be lower aspects of stage or ensemble, where performers become mere exchangeable modules, functions, operators... really, servants. If we can bring a bigger awareness, a sense of the body, into a musical work, it can be so exciting – but we certainly do not see enough of that.

GRAPHIC

Various notations and concepts are of course experimental, but the (loosely defined) graphic score does have a certain advantage. It can interconnect symbolic processes and thus reorient, in mutual and multiply productive ways, perception, processing, imagination – especially because we do train ourselves to read, which is neurologically a peculiar thing to do. The densely tangled process of reading (which, though familiar, is not simple) tends to produce varied changes and developments...

5 Greenaway, *The Pillow Book*.

And then, of course, we train ourselves to read (musical?) notation. But seeing actions in multiple dimensions, on a stage, with depth and spatial locations and actions and temporal moments, is very different than any kind of reading on a page. When we fuse those functions, each entails multiple operations in itself, everything starts to proliferate, everything starts to offer more possibility, more openness.

There is a real advantage to this kind of approach. Over years of teaching, I have frequently told students that there are many ways of making and using and exploring all these things, particularly graphic scores. A graphic score can skew off in different directions (I think those of you who have looked at different ones can easily see this). Such scores are not only about whatever sounds may result from their readings, they are also about the processes of creating them.

If you have engaged with such scores, you know it can transform the musical experience of the performer. Performers are suddenly different, performing differently – they can be changed in ways that are powerful. And this can be an antidote for the bored, excruciatingly well-trained musician – the one who faces the next Mostly Mozart Festival with dread and a bottle of vodka: if their training originally tended to narrow towards a point of perfection, but they discover over time that it is unbearable to exist within that single point – what if they could suddenly do a lot of different things, use their skills in ways that are slightly beyond their control?

Performance art does something similar of course, transforming ideas, experiences, symbols, skills in other ways – that is a different, and also productive, line of development.

QUEER

Gay and straight Darmstadt: I wrote about this with David Osmond-Smith, and it is an important part of Bussotti's life story. He was so obviously queer in the 1950s in Darmstadt – and even before then, when almost no other public figure was quite willing to act that way...

The discussion is embedded in a number of complicated issues: people who do not want anyone to know about themselves or others, people who are offended by the possibility that such things exist, people who are insistently political or ideological about private life, or contrarily private about ideological labels... but, throughout his own life, Bussotti kept being, essentially, *out*.

It is interesting how these discussions bother some scholars and historians – some otherwise able scholars do not seem to be aware of the range of possibilities that exist in human behaviour. There are always those who are certain that queer behaviour, real and/or symbolic, must be exaggerated – one runs into this with those historians who seem to believe that artistic imagination cannot coexist with

intensely charged acts; of course, that contrasts with the tendency of others to overstate or overinterpret their more theatrical memories. There seems to be an endless desire to impose Apollonian, or Dionysian, images on the fluidity of real personal history.

Gay and straight Darmstadt, with their multiple meanings, was one of the more important conflicts maintaining the split between what Toop used to call the 'Metzger group' and the 'Stockhausen group'. There were the delights of talking to Heinz-Klaus Metzger, talking to Osmond-Smith, talking to Konrad Boehmer over the years – all gone now. I do remember that, before Osmond-Smith and I published that article about gay Darmstadt,⁶ I was worried – excited, but worried. I wanted to tell these stories, I wanted to tell them clearly, and I wanted to know The Truth. But I heard an always somewhat inconsistent tangle of stories, none of them exactly false, but it was also clear that many were not entirely true. That was – and will always be – problematic: did Boehmer love to exaggerate for the sake of a story? Did Metzger tend to remember people through the lens of his ideological assessments?

Osmond-Smith considered himself a relatively objective observer of all these people and their actions, but it was clear that he enjoyed exaggerating in various ways, then laughing at himself for exaggerating. As a musicologist, he was passionately excited by personalities and clashes, and endlessly willing to talk about their historical and aesthetic implications – but also worried about what would appear on paper, what would be communicated to a larger or more judgmental world. So, in the article we wrote, I tried to be more direct – though I knew I was discussing things that might have been speculation or were, more probably, fact mixed with projection and speculation – but perhaps it is too much to worry about that, as it is in the nature of any history based on story and memory.

As I say: all these men are gone. One thing we could do is try to tell stories without being concerned about their agreement or permission. Or we could erase all these discourses based on the old-fashioned idea that 'this is none of our business' – people should not know, just shut up about it.

But I do not think either of those positions really work. Thinking of it in a more psychoanalytic way, as I might with a patient who is having trouble focusing on something that is deeply important to them, I suggest that this is embedded in our dense histories of being LGBTQ+ as we now call it, because such histories, and the lives of our predecessors, were never *entirely* knowable in any case. Some of that is about what is concealed – which is a common political concern from the 1960s and 1970s: is it not terrible that people had to hide? Of course, that is important, but it's also a bit old-fashioned. To ignore such concerns, even in a time when people do not have to conceal themselves as much, can lead to a better appreciation of exaggeration and play and irony, subversion, a certain chaos, and a

6 Osmond-Smith and Attinello, "Gay Darmstadt".

lot of pleasure. That was also worthy of being celebrated: so, if Metzger and Rainer Riehn are sitting with me at an outdoor café in Berlin, telling me stories – but they do not quite fit with the stories Boehmer tells me while we are sitting beside a canal in Amsterdam, and they do not quite fit with the stories Osmond-Smith tells me in his small house in Brighton, as he walks back and forth to the kitchen with a painful but determined gait, to make a pot of tea...

Maybe it is because they are all having fun: because this is exciting, this is life. Because this is kind of queer. And maybe, if we could really know the exact sexual and social history – Pierre Boulez and Boehmer and Stockhausen and Luigi Nono – and even Bussotti – maybe, if we tried to know all these things through a specifically delimited structure, it might make us hopelessly and determinately... *straight*.

METZGER

As for Metzger himself... he always spoke so beautifully, so intelligently; but he also tended to structure memory and discussion in a way that was clearly, transparently, and ethically *right*. That raises questions: back when he was young, long before I knew him at all – what were processes of creation, of interpretation, of ideas, as they went back and forth between Sylvano and Heinz-Klaus? Because I think it was complicated. They were in a relationship, they were talking and making, things were happening around them – I doubt that anything came only from one or from the other, and there were so many remarkable composers and performers and theorists talking to both of them.

Metzger's passionate knowing, interpreting, analysing – Metzger as an intellectual, as someone who wanted to know what everything meant, to find all possible meanings, to understand them in terms of positive or negative value. This would later grow into a broader wisdom – the vast world of *Musik-Konzepte*, his extraordinary generosity to ideas in the time that I knew him – but I suspect that when he was younger, he was more opinionated, even more doctrinaire, from what people say. I'm sure his strictness did at times clash with Bussotti's tendency to create, to generate – because this is one of the things that makes Bussotti a bit different than many of the composers and others around him. When a question or a doubt came up: does this work, does this not work?, Bussotti was far more interested in making something new (even if he used pieces of the old) than in slowing down and figuring out implications or limitations. That is a real creativity, something that, as a Jungian, I would want to point towards, with all its Dionysian aspects – this is about proliferation, energy, life.

Speaking as a psychoanalyst, we see in many couples that, when they are older, they may be more willing to complement each other – but, when they are young, people tend to clash more. One, or both, insist(s) on being right. It can be difficult for young people to live with someone who is not as they are and *not* push

them to be more similar. One senses that boundaries between ideas and personalities in this era – and perhaps in all historical eras – were looser, more porous, than we have remembered; that is in itself Deleuzian, rhizomatic, emphasising the collaborative tangle of possible ideas, reflections, creations, multiplicities. This is actually a good thing, and that includes the impossibility of knowing exactly what happened. A wish to know, with certainty, is a scholar's personal indulgence – it cannot be the only measure of understanding.

SCORE

Gardner Read,⁷ an American musicologist, published several books on notation and graphic scores. He generally focused on the 'best' ways to make such scores: can we predict the resultant sound, is it logical, is it reproducible, is there a good chain of transmission? Such a discussion suggests thinking in terms of signals, semiotics, linguistic translation, all the communicative processes that are associated with the semiotic chain. The background assumption in such analysis is that music is a process that demands accuracy and is thus subject to a kind of information theory, as established by Shannon and Weaver. I was interested in this kind of semiotics in the 1980s, and it is worth studying, but it certainly does not need to dictate creative processes.

Then there is Erhard Karkoschka's approach⁸: as I've taught about graphic scores over the years, I think that, of the various writings I've seen about them, Karkoschka's remains among the most useful and the most fascinating. Karkoschka was interested in many kinds of scores, in many directions for visual and aural elements – you can compare this to John Cage's *Notations*,⁹ a wonderful book, but not as challenging. Cage merely collected available scores, while Karkoschka searched for as many answers as he could find for several questions: what are things I do not quite understand, that no one quite understands? He believed that was what was worth looking at; the result is terrifically exciting, and the book remains a powerful piece of work.

Of course, Bussotti's scores have always been resistant to any kind of rational analysis, to anyone claiming that there is a *correct* way to make a score, to make or communicate a piece of music, even a sound. His work is always alive and inconsistent and demanding. You may have seen pictures of the circular dais at the Venice Biennale when he was directing the musical portion in the early 1990s, which was entirely covered with a new score. An obvious question that came up for the audience would have been: is someone supposed to perform this? That is of

7 For instance: Read, *Music Notation*.

8 Karkoschka, *Notation in New Music*.

9 Cage, *Notations* (1969).

course fun, and even seeing it as a symbol is also fun. It reminds us to see possibilities everywhere we look; he did not need to design it with a plan for exactly how it should be performed. Such art, such notation, is not merely about a purified line of communication, the correct reproduction of an abstract concept, but is something that is itself unstable and changing.

TOOP

Toop. I speak of Richard, not David – both are interesting of course, but Richard is more useful in this context. Richard Toop was more fascinated by and much more knowledgeable about unusual scores and notations than most. He did not publish as much about them as I would wish, but he loved working and playing and talking with his students in Sydney and musicians all over the world about many aspects of music. He had a huge collection of scores, manuscripts, and detailed interpretative notes in his apartment, but after his death in 2017¹⁰ there was not much in the way of financial resources to preserve his collection, though there is an organised attempt to maintain it with one musicologist working on a part-time basis.

At one point I planned to work with Richard on these materials, and I was always impressed with the depth of his understanding of them. His were covered with writing, interpretations and explanations and diagrams – powerful, surprising things, detailed lines, interleaved post-it notes. He was fascinated with figuring out how the pieces worked, how remarkable musical events could be made to happen. Richard enjoyed his work – he was fun, and that comes out of many of his interpretations. He would think: what can I do with this, how can I make something happen? I hope people will be able to look through his materials in the future.

RATIONAL

The problem of rationality: musical materials, completed or sketched, often appear to be relatively organised. Many drafts and manuscripts I have seen at the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel look like carefully reasoned plans for a piece. The Stiftung is a marvellous collection, the most well-kept and organised of all the musical collections I've seen – but so much of it is not particularly surprising: in looking through sketches one often sees a line of development from early ideas to a finished work that does not seem to take many unexpected turns. A lot of materials I've seen by Mauricio Kagel, whom I wrote about around the same time I was writing about Bussotti, seem quite clear. Kagel had an idea, he made it happen – I may be miss-

10 Attinello et al., “Remembering Richard Toop”.

ing something, and the materials are of interest to Kagel specialists, but they did not generally change my understanding of a work.

I am more excited when materials show something different, something surprising – innovations and possibilities that may not be visible in the published score, things I did not already know. Some things I am discussing here are in that line – partly because that is more the way that Bussotti worked; and perhaps those unexpected possibilities are the best reasons for looking at sketches and drafts made nearly seventy years ago.

COMPOSERS

There are of course composers who only analyse and interpret the music of others when it feeds their own new ideas. I understand that – I've known many composers, some who write or teach, some who also wrote doctoral or masters theses. When they analyse or interpret, especially at early points in their careers, many seem to search for jumping-off points from which they can reach their own creative ideas – and then they become less interested in looking at the work of others in any detail.

There have, of course, been exceptions – Schnebel and Karkoschka were very excited by the works of others. I remember talking to Brian Ferneyhough about Bussotti, and being surprised that he knew Bussotti's work in detail and was enthusiastic about it. Ferneyhough did not try to contain Bussotti's ideas in his own, which indicates a more open, livelier approach to mutual creativity. I've spent time with young composers who are fascinated with some of these possibilities in the last couple of years; the possibilities, the ideas generated around graphic scores, are not lost to the past.

The fact that we live in a hypermodern internet world also matters: the composer is no longer locked into a geographic base of performers and audience, experimental musics are no longer locked into a few urban centres – work can be created and played anywhere. Across the world, interested people can connect, they can play unusual works, and even the performing arts do not need to maintain local performers and audiences in order to survive. If those who are interested in experimenting can connect, that is very exciting – it is actually a very different world than we have ever had before in relation to music, and experimentation, and creativity.

TECHNIQUE

Though I'm always fascinated by the sheer variety of graphic and conceptual scores, I have to admit to my students that many such, even those by brilliant and innovative artists, are relatively linear in conception and construction. Most are, in fact, fairly simplistic when compared with some of Bussotti's works. Even most fluid shapes and carefully articulated lines rarely manage to break through spatial boundaries – x-axis as measured time, y-axis as measured pitch, faster frequencies above and later moments to the right – let alone move beyond the plane of the page.

Of course, much of this is about visual awareness, about the depth and complexity of techniques of drawing, of seeing. I know that when I try to draw myself, I am rarely able to break the usual boundaries; and I remember someone commenting years ago that Morton Feldman's *King of Denmark* is just another piece by a guy with a straightedge. And so, it remains wonderful, perhaps, but with certain... limitations.

How is it possible to go beyond those limitations? I've always looked at Bussotti's works and thought, good lord, look at all that technique. But the vivid realities of the best scores are not only technique – they involve an ability to imagine out *beyond* any learned technique: variation and reorientation, but also changing boundaries and different fields of possible action, and even transforming the basic rules and postulates of different systems. I still do not know many musicians who can create work as radical as the best of Bussotti's – perhaps the study of his work also demands the ideas of an art historian. It would be interesting to see how such a discussion could play out: can we start to look at these works from many different angles – at least as many angles as they generate in themselves?

AUTEUR

Being an auteur – being, or becoming, the central creator of a complex multileveled multimedia work... Jungians often like vision, passion, eros, larger aspirations, though they can at times move towards inflation or narcissism. Such things do indeed show up in artists, and they can be problematic for living in the world. But I prefer that risk to the fields of anxiety, guilt, endless loss that are emphasised in some other schools of psychoanalysis.

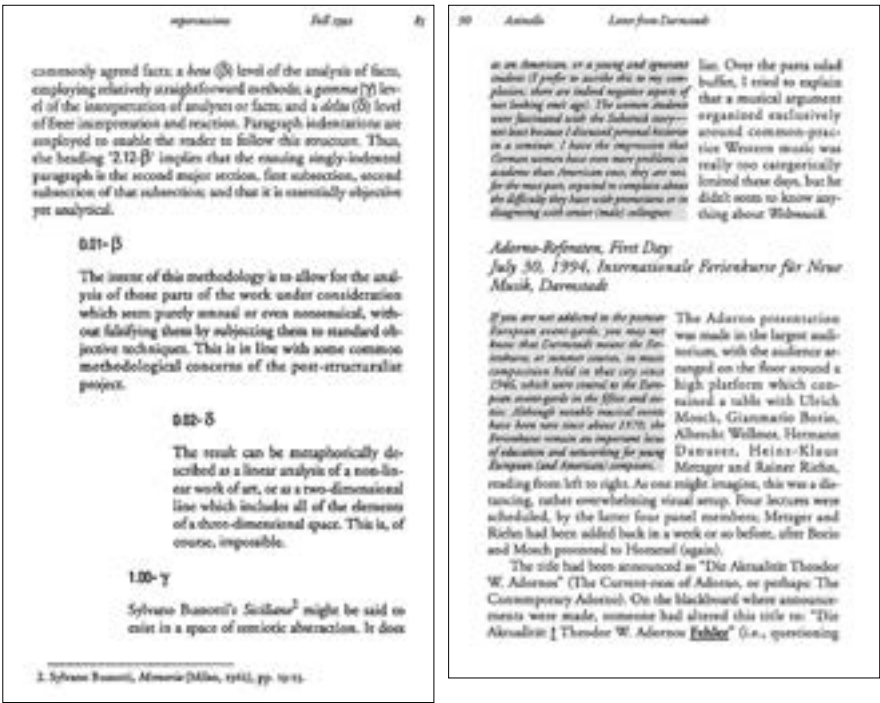
Bussotti was of course an auteur – that clearly enraged some of his Darmstadt colleagues, especially Stockhausen, who wanted to be the ultimate auteur (his evident sense that he can create operas that would create the world, as Richard Wagner wanted to do). There are letters from the 1950s and 1960s where Stockhausen delivers criticisms – often exaggerated – of Bussotti's consistency and technical care. These letters expose a desire to impose rational systems – as well as, of

course, exhibiting the kind of envy that will cause Stockhausen to create *Originale* out of a similarly uncomprehending resentment of Cage. He will see Bussotti's work as sloppy, as inaccurate, when it is merely inconsistent. Stockhausen does not seem to understand that the inconsistencies are where the light, the life, appears: these want to be works that bend around corners, that open up or drop into previously unconsidered alternatives. I prefer a creative and recreative approach where the world is more fluid, where the frames of work and actions are wider and more porous, and of course in such a world competition has less meaning. In such a world, creators can, and should, create.

TEXT/FORM

Texts, forms, forms of texts... I am thinking as a musicologist.

Consider the written page as an experiment: there are forms and layouts that reflect different problems, levels, voices. Consider various experimental literatures – Dada, surrealism, Oulipo, postmodern – and note that their experiments are not only visually distinctive, they are also meaningful. How can we use this in musicological research?



Figures 2 and 3: Attinello, "Signifying Chaos", p. 85; Attinello, "Letter", p. 90.

I tried experimental layouts in three or four articles in an attempt to differentiate levels or kinds of interpretation. Roland Barthes and others created such works as criticism, and they appear in Ivanka Stoianova's book on Luciano Berio¹¹ – she uses fonts, blocks, and margins to distinguish levels of materials from her own analyses and historical interpretations.

I have always loved these kinds of texts, and I was excited to create texts using these constructions – they seem more interesting, they outline larger relationships, they draw one's attention to implicitly or explicitly spatial aspects of discussions (and they avoid the classic problem of writing as *Bleiwüste*¹²). Although it has become vastly easier to create such formats, they never seemed to quite catch on, which is to me disappointing: if musicologists are at times struggling to find ways to articulate something interesting and new, or if they are engaging with the kind of work that destabilises various aspects of the musical work, why would they not make something expressive, something that wakes us up to read it? Can we do this in a way that changes the forms of our discourse?

MUSICOLOGIES

And so, different *kinds* of musicologies...

In the autumn of 1994, around the middle of the time when I was writing about Bussotti and graphic scores, a number of people associated with what had become known as the 'New Musicology' met for three months in Irvine. The city of Irvine, California is not in itself terribly exciting, and there is not much to look at; but the University of California at Irvine has a Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI) that frequently invites groups of people to leave their academic routines and talk about ideas. So, we came together for 'Re-Theorizing Music', and there were wonderful people to talk to – brilliant people and fascinating conversations while isolated in a rather dull suburb. We talked and wrote for months – most stayed for the whole time, perhaps ten professors and five postgraduates, with apartments and offices. We were there to talk about all the new expansion of musicology into gender studies and related ideas; we were expected to interface, communicate, and write research in ways not often available in universities.

Unfortunately, a tumultuous argument developed at the end of the three months, one apparently precipitated by a doctoral candidate who later left academe to create innovative pornography. He never finished his research, which combined ideology, aesthetics, and the art of Tom of Finland, but his company remains famous. We all create through different channels.... But the fight itself

11 Stoianova, *Luciano Berio*.

12 A *Bleiwüste*, or "lead desert", is a German metaphor for a text without paragraph breaks, one that implicitly seems airless.

was destructive – the organisers of the forum were disoriented and at a loss, and the group dispersed in dejected confusion. People later created some of their own writings and research out of it all, but the planned group work was never published.

I had my own ideas about what we could create in that wonderful hothouse environment. I wanted writings that would represent different kinds of collaboration, mutual experiments that could represent different people and their ideas in interwoven combinations.



Figure 4: Possible approaches to scholarly pages.

So, collaborative texts based on experimental formats. These sketches are simple, as I am no graphic artist, but with current software one could create pages that are considerably more interesting. Unusual formatting of text on the page remains something for advertisements and leaflets, but it could be communicative, radical, thought-provoking.

If, for example, you had two musicologists – as might have been possible in that Irvine group – or a musicologist and a director or composer or performer, writing and relating texts next to each other that explore elements in parallel, reflecting back and forth. Or perhaps a central text with reflections and arguments and responses arranged around it. This could work like a medieval gloss – traditionally, of course, the central text would have been a famous or classic one, and the gloss texts around it would be commentary, discussion, elaboration, but other relationships could be shown.

Can we do that with each other's work? Because for hundreds of years people have published single-voiced texts, even if by more than one author; in the humanities today, everyone always publishes single-author articles. (The sciences are somewhat different – it is normal to have multiple authors for a given paper – but that paper is presented as a single, uninflected, unitary argument: any advantage of working through different opinions and points of view is erased in the final product, which is thus, by the standards of Deleuze and Guattari, paranoid, falsified, artificially deadened.) What we do is perhaps reasonable enough, but – can we not go further? We are so much more interesting together than we are alone – almost any discussion across the humanities is more interesting than any single person talking.

I would like to see something on the page, in a book, where our discussions would be seen and developed. Perhaps as hypertext, which is so much easier now than in the early 1990s. I'd be much more interested in our publications if they had people talking with each other, rather than merely next to each other. This is rooted in visions I've always had, and still hope to see in some future.

CORRECTNESS

The problems of being correct, of processing what we say and do and write so that it is always-already correct, of writing music and musicology correctly... this was a powerful battle that engaged Boulez and Stockhausen among others (one thinks of the brutality between Cage and Boulez, of ruthless dismissals – some of their mutual criticisms were the opposite of anything that could be considered 'experimental,' open-ended, in development).

I have written about arguments between Boulez and Bussotti about the techniques used in *Due voci* (1958), and we are familiar with Stockhausen's incomprehension of the possibilities represented by Bussotti's more inconsistent, more improbable gestures and scores, which also reflected some of Metzger's ideas. These attitudes were central to the clash between Metzger and Stockhausen, which folded out across many works and careers.

I've also written about Stockhausen's *Originale* (1961) and its imitation of Cage – he understood enough to create a theatre piece of people doing unusual things

on age, but then he gave the work a title that identified them as, in essence, mere eccentrics. That abruptly reduced the possible meanings of the piece to a vanishing point – we are told that we are merely watching people who happen to be weird: they will do some things for a while, and then it will end. And so is possibility diminished, and a Cageian vision reduced to something that is merely silly....

So, instead of correctness, can we move towards fertility, towards proliferation, towards multiplicity – towards things that Bussotti, with Cage, Deleuze, and many others, wanted to celebrate.

STAGES

The creation of new spectacle, in an era of destabilised standardisation across opera and other musical stage works... there is this ongoing problem, that large, expensive works and their processes are not often recorded, either as audio or video. There are of course composers and directors who dislike video, who dislike the determinate inflexibility of recorded media – but when things are not recorded, they are lost. How can new performers, new directors and designers, new composers, realize what might be possible – how can they see what has happened, what mattered, and be inspired by it?

For years I've pushed artists to allow for video recordings – I admit that some of that comes from my own acquisitiveness, my disinclination to let the past be the past. But some of the most radical works of the 20th century were never recorded, and their ideas have faded into descriptions – if we could see and hear them, we could remember that many were absolutely, remarkably strange, radical, new. There have been so many things you would not be able to imagine from looking at a score or a text....

LA PASSION

These are my own notes, based on some of the many materials I saw in Bussotti's house in Genazzano. There was a copy of the published score of *La passion selon Sade* covered with his performance notes in green and red. I transcribed the notes; this is the beginning of my transcription – it's not something one could make into a score, but there is endless information and ideas about how to create a performance: not as the correct or only way to do it, but as a source of possible ways forward. There is fortunately an immense amount of this material.

performances from fragmentary notes? There are organised formal plans that may now be nearly indecipherable: can they get us closer to anything interesting about the work? And there are those arguments with creators about video and image – when something remarkable happens, and only a small number of people get to see it...

This is a list of audio cassettes that I found in a box in Genazzano. This is a small part of page one of a list that goes on for six or seven pages. So, these materials exist: they are perhaps rather hard to care for – as you know audio and video tape is difficult to maintain in a library. But they may be important and useful: perhaps they could be digitised, and there is certainly a vast trove of rich materials here. How can we look at these things, what can we do with them?¹³

PHILOSOPHIES

In relation to philosophy, I want to return again to the demands of Deleuze and Guattari: can we have a schizoid approach to the future, a rhizomatic relation to creating, thinking, performing?

Deleuze and Guattari liked Bussotti's work; after all, they put an example of it on the first page of *Mille plateaux*. There are overlaps with Metzger's ideas, both intending to encourage and inspire new approaches to creation. This connects with other composers – Hans G. Helms formed a group to read *Finnegans Wake*, and György Ligeti's fascination with it later grew into *Aventures* and *Nouvelles aventures*. Those works, with Helms' *GOLEM*, suggest the dense rhizomatic world of Bussotti's music; they reflect a desire to imagine utterly different, extraordinarily *other* kinds of music, with other ways of thinking and being.

SELVES

Selves that are doubled, selves that are multiply oriented, and problems or advantages with them...

Though our world is more connected, denser, and we are able to see much more of past and present than ever before in history, this can make existence and purpose difficult. How do we create identities? Young people do not appear to need to seem unique as much as in other historical periods, but how can they distinguish themselves from others? Many of my students seem to want this, and they look at experimental scores, and what they might do with music or creativity, from a point of view of finding something not already known. So, looking for the

13 After the donation by Rocco Quaglia of much of Bussotti's material to the NoMus Research Centre in Milana digitisation of the archival material has started.

possibility, the ability, to create *differently* – which is no longer contingent on living in large cities with a range of performers and audiences: one can create radical artistic and experiential enclaves independent of spatial proximity. And that may become a current answer to Erich Fromm, to Herbert Marcuse, even, perhaps, to Theodor W. Adorno.

GENAZZANO

These are from my own notes on visiting Sylvano and Rocco Quaglia in December 1998:

I had forgotten how beautiful this farmhouse is... both country-Roman, red with steps, stone, plaza, etc., and sophisticated, with complex and sometimes baroque paintings on the walls. I have a pleasant guest room, old furniture, big spacious room with stone floors... it is always rather difficult to work here, with the relaxed country attitude and the social focus on enjoying oneself (the others work alone and in quiet). As always, the contrast between the volume of interesting materials that I want to work on (which makes me demanding and nervous), versus the pleasures of the house and landscape which make me lazy and cheerful, are rather confusing... Stone floors, open plaza. The cats live in the plaza; he doesn't let them in the house; they are incredibly cute, there being three kittens who were very interested in the paella/calamari dish Rocco made for dinner. Rocco keeps house and cooks, while SB paints, works, and fusses...

PERFORMANCE ART

How do we define performance art, which is not unrelated to Bussotti's experiments? In teaching the subject, I tend to detach performance art from its background in art galleries – not to misrepresent its history, but because the possibilities of any kind of 'performance art' cross through a wide variety of artists and media, and music students will want to think of it in their own terms.

Instead, I emphasise that performance artists often cross from familiar territory into the unfamiliar, making it therefore different (a kind of *Verfremdung*), even if for a given audience and its expectations. So, performance artists who are particularly related to music would include Meredith Monk (a different use of voice, with movement and image coming in through different paths); Laurie Anderson (an altered approach to text with interlocking, unstable technologies), Robert Wilson, Diamanda Galás... and, I think, Bussotti.

La passion selon Sade can only be considered a work of performance art in its overlapping categories and transformations – it is theatre of course, but not as we know it. And what does that mean for the entire process of making performance art?...

The Getty Centre in Los Angeles contains the substantial David Tudor Collection with masses of detailed materials including scores by many composers, along with Tudor's materials for developing performances. The materials related to Bussotti are informationally dense, including pages of numbers to three decimal places – was Tudor measuring the scores, or creating numbers by throwing stalks or coins? These pages represent the generation of performances of the *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* and probably tell us more about Tudor than about Bussotti.

Tudor left a number of detailed charts of various kinds; some are clearly about ranges, and he seems to be reproducing, translating, or creating in response to what he sees in the scores. Many of these resemble materials one sees at the Sacher Stiftung and, as with those, it would require research to decipher their contents. Some suggest the hyper-rationality of throwing the I Ching to generate numbers that could dictate what to perform, and how; they present interesting problems, and in fact it seems to be their purpose to present interesting problems. Tudor certainly appreciated the *Five Piano Pieces*, though he did not like all five equally – he said some were more exciting than others, and it's clear that some seemed to offer more possibility to him.

Along with Tudor's notes, there are two other, quite remarkable, things that people have begun to write about. One is *Piano Piece for David Tudor 6*,¹⁴ which is very sparse and rather pretty. It is also a little hard to 'get' – it seems difficult to know what to do with it at first.

More remarkably – this was one of the most exciting things I had seen in ages when I found it in 1999 – there is *Piano Piece for David Tudor 7*, which Bussotti wrote in one of the scores now in the collection. It is beautiful, it is strange – it seems clear: there are two staves, the cluster of moves in the middle of that first line, then the group of notes and dotted lines, the interesting change in orientation, and the label for fourteen seconds – there is a lot of information here of the kind Tudor loved, and he would certainly have enjoyed figuring out what to do with it. It is also exceptionally beautiful as a purely visual object – in fact I would say it is more beautiful than any of the original five pieces. Of the seven, this seems the most remarkable, and it was amazing to discover such a thing.

EGOS

Sylvano was, admittedly, vain. From an Anglo-American point of view, this may seem a bit embarrassing. People worry about self-indulgence, especially here in England, even more than in America – cultures have different levels of tolerance,

14 See Freund, "Von japanischen Steingärten und Pariser Geschichten", pp. 454–458.

different measures for what is usual or acceptable. So, this might compare to the way we think of Ludwig van Beethoven, Wagner, or other musicians – though they were really too serious to compare.

Sylvano was different. His egotism was more like the playfulness of a young god, the egotism of a very me-centred universe, but that universe is filled with a creative energy that spills out in all directions. It might be seen as an egotism that is not closed, but open: the surrounding world is watered by it, and everything, all around, can become fertile.

UNIVERSAL

There are treasures in Universal Edition...

As you may know, the seven works that make up *Sette fogli* are probably the most often reproduced of works by Bussotti, which makes sense because they are so beautiful and musically evocative. The first piece, *Couple pour flute*, was originally published on its own with a page of relatively simple notational explanations. The full published score does not have instructions for the seven pieces, but instead has a brief, frustrating paragraph by Bussotti that says instructions are no longer needed for these works because musicians know how to interpret them – which is of course nonsense.

As it happens, in the third sub-basement of the Bösendorferstraße building in Wien where UE is housed, in the back of a large room on very high shelves (which require a dangerous trip up by ladder), there was a box marked 'BUSSOTTI', which included various receipts and letters – as well as translations of the original, lost instructions for all seven pieces. In the late 1990s an assistant let me sneak into this sub-basement, quite against the rules, and let me take notes, though I have unfortunately lost some of them. The correspondence in this box shows that Bussotti wrote explanatory instructions for all seven works, and then Cornelius Cardew, Friedrich Cerha and Roman Haubenstock-Ramati made translations of them into English, French, and German – but then someone unfortunately lost the Italian originals. The file includes a shamefaced letter from Universal to Bussotti saying, we're sorry, we've lost the instructions – would you mind recreating them? But Bussotti responded: no, I cannot, and instead he offered them the disappointing paragraph that is now published in the score.

The box in that sub-basement contained the typed translations, without the visual symbols – but the textual explanations are unexpected and surprising, with a number of aspects one could not guess from the scores alone. For instance, *Per tre sul piano* is in three sections, and the three players exchange roles for each section. The *Lettura di Braibanti per voce sola* can be performed by a woman or a man, but each must pay attention to vocal registers, and each is expected to produce different sounds as a result. The piece called *Mobile-stabile per chitarra, canto*

e piano is actually a contest, with the performers playing against each other. And, most unexpectedly, the final *Sensitivo per arco solo* is actually notated in a kind of tablature: the lines are to be read as locations for the fingers, rather than as an analogue of staff notation.

I still remember that dangerous trip up that ladder, probably in 1998, perhaps four meters or more above a concrete floor – I thought: this is going to be it for me, I'm going to fall, and it will all be over. But the materials exist, they are radical and exciting, and it would be wonderful if someone could find them again. I have not been able to find my own copies – they seem to have been lost in my hasty moves from one continent to another. Nicolas Hodges recently tried to find them in Vienna, based on my directions, but was not successful – I hope they have not been destroyed, and that they can be found and published with the scores.

COMPETENCE

Questions of competence... our profession has its own often inconsistent rules, but as someone who has always crossed through different professional fields, I am always fascinated with the meanings of competence, ability, and skill. As I am now a psychoanalyst, I am equally fascinated with ideas of personality typology – not only what we are able to learn in reflecting on our typological choices and limitations, but our abilities that develop from those choices, the ways we are good at things, or not so good.

I am myself text-oriented, linear, conceptual in my ways of thinking – and so Bussotti's work, which is so expressive in a nonlinear global, visual sense, is always both fascinating and a challenge, something far from my comfort zone, something that uses communicative channels where I would never be expert. I also faced this while working on Monk, whose work is so physical, so embodied. I knew I could never be the ideal musicologist, the ideal analyst, the ideal explainer for those kinds of material – but I realised that my *partial* understanding, my need to understand and explain these things for myself, helped me explain them to others. It is like translating from one language to another, though the 'language' here is more a range of ways of seeing or knowing; and that may allow for interesting reactions from people who are learning or watching the results.

Perhaps then, when we are being musicologists, when we are doing research and teaching, as well as when we are creating or performing, the fact that something is not entirely familiar, not entirely under our fingers as it were, may be of positive value: if we have to *work* to see something, can we then explain it more clearly? Can we make it even more important for a listener?

About *Due voci*. This is work I presented at a conference in 1999, shortly before I stopped working in these scores. The score to *Due voci* was transformed before publication through discussions – sometimes close to arguments – among several people. Boulez took the draft of this large early work and rationalised its rhythm and meter, imposing reasonable and consistent solutions onto the fluid instability of Bussotti's experiments. This is something Bussotti asked him to do but, looking at the originals, I now doubt that Boulez' choices were the only, or best, answers.

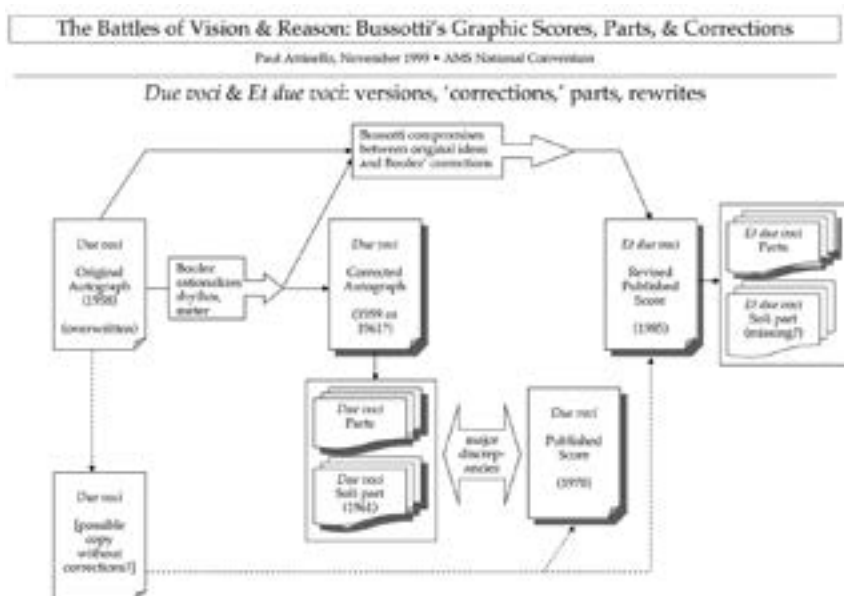


Figure 7: Attinello, process chart on *Due voci*.

It is interesting to examine the drafts and how they were managed by two publishing companies and two composers – it was a technically dense process with various people working, explaining, helping – but there is an aspect of the final decisions that now seem like a kind of suppression, or even intellectual censorship.

PLANS

In the late 1990s, when I was deeply involved with these materials, I started to design expansive frames for my research. Materials from that time indicate some of what I was hoping to do in writing about graphic scores; perhaps younger scholars

can pick up some of these ideas. At the time I wanted for *Piano Pieces for David Tudor* 6 and 7 to be published, as well as the original instructions for *Sette fogli*.

I also cherish my photographs from the house at Genazzano, where we can see not only Bussotti's paintings and drawings, but the ways that the entire space is transformed through them: a remarkable world opens up.

NOTEBOOK

He has shown me a diary he wrote at the age of nine, a torrent of opinions and reflections interspersed with small pictures of places and objects scattered across the pages with a flexibility that suggests his later work.¹⁵

As a musicologist, I've worked with a number of composers, as subjects of study and as colleagues or friends. I've also worked as a psychoanalyst with creative artists, digging into the ways their lives might be connected to what they make, what they want to make. For many, certain points in their early lives where they are permitted or encouraged to play and make can have enormous meaning – we have the potential to grow into huge experiences, into vast lives.

When I first saw that diary, I was a bit confused: did he really do this at the age of nine? It seemed like a remarkable thing to create at that age. But it was clearly one of the original fountains of a vast range of things that became deeply important – not just for him, but important in the world. So, by now, many years later, I am grateful for having seen that small book.

I am also grateful that I'm allowed to exhibit this range of fragments, which are also possibilities for the future. I hope some will pick up these pieces and continue to discuss and create from them.

[Newcastle upon Tyne, September 2023]

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Abstracts

Sylvano Bussotti's Masks. The Author on the Stage (After the "Death of the Author")

Matteo Nanni

The phenomenon of authorial self-staging has been very common in performative art forms, such as Happening, Fluxus, Conceptual Art, Body Art, Behaviour Art, and Theatre of Mixed Means, since the 1960s. Significant examples of an early and substantial new way of self-staging is provided by many works of music theatre by Sylvano Bussotti since *La Passion selon Sade* (1965). The presence on stage is always marking the ambiguity between actor and composer, role and author, and creator and mask. In this paper, this practice will be explored and discussed against the background of Kristeva's and Jestrovic's theory of authorial presence, starting from the theoretical discussion of the "death of the author", as it was articulated by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. After that, some scenes from *La Passion selon Sade* and *Lorenzaccio* are taken under examination and discussed under the theoretical frame of the presence of the author after its 'removal'.

From Silvano to Sylvano. The Young Bussotti in the Mirror of His Letters to Arrigo Benvenuti

Paolo Somigli

Silvano Bussotti — not yet Sylvano — took part in a group of six composers called *Schola Fiorentina* (with him: Bruno Bartolozzi, Arrigo Benvenuti, Alvaro Company, Carlo Prospero and Reginald Smith Brindle) in the early 1950s. They were pupils of Luigi Dallapiccola. Among them, Arrigo Benvenuti, who was six years older than Bussotti and would later marry the soprano Liliana Poli, was in a close friendship with him. When Bussotti lived between Florence and Padua and finally moved to Paris in the mid-1950s, they kept in touch with postcards and letters. Bussotti used his letters to update his friend about his artistic path and, at the same time, about what was happening in the international musical life.

These documents, carefully preserved by their recipient, are now part of the "Fondo Benvenuti", the collection of writings, scores and documents that Benvenuti's family donated to the National Library of Florence. They allow us to follow directly the transformation of Bussotti from the young and scarcely known Silvano to the celebrated Sylvano who shocked the musical world in the late 1950s, revealing, at the same time, the composer's ideas on contemporary musical trends

and musicians, and shedding new light on well-known facts of recent music history.

Michelangelo Unveiled. Discovering *Nottetempo*

Federica Marsico

A particularly representative example of the frequent thematisation of all-round eroticism in Bussotti's operas is *Nottetempo*, "a one-fragment lyrical drama based on Varagine, Michelangelo and Sophocles". Commissioned by the Teatro alla Scala, the opera debuted at the Teatro Lirico in Milan on 7 April 1976 in a diptych with *Oggetto amato*, marking the birth of BussottiOperaBallet.

The chapter investigates how queerness permeates this original reinterpretation of a classical myth. Elements of the plot and the scenography designed by Bussotti for the premiere are explained in terms of the author's wish to underscore the homoerotic desire.

The aria sung by the protagonist in the section *Nottetempo* – the third of the four parts into which the work is divided – is read in light of Bussotti's intent to underscore the erotic charge of the passage. Quotations from Michelangelo's *Rime*, from Heimito von Doderer's *The Lighted Windows* and from a story by Aldo Palazzeschi are also read in this context.

Lastly, some excerpts from the press review of the *première* are discussed to highlight how most journalists harshly criticised the opera because of its controversial topic.

***Izumi Shikibu nikki*: An Inspiring Love Story from Ancient Japan in Sylvano Bussotti's Music**

Alessandra Origani

The purpose of this article is to shed light on Sylvano Bussotti's unperformed opera *Izumi Shikibu. Diario di tre Stagioni*, composed between 2005 and 2006. The study develops starting from the subject, a love affair documented in the diary of the poetess Izumi Shikibu, a historical figure who actually existed around the year 1000 in Imperial Japan and is considered to be one of the greatest writers of that time. Bussotti's music engages in a dialogue with the ancient text, which is full of allegories and metaphors of a refined nature assembled into a mixture of prose and poems. The composer approaches the poetess' poems and puts into music the story of her unfortunate affair. Bussotti's musical interpretation shows more of what the Japanese culture of modesty allows by giving the text a stronger sensual touch. The article describes the musical manuscript, preserved at the NoMus Archive in Milan, and enhances the relationships to the literary source. Comparative analyses are also conducted to establish connections with the rest of the composer's corpus highlighting recurring aspects of his aesthetic.

***I semi di Gramsci*. Communism, Capitalism, Cold War, Avant-garde and the Italian Position**

Vera Grund

This paper explores the intersection of politics and contemporary music in Italy during the Cold War, emphasising the influence of the Italian Communist Party on cultural life and discussing Sylvano Bussotti's composition *I semi di Gramsci* in relation to political and artistic considerations. It discusses the *Partito Comunista Italiano's* impact on cultural policy, Bussotti's artistic autonomy, and his deviation from avantgarde trends. An examination of Bussotti's political positions and his artistic career against the backdrop of *Realpolitik* provides information on this. The analysis of his composition that he based on three letters Gramsci wrote to his wife, Giulia Schucht, unveils connections to musical traditions that, at least, the German avant-garde considered problematic. This is evident not only from his own choice of the term 'symphonic poem', but also from the direct musical references, such as tone painting, in the composition, which he based on descriptions of how Gramsci tried to create a garden and grow plants in captivity. However, it also shows clearly that Bussotti sought to distance himself from the musical avant-garde in a later phase of his life.

Bussotti in 'The Labyrinth'. Friendship and Artistic Relationships with Alain Daniélou and Jacques Cloarec

Costantino Vecchi

Sylvano Bussotti and the musicologist and orientalist Alain Daniélou were, first and foremost, two great friends. They had always been in touch, sharing their thoughts and creations, since they met in France in the early 1970s. During his long stays at Daniélou's house in Zagarolo (Rome) called the '*Villa Labirinto*', only a few kilometres from his own house in Genazzano, Bussotti also established a personal friendship with Jacques Cloarec, the photographer and companion of Daniélou, to whose camera he entrusted many images of himself and his shows. In light of the archival material that emerged from research conducted at the *Alain Daniélou Foundation*, this paper retraces the contacts and artistic relations between Bussotti, Daniélou and Cloarec, focusing particularly on four main topics: Bussotti's fascination with the 'Semantic', the electroacoustic instrument invented by Daniélou, which played an important role in the genesis of *La Vergine Ispirata*; Bussotti's and Daniélou's shared way of approaching the connections between tradition and innovation in arts; their mutual understanding through drawing and painting; and the 'photographic' relationship between Bussotti and Cloarec. This last bond resulted in more than two thousand pictures, mostly unpublished, relating mainly to opera performances staged by Bussotti in the 1980s. This collection constitutes an important and still unexplored source for the study of Bussotti as a stage director, and costume and set designer.

“Œuvre d’adieu à la musique de concert”.

***Julio organum Julii* by Sylvano Bussotti**

Matthias Geuting

Only exceptionally did Sylvano Bussotti turn his attention to the organ, an instrument with which the composer was presumably not too familiar, but had a certain sympathy for due to its associative potential. Bussotti conceived *Julio organum Julii*, a “secular liturgy” for organ and speaker, which he also premiered himself – together with German organist Gerd Zacher, in close temporal proximity to the abysmally mysterious *Passion selon Sade*, introduced by an organ solo. Designed as an “adieu to concert music”, the multilayered work, with its numerous intertextual references, is exemplary of Bussotti’s self-referential approach to composing in the 1960s and his art of staged self-presentation. This article sketches a portrait of the piece against the background of recent organ music history, which is known to have experienced a significant boost during this phase. The circumstances of the work’s composition are illuminated by a number of previously unknown documents.

Between Pre-Fluxus und New Music. Reflections on the Performance Practice of Sylvano Bussotti’s Compositions of the Early 1960s

Anne-May Krüger

New music performance practice has, as any professionalised *métier*, developed its own standards and modes of operation with the aim of enhancing both the efficiency of working processes and the quality of performative results. This article argues that, in the case of Sylvano Bussotti’s *œuvre* of the early 1960s, those practices fall short of exploring the potential of his (calli-)graphic scores. Taking into account the double-rootedness of those scores might open up alternative ways of dealing with the creative space they offer to performers: Sylvano Bussotti, today often seen as an eccentric figure at the edges of the Darmstadt circle, was the most performed composer at the Contre-Festival, organized by the artist Mary Bauermeister in her atelier in Cologne. Featuring intermedial art practices, this event was a reaction to the festival of the International Society for New Music (IGNM) in 1960 and, therefore, highly critical of the new music establishment Bauermeister and her circle identified with the IGNM. This article discusses the potential of Bussotti’s scores of that time which unfolds when so-far neglected aspects are activated, such as its connectedness to pre-Fluxist art practices.

“Adventures of Writing”. On Bussotti’s Practice of Freehand Line-drawing

Julia Freund

This paper offers thoughts on one of the most characteristic features of Bussotti’s musical writing: his technique of freehand line-drawing. Using examples from *Oggetto amato* (1975), the graphic element of the line is examined as an *intermediary* between Bussotti’s notational and scenographic practices. Given this *permeabili-*

ty between otherwise medially differentiated art genres, the paper addresses the question whether Bussotti's use of the line suggests a 'return' to what – in prehistoric and anthropological research and, more recently, in the theory of writing – has been called 'graphism': a mode of articulation *beyond* the institutionalised distinction of writing and drawing. As one possible reply, a reading is proposed in which the dynamic, oscillating lines in Bussotti's musical writing come into view as a *negation* of the straight, rationalised line prevalent in musical notation. Through this music-notational self-reference, musical traditions and practices (even as negated ones) are referenced to and being evoked in Bussotti's graphic notations. The paper closes with remarks on how the respective interpretational horizons of different art media (here: musical writing and scenography) may interlock in the realisation of Bussotti's works, engaging the performers in an interpretational process in which transmedial interactions come into play and turning our attention to a *scenographic dimension* of musical writing.

Towards a Rhizomatic Future. Directions for Sylvano

Paul Attinello

For more than three decades, I have been fascinated with what Bussotti's work suggests about music, about notation, about radical vision, about suggestive lacunae in symbolism and materiality – about rhizomes, about graphics, about ways of making music and ways of making musicology. I wish to open up a range of potential lines of development for newer musicologists, performers, and composers – from scores in archives to ways of writing, from what a closer yet freer look at Bussotti's scores tells us about potential in our world (especially for a wide-ranging internet generation) to what that work inspires us to make as writers, as interpreters, and as complex, imaginative beings.

Contributors

Paul Attinello is a musicologist and psychoanalyst who has taught at Newcastle University, the University of Hong Kong, and UCLA. He received his PhD from UCLA and diploma from the C. G. Jung-Institut, Zürich. He has lived and worked on four continents and been involved in numerous academic and creative events and projects. He is published in a number of essay collections, journals, and reference works, including the ground-breaking *Queering the Pitch: The New Lesbian & Gay Musicology*, writing on contemporary musics, the culture of AIDS, and philosophical and psychological topics.

Julia Freund is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Historical Musicology of the University of Hamburg. Her doctoral dissertation was published by Wilhelm Fink Verlag in 2020 under the title *Fortschrittsdenken in der Neuen Musik*. Her research focuses on the music of the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries, music aesthetics, music historiography, music and gender, as well as the history and theory of notation. She has published several essays on Bussotti's graphic notations.

Matthias Geuting is an organist and musicologist. As a soloist, he regularly accepts invitations to well-known festivals dedicated to contemporary music in Germany and abroad. He works with renowned representatives from dance, performance and acting in the field of improvisation. He founded the interdisciplinary PART ensemble in 2020 together with Evelin Degen. Matthias Geuting teaches at universities in Essen and Düsseldorf and publishes mostly on twentieth and twenty-first century organ music.

Vera Grund has been the head of the Music History Department of the German Historical Institute in Rome since 2024. She was a Fellow at DHI Rome with the project "Der Partito Comunista Italiano, Massenkultur und Neue Musik im Italien der Nachkriegszeit" in 2022/23 and a research assistant at the Detmold/Paderborn musicology seminar from 2017 with the acceptance of her habilitation thesis in 2024.

Anne-May Krüger studied voice and musicology at the Universities of Music in Leipzig and Karlsruhe. She gained her PhD in 2020 on vocal performers of the 1950s and 1960s at the University of Basel in cooperation with the Basel Music

Academy FHNW. She has been a professor at the Basel Music Academy since 2023. Anne-May Krüger as a singer has been mainly active in the field of contemporary music. As a librettist, she has written two music theatre pieces. She has had publications in *Dissonance* and *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, and by PFAU Verlag, Wißner, Brepols Publishers, Laaber-Verlag and Wolke. www.annemaykrueger.de

Federica Marsico is an assistant professor of musicology at the Department of Communication Sciences of the University of Teramo. Her research and publications focus on the music theatre between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries. She has published many essays on Bussotti's works and is cataloguing the composer's letters and writings in NoMus. The catalogue is expected to be published by the end of 2024.

Matteo Nanni is a professor at the University of Hamburg. He completed his doctorate with a thesis on Luigi Nono and habilitated with a dissertation on the Italian Trecento. His research also focuses on the theory of musical notation, aesthetics, music theory and the philosophy of music. He is PI and speaker of a research field at the Hamburg Cluster of Excellence 'Understanding Written Artefacts'.

Alessandra Origani obtained a master's degree in musicology in Cremona in 2020. In the same year, she received a scholarship from the Paul Sacher Stiftung for research on Aldo Clementi, and in 2021 she was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Padua, where she participated in the international project in Digital Humanities "FONTI 4.0". She is currently pursuing her doctorate on the *Aesthetics of Figures in Late 20th Century Music* at the Musikwissenschaftliches Institut of the University of Zurich.

Paolo Somigli is an associate professor in musicology at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano. His research focuses on topics of Italian classical and popular music in the twentieth century. The volume *La Schola Fiorentina* (2011) and several contributions concerning musical life and Twelve-Tone reception in Italy and Florence are among his publications.

Costantino Vecchi is a PhD student in ethnomusicology at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. His research activity currently focuses on the protection and enhancement of sound and audiovisual archives in the field of ethnomusicology. Since 2017, he has been the curator of the archive of the Intercultural Institute of Comparative Music Studies (IISMC), founded by Alain Daniélou in 1969, and since 1999, part of the Giorgio Cini Foundation in Venice.



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