

# Recital I (for Cathy): A Drama ‘Through the Voice’

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## Abstract

Work on this article began as a contribution to a wider discussion of twentieth-century music theatre, and in particular a genre in the category of twentieth-century musical monodramas – one-act staged monologues with, or in music for, one performer.<sup>1</sup> My current research focuses on the genesis and performance tradition of works composed for solo female singer, and raises questions about the creative agency of the performer in the making of such works, reflecting on matters such as subjectivity, voice, and identity.<sup>2</sup> If this outlook may slightly drift from a conventional narrative springing from the composer’s voice, a critical investigation of the collaborative process foregrounding the genealogy of some of these works is compelling, especially since every composer who embarked on this ‘genre’, or compositional *topos*, inflected it in idiosyncratic ways. In works such as *Erwartung*, *La Voix humaine*, *The Testament of Eve*, *Neither*, and *La machine de l’être*, the performative voice of the female soloist to whom the work was tailored became a generative element capable of shaping the formal, musical, and dramaturgical material.<sup>3</sup> Examination of selected case studies, focusing especially on the creative and performative processes surrounding these works, triggers an array of questions about gender politics. More importantly, transversal insight into the making of these works and their performativity reveals the interconnected nature of the two phases of creation and performance. In musical monodrama, more than in larger forms of music theatre, the two processes interweave and depend on each other; reconstructing the performative genealogy of the ‘work’ reveals an intrinsic impasse in the very notion of the musical ‘text’ associated exclusively with the compiled score and its literary sources.

In this article, I explore Luciano Berio’s conception of voice as a trigger to expectations of genre. I discuss his *Recital I (for Cathy)*, a one-act/one-performer music theatre piece, the gestation of which marked Berio’s speculation on voice and music theatre, both concerns that spanned his entire creative career. My research leads inevitably to the crucial role of the dedicatee in the creation and destiny of the work. *Recital I*, a quintessential homage to Cathy Berberian’s virtuosity, is structured on musical quotations that both Berio and

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- 1 This article contains unedited materials preserved at the Paul Sacher Stiftung (PSS), and accessed by courtesy of the Berio and Berberian Estates and of the Paul Sacher Stiftung. I wish to thank Dr Talia Pecker Berio for granting me permission to use and include such materials and for offering amendments to my article in its final stages, Cristina Berio for her kind support in the handling of unpublished texts, and Prof. Angela Ida De Benedictis for her invaluable guidance during my time in Basel and throughout the permission clearance process.
- 2 My postdoctoral artistic research project *En-Gendering Monodrama: Artistic Research and Experimental Production* was hosted at Maynooth University, Ireland, and funded by the Irish Research Council between 2015 and 2017.
- 3 I discuss the performative voice in musical monodrama in ‘The Unsung One: The Performer’s Voice in Twentieth-Century Musical Monodrama’, *Journal of Musicological Research* 37/2 (2018).

Berberian extrapolated from the singer's repertoire to fit the literary monologue of the libretto, and is thus idiomatically tailored to the singer's performative characteristics. In addition to participating in the creative process, Berberian took part in its choreographic and performative planning, as she stated in many biographical accounts.<sup>4</sup> Although Berberian's collaboration in the genesis of the musical collage is generally recognized, her participation in the finalization of the piece requires further consideration: it is this aspect that my work will develop.<sup>5</sup>

In the following pages, I shall identify Berberian's contribution to the making of the literary monologue of *Recital I*, basing my observations on archival sources dated after the premiere of the work. I shall then move to consideration of the programme of *Recital I* at the time of its composition and in early performances, comparing its content at that time with its current form. In doing so, I shall necessarily engage with two cogent issues: on the one hand, the indisputable agency of Berberian and, on the other, the 'open' programmatic nature of the 1972 version, which has been totally obliterated in current published versions.<sup>6</sup> Finally, returning to the wider framework of twentieth-century musical monodramas scored for solo female interpreters, I shall present *Recital I* as a paradigmatic example of both the 'problem of music theatre' and Berio's exploration of the voice as a challenge to the audience's 'horizons of expectation'.<sup>7</sup> Although focusing on this under-explored work raises numerous possible research topics, I shall limit my discussion here to a few aspects, leaving scope for future work.

### Constructing drama 'through the voice'

In his essay on musical drama, Carl Dahlhaus assigns equal weight to music and text in the construction of a dramaturgy, and highlights the lyrical implications of the immanent performance over the horizontality of the text:

Two dogmas have been in perpetual conflict throughout the history of theories of opera: the proposition that music is a means serving the dramatic end; and the

4 See, for instance, Marie Christine Vila, *Cathy Berberian Cant'atrice* (Paris: Fayard, 2003); Francesca Placanica, 'Cathy Berberian: Performance as Composition' (Master's thesis, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX, 2007); Kate Meehan, 'Not Just a Pretty Voice: Cathy Berberian as Collaborator, Composer and Creator' (PhD diss., University of St Louis, 2011); Giovanni Cestino, "'When She Looks at Music": L'approccio performativo di Cathy Berberian attraverso lo studio delle sue partiture' (Master's thesis, University of Pavia, Italy, 2014); Angela Ida De Benedictis and Nicola Scaldaferrì, 'Cathy Berberian', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani Treccani*, [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cathy-berberian\\_](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cathy-berberian_) (Dizionario-Biografico).

5 Cestino, in particular, reconstructs the genesis of the work through documentary materials and summarizes studies of the topic up to recent times; see Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 156–71.

6 My discussion is based on the 1972 (reprinted 2002) and 2009 versions of the published Universal Edition full scores. The 1972 version is the score for the 1973 RCA recording, which I consulted at the Paul Sacher Stiftung (henceforth abbreviated as PSS), Sammlung Luciano Berio (SLB) (Luciano Berio, *Recital I (for Cathy)* (1972), UE34396 (English version), UE34399 (Italian version), Vienna, London, New York: 2009). All discussion of the libretto is based on primary sources now conserved at PSS in the Sammlung Cathy Berberian (SCBE).

7 Luciano Berio, 'Problemi di teatro musicale' (1967), in *Scritti sulla Musica*, ed. Angela Ida De Benedictis (Turin: Einaudi, 2013), 52–3.

contrary proposition that drama is a vehicle for the music. Both [are] founded on the same false premise, treating music and drama as antagonists, as if only one could be pre-eminent except when a final compromise is achievable . . . But the fact that drama can exist without music, as in the spoken genre, does not mean that in musical drama it constitutes a complete and self-sufficient element distinct from the music. A libretto is not a drama until music makes it one. It is the music that – under preconditions outlined in a libretto – constitutes the drama.<sup>8</sup>

Recalling Joseph Kerman's discussion of the *dramma per musica*, Dahlhaus asserts that a musical drama is not only a drama with music but also 'through music, by means of music'. Hence, music substantiates and amplifies the drama expressed in the literary text, to which it is intrinsically moulded.<sup>9</sup> Musical drama lives through the immanence of the performative momentum and therefore the two elements should neither be separated nor, even worse, set in competition with each other. In addition, Dahlhaus specifies:

Singing is the essence of operatic music, expressing as it does the present moment (it is significant that reminiscence motifs are almost always instrumental); and the musical present manifested in it is simultaneously the scenic present. Melodic expression, unlike verbal expression, does not reach beyond the present moment but exists entirely in the given situation; it isolates that situation and lifts it out of its context, so that what has gone before recedes into oblivion with no thought given to the consequences which will follow the particular moment.<sup>10</sup>

In monologues in or with music, what we witness is a profound transformation of the structures and techniques of musical drama, which eschew conventional operatic settings, often giving way to the deliberate inconsistency of a hysterical stream of consciousness.<sup>11</sup> In such contexts, the bodily and vocal tessitura of the solo performer remain the only tangible dramaturgical *media* and the only material sources of on-stage dialectic between presence and absence, silence and noise, theatrical illusion and corporeal immanence. Only the performer's persona, with the lyrical legacy embedded in her voice and acting, maintains a connection between the ritualized setting of the musical monologue and the expectations of dramaturgical consequentiality instituted in the audience. Therefore, to paraphrase Dahlhaus, I argue that some of Berio's vocal works, and especially those which earned a performative quality by virtue of their implicit theatrical character fully realized by Berberian's original embodiment – *Circles* (1960), *Visage* (1961), *Sequenza III* (1965), and in particular *Recital I* (1972) (the latter more explicitly written for the stage) – are intended to be dramas not only 'for the voice', but also 'through the voice'.

<sup>8</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, 'What Is a Musical Drama?' *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1/2 (1989), 97.

<sup>9</sup> Dahlhaus, 'What Is a Musical Drama?', 95.

<sup>10</sup> Dahlhaus, 'What Is a Musical Drama?', 102.

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, Jessica Payette, 'Seismographic Screams: *Erwartung's* Reverberations through Twentieth-century Culture' (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2008).

This formula is indeed applicable to Berio's conception of music theatre, which was a prominent subject in his writing. The author wrote extensively on and returned to the topic on several occasions, describing his approach to music theatre as the research and development of an implicit dramaturgy already emanating from the inner potential of the voice and its gestures.<sup>12</sup> For Berio, the sound of the human voice is always a quotation and a gesture, is inevitably 'significant', sparks associations, and brings its own self-contained model. Text and music operate within a hierarchy of relationships in which lexical and phonetic details may either be musically irrelevant, or may have thematic and generative value.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore:

The voice represents such a wealth of potential gestures that it becomes possible to use it alone, as tool for developing a concern with the simultaneity of different actions – that is, the concurrent but independent development of various characteristics of performance, resulting in a theatre of instrumental actions that allows the listener to perceive polyphonically what, by its very physical nature, is bound to be monodic. / The musical gesture as a whole, when developed, and when its linguistic connections are dialectically questioned, tends to become theatre. In music theatre the interpreters do not simply perform a musical work; they become actors who interpret themselves as the performers of music.<sup>14</sup>

This polyphony emanates from the numerous languages combining to recreate the performative act, as well as from the intersubjective readings that composer, performer, and audience re-elaborate immanently, in a setting that turns any performance into a theatrical stage in its own right. Berio played a primary role in the transition from opera to music theatre in post-Second World War Italy. Contemporary authors, such as Bussotti, Pousseur, and Kagel, contributed to the exploration of interdisciplinary pathways that could have better rendered the staged fragmentation of the complex unity that had characterized the epitome of opera, and were especially interested in possible suggestions from experimental theatre, dance, and electro-acoustic practices. They experienced modes of operatic composition, especially the traditional mechanisms of the music–text setting, as limiting and claustrophobic, and considered opera to be an anachronistic genre.<sup>15</sup> In Berio's view, opera was no longer a

12 'Cos'è infine, il teatro musicale? È la ricerca e lo sviluppo, per mezzo della musica, di una drammaturgia implicita. In ogni situazione c'è una potenziale drammaturgia, così come in ogni forma percepita c'è un movimento potenziale. Non è necessariamente basata sulla relazione tra l'osservatore e l'oggetto, ma può essere una drammaturgia interna, come nella pittura, dove l'idea di "grande" e "piccolo" non è necessariamente basata su una scala convenzionale esterna alla pittura stessa, ma su una scala interna alla natura delle cose, delle forme e dei colori.' Berio, 'Problemi di teatro musicale' (1967), 52–3.

13 'Può essere utile al compositore ricordare che il suono della voce umana è sempre una citazione, è sempre un gesto. La voce, qualsiasi cosa faccia, anche il più semplice rumore, è inevitabilmente significante: accende associazioni e porta sempre con sé un modello, naturale o culturale che sia.' Luciano Berio, *Un Ricordo al Futuro. Lezioni Americane* (Turin: Einaudi, 2006), 41.

14 Luciano Berio, *Toward Music Theater*, unpublished typescript (PSS, SLB, 12 ff., here f. 10, by courtesy of the PSS and Berio estates); translated in Italian as 'Verso un teatro musicale' (c. 1967–70), in *Scritti sulla musica*, ed. De Benedictis, 431.

15 For examples of post-Second World War composers' criticisms of libretto and music–text setting see, for instance, Sylvano Bussotti, 'Allegoria nei fatti', in *Disordine Alfabetico: Musica, Pittura, Teatri, Scritture* (Milan: Spirali, 2002);

form that could assume a relevant role in contemporary society but more of a *manner*, unable to regenerate itself, and destined only to paraphrase older models.<sup>16</sup> His criticism of contemporary opera and the operatic market stemmed from a profound distrust of the political meanings assigned by contemporary cultures to operatic performances and its 'temples', and the deployment of substantial resources to revive operatic productions, much to the detriment of performative languages and artistic manifestations that responded more immediately to the anxieties of the times.<sup>17</sup> For Berio and many other contemporary composers, addressing the operatic form and its anachronistic ideologies would only result in a kitsch operation, a failed attempt to revive a still important aspect of the past but which belonged more to the praxis of conservation than of renewal. Such positions certainly underpinned their efforts to create vocal and dramaturgical alternatives through music theatre, and more specifically by fostering new uses of the operatic voice.<sup>18</sup> However, Berio's quest for music theatre was far more articulate than that, as he also expressed, for instance, in a lecture he gave in Siena in 1995:

We are close to an idea of theatre that is a theatre of the mind and of the memory, even a virtual theatre, which invites a continuous oscillation of our attention from listening to watching, and again to listening, a theatre able constructively to challenge those who watch and listen, and that provokes the desire to listen through the gaze and watch through the ears . . . we think of a theatre that is not made necessarily understandable only by the specific things we see and hear, but also by the desire to penetrate, discover and confound the different *tempi* of sounds and images.<sup>19</sup>

This theatre of mind and memory, with its ability to trigger synaesthetic effects, seems to be perfectly represented in the polysemic stream of consciousness produced by *Recital I*. The composer often associated his notion of music theatre with the aesthetics of the baroque *stile rappresentativo*, with its potential to represent reality in multiple ways and to experiment with the possibility of integrating and discovering, through music, different

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Mauricio Kagel, *Staatstheater* (1967–70); Henri Pousseur, *Electre* (1960), *Trois visages de Liège* (1961) and *Votre Faust* (1960–8); and also Morton Feldman's opera *Neither* (1977).

16 Berio, 'Problemi di teatro musicale', 45.

17 See, for instance, Luciano Berio, 'Una notte all'opera, ovvero: Cos'è che non va col Met?' (1970), in Berio, *Scritti sulla Musica* ed. De Benedictis.

18 Berio, 'Problemi di teatro musicale', 45.

19 'Noi siamo vicini ad un'idea di teatro musicale che è un teatro della mente e della memoria, magari un teatro virtuale, un teatro che invita a un'oscillazione continua della nostra attenzione dall'ascolto allo sguardo e ancora all'ascolto, un teatro che riesce a mettere costruttivamente alla prova chi guarda e chi ascolta e che provoca il desiderio di ascoltare con gli occhi e di guardare con le orecchie . . . Pensiamo cioè a un teatro che non è reso necessariamente intelligibile solo dalle cose specifiche che vediamo e da quelle che ascoltiamo ma, anche, dal desiderio di penetrare, scoprire e confondere i tempi diversi dei suoni e delle immagini.' Luciano Berio, 'Dei suoni e delle immagini' (1995), in *Scritti sulla Musica*, ed. De Benedictis, 163. This paragraph is actually missing from the translated version of the 1995 University of Siena Lecture provided in David Osmond-Smith, 'Of Sounds and Images', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 9/3 (1997). Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this contribution are by the author of this article, with special thanks to Elizabeth Parker for her invaluable assistance in their copy-editing.

levels of experience.<sup>20</sup> This particular aspect is key to grasping his mimetic approach to the representation of consciousness, and is especially typical of his stage works conceived for solo performer. Berio's attention was oriented to the realm of the *performance*, which he lived as a more dynamic space, free from fixed operatic conventions. This conception assigned an intrinsic role in the artistic production to the recipient of the artistic *medium*, and presented the opportunity for music theatre to be lived as a genre in which 'the wall between audience and stage was thin', in which audience was called to decide on the meaning of the action, rather than relegated to being an object of its seduction.<sup>21</sup>

In traditional opera, the spectator is tense with respect to the ending; the course of events is linear and grows from scene to scene; the music duplicates the text, illustrates and paints the psychic situation. In music theatre, the spectator is tense with respect to the sequence of events presented as a collage of separate situations; the music presupposes the text and takes on an attitude as a function of behaviour.<sup>22</sup>

The intertextual correspondence instituted between the 'work' and the subjectivities of composer and recipient, actively filtered through that of the performer, foregrounded the basis for the 'distributed creativity' of the performance process.<sup>23</sup> The composer offered to the audience the tools to reconstruct the text and turn it into a subjective experience. Berio's compositional aesthetics were intrinsically driven by the contributions of semiotics and linguistics to the contemporary development of communication. Tenets from theories formulated by Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson, as well as from a personal and intellectual relationship with Umberto Eco, who played a militant role in the development of contemporary European literature and philosophy, were fundamental to Berio's construction of his own aesthetics and programming of his works.

In an interview released in 1986, Eco and Berio discuss the interface between voice and genre.<sup>24</sup>

My question starts from the presumption that you were carrying out experiments on the voice. Now if I'm right, it appears that you also experiment on the genre. The voice is a material that, like all materials, carries within it the history of the ways in which it was used. A genre is a social convention that, like all social conventions,

20 Berio, 'Problemi di teatro musicale', 48.

21 Berio, 'Problemi di teatro musicale', 53.

22 Berio, *Toward Music Theater* (PSS, SLB); It.: 'Verso un teatro musicale', 426.

23 David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, *Key Concepts in Musicology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 28; Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 57.

24 See also, for instance, Janet Halfyard, *Berio's Sequenzas: Essays on Performance, Composition and Analysis* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Patti Yvonne Edwards, 'Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III*: The Use of Vocal Gesture and the Genre of the Mad Scene' (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2004); Fabio Buda, 'Luciano Berio: *Visage* e il linguaggio non verbale' (Master's thesis, Istituto Musicale Bellini, Catania, Italy, 2007).

produces 'horizons of expectation' on the part of the recipient, the 'performance consumer'.<sup>25</sup>

Here, Eco and Berio engage with the two concepts reflected in the aesthetics of composition and contemporary music theatre, supporting their views with Hans-Robert Jauss's notion of 'horizons of expectation', which is still prominent in contemporary reception studies.<sup>26</sup> The horizon of expectations is associated with the 'recipient' of the cultural artefact.<sup>27</sup> While the term 'recipient' avoids the specificity of 'audience', Eco and Berio seem to establish a direct connection between the term and the audience's agency as cultural consumer. The notion of the recipient recalls the semiotic theories enunciated by Eco in his *Trattato di Semiotica Generale*, in which Eco had already explained the mechanisms of communication in correspondence between cultural consumerism and the audience's 'horizons of expectation'.<sup>28</sup> The performance consumer is a recipient who performs a deliberate political act in choosing one cultural product over another. For Eco, a work might be deemed successful in two ways: either by fulfilling such expectations or by being able to drag such horizons towards the work itself in original ways.<sup>29</sup>

According to Eco, Berio conceived of the voice as a 'material to be used', assigning to it an instrumental quality capable of affecting the audience's perception of genre. The latter was conceived not as a normative set of formal structures governing the compositional process in programmatic terms but as a 'social convention' imposed by the recipient's perception, and perhaps only seconded by the composer. For instance, an opera-goer responds to predetermined rituals inherited from long-standing conventions in the consumption of operatic performances. The audience's aesthetic experience plays a fundamental role in assigning value to the cultural artefact, and represents a political act per se. Berio's answering arguments provide a window onto his approach to vocal writing, as they closely scrutinize semantically charged aspects of the operatic voice:

A few minutes ago you talked about the voice as if it were the discriminating element between what is and is not opera. It is more or less true that a performance presented in a large opera theatre needs great 'operatic' voices, meaning voices able to travel from the stage to the balcony, soaring over a symphonic orchestra. It is also true, for instance, that the voice of Cathy Berberian required other types of spaces, more

25 'Sono partito dalla mia domanda presumendo che tu facessi esperimenti sulla voce. Ora, se ho ragione, apparirebbe che tu li faccia anche sul genere. La voce è un materiale che, come tutti i materiali, porta con sé la storia degli usi che ne sono stati fatti. Un genere è una convenzione sociale, che come tutte le convenzioni sociali genera degli 'orizzonti di attesa' da parte del destinatario, "consumatore di spettacolo". Enzo Restagno, ed., 'Eco in ascolto: Intervista di Umberto Eco a Luciano Berio (1986)', in *Berio* (Turin: EDT, 1995), 53, now in Luciano Berio, *Interviste e colloqui*, ed. Vincenzina Caterina Ottomano (Turin: Einaudi, 2017), 171.

26 Mark Everist, 'Reception Theories, Canonic Discourses, and Musical Value', in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Mark Everist and Nicholas Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

27 Everist, 'Reception Theories', 383.

28 Umberto Eco, *Trattato di Semiotica Generale* (Milan: Bompiani, 1975).

29 Umberto Eco, *Sugli Specchi e Altri Saggi: Il Segno, la Rappresentazione, l'Illusione, l'Immagine* (Milan: Bompiani, 1985; reprint 1995), 110.



intimate and homogeneous, where it would be possible to catch the smallest details of her voice and face, of those particular – and I would say microscopic – details, which allowed the music to penetrate with great subtlety into the totality of her vocal make-up – all those aspects, ultimately, that the singer of operatic ‘bel canto’ must necessarily neglect. However, I believe that the matter is of a different nature, otherwise it would have sufficed to give Cathy a microphone and . . . to request Pavarotti to sing with his legs up. The fact is that, when hearing operatic singing, your ‘performance consumer’ has a Pavlovian need for definitive, linear narrations capable of provoking tension about the outcome, rather than, as Brecht said, the development of the story. To conclude, I would say that styles and singing techniques are fundamental elements in providing meaning to the horizons of expectation of your ‘performance consumer’. The important thing is to use these vocal modes appropriately and, again as Brecht would say, with a certain detachment. This is all part of the dramaturgical substance, deliberately ambiguous, of *La vera storia* and *Un re in ascolto*.<sup>30</sup>

This exchange between Eco and Berio is fertile even in its narrow context. For instance, it highlights Brecht’s influence on Berio’s dramaturgy, as well as the intrinsic association made by the composer between his vocal writing and Cathy Berberian’s voice. Most consistently with the objectives of this article, it foregrounds the mutual inspiration they brought to each other’s developing theories. According to Berio, identification of the ‘operatic voice’ with its narrative linearity is fundamental to meeting the ‘horizons of expectation’ of the opera ‘consumer’. In this process of recognition, vocal styles and singing techniques represent semiotic landmarks that help orientate the spectator’s involvement within a logical dramaturgical construction. The objective of subverting the conventional identification of specific vocal idioms into recognizable forms of cultural pampering led, at least at a programmatic level, to Berio’s quest for alternative dramatic solutions that passed through the voice and its multifaceted evocative potential. This process was made possible, at least in its early stages, by his proximity to the extraordinary qualities of Cathy Berberian. Through her imposing presence, her exceptional vocal versatility and performance intelligence not only partly inspired this search

30 ‘Poco fa accennavi alla voce come se fosse l’elemento discriminante fra opera e no. È vero, grosso modo, che uno spettacolo rappresentato in un grande teatro d’opera ha bisogno di grandi voci “operistiche”, cioè capaci di viaggiare dal palcoscenico al loggione volando sopra un’orchestra sinfonica. Ed è anche vero, ad esempio, che la voce di Cathy Berberian aveva bisogno di spazi diversi, più raccolti ed omogenei, ove fosse possibile cogliere i più piccoli dettagli della voce e del viso, quegli aspetti particolari e direi, microscopici, che hanno permesso alla musica di penetrare con grande sottigliezza nella totalità dell’edificio vocale. Tutti quegli aspetti, infine, che il “bel canto” operistico deve per forza di cose ignorare. Ma credo che il punto sia di natura diversa, altrimenti sarebbe bastato dare a Cathy un radiomicrofono e . . . pregare Pavarotti di cantare a gambe in su. Il fatto è che il tuo “consumatore di spettacolo” quando sente il canto dell’opera lirica ha pavlovianamente bisogno di storie lineari, finalizzate e capaci di provocare tensione in rapporto all’esito piuttosto, come diceva Brecht, che all’andamento. Per concludere, direi che gli stili e le tecniche di canto sono elementi fondamentali per dare un senso all’orizzonte di attese del tuo “consumatore di spettacolo”. L’importante è di usare questi modi vocali con pertinenza e, come direbbe ancora Brecht, con un certo distacco. Tutto questo fa parte della sostanza drammaturgica, volutamente ambigua, di *La vera storia* e di *Un re in ascolto*.’ Berio, ‘Eco in ascolto’, 174.



but also proved that such alternatives might be plausible and successful, thus enabling Berio's speculations at an engaging performative level. Berberian contributed heavily to incarnate the implicit theatricality of some of Berio's works of the 1950s and 1960s (*Chamber Music* [1953], *Circles* [1960], *Visage* [1961], *Epifanie* [1960–3]) not originally conceived for the stage, and also created an embodied vocal vocabulary that responded to Berio's creative impulses in works composed in the studio. At a later stage, as an independent performer emancipated from dyadic identification with the Italian composer, by applying her encompassing theatrical vocation to diverse styles and genres, Berberian reduced the most conventional recital settings to the stage; commissioned vocal parodies of canonical instrumental repertoire; paraphrased Beatles' songs mocking the most reassuringly conventional vocal styles; created a disarming concoction of pop culture with modes and languages of contemporary art music, in ways that were new in the post-Second World War European avant-garde; presented avant-garde works in seamless performative settings, allowing a wider diffusion of the repertoire; and reinterpreted operatic scenes asserting the operatic voice as more than simply full sonic power. Most importantly, Berberian was the first twentieth-century vocal performer to gather her vocal creed into a manifesto, *The New Vocality*, a legacy left for future generations of performers, whom she empowered as 'composers of their own performance'.<sup>31</sup>

### Issues of voice and genre in *Recital I*

Inquiring into genre in *Recital I* may seem pointless; however, the work has rarely featured in scholarship on Berio's music theatre, even though it straddled the most prolific periods of Berio's vocal writing and his most successful stage works. The composer himself seldom mentioned the work in his known interviews and writings. In my opinion, *Recital I* is instead a crucial link between Berio's vocal experimentations and his ongoing discovery of the morphogenetic potential of voice and language in his theatre writing, as expressed in the above-mentioned interview with Eco.<sup>32</sup>

In his overview of Berio's theatre works, David Osmond-Smith, who closely worked on Berio until his untimely death, associates *Recital I* with works dealing with 'performance neuroses', especially *Melodrama* (1970), a short musical monologue for tenor initially conceived as a section of *Opera* but which then lived on as a solo stage work for tenor and orchestra. Both monologues are structured as a stream of consciousness and are immersed

31 For a more extensive exposition of Berberian's groundbreaking role in the performance culture of the 1950s–1970s, see, for instance, Pamela Karantonis, Francesca Placanica, Anna Sivuoja-Kauppalaa and Pieter Verstraete, eds., *Cathy Berberian: Pioneer of Contemporary Vocality* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Vila, *Cathy Berberian Cant'atrice*.

32 On voice and gesture in Berio's theatre, see Claudia Di Luzio, 'Sanguineti e Berio: Suono, voce, gesto', *Poetiche, Rivista di Letteratura* 8/3 (2006); Claudia Di Luzio, *Vielstimmigkeit und Bedeutungsvielfalt im Musiktheater von Luciano Berio* (Mainz: Schott, 2010); Claudia Di Luzio, 'Sound, Space and Gesture in Music Theatre Today', in *Five Perspectives on 'Body and Soul'*, ed. Claudia Emmenegger and Olivier Senn (Zurich: Chronos, 2011), 181–90; for a compendium of Berio's music-theatre, see Ute Brüdermann, *Das Musiktheater von Luciano Berio* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2007).

in a Monteverdian aura. Osmond-Smith also refers here to an extensive study of *Recital I* in the making, an essay which he probably planned but never published.<sup>33</sup>

David Metzger and Clare Brady devote their attention instead to the assemblage of *Recital I*, positioning the work within the postmodern discourse on quotation, authorship and cultural meaning.<sup>34</sup> Metzger, in particular, frames the work and its use of fragment and quotation as a depiction of the *topoi* of madness and memory, and legitimately places *Recital I* within the tradition of neurotic scenes. Susan Youens also focuses her attention on this aspect of the work, especially the *topos* of memory and identity in one of the earliest published scholarly accounts of *Recital I*.<sup>35</sup>

The most recent scholarship on Berberian provides further factual evidence about the work. Berberian's biographer, Marie-Christine Vila, outlines its genesis, basing her description mainly on the contemporary musical press, as well as on both published and unpublished interviews released by Berberian.<sup>36</sup> I also dealt briefly with the work in my Master's thesis, bringing to light a few unedited documents in my overview of primary sources.<sup>37</sup> Kate Meehan takes this approach further, mapping out the genesis of the work and supporting her discussion with other valuable primary sources.<sup>38</sup> She describes the work as a locus for the display of vocal styles and ranges that Berberian had already explored in pieces such as John Cage's *Aria* and Berio's *Sequenza III*. Giovanni Cestino's unpublished thesis presents further insights into the sources of *Recital I*, and thoroughly explores the performative agenda of the piece, framing his discussion within the philological perspective he adopts to reconstruct Berberian's approach to performance.<sup>39</sup>

*Recital I (for Cathy)* was created by Berberian in Lisbon on 27 May 1972 for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, with the Orchestra Gulbenkian conducted by Berio. Its original literary material is by Edoardo Sanguineti, Andrea Mosetti, and Luciano Berio.<sup>40</sup> While most

33 David Osmond-Smith prefigures a 'more extended essay on the performance neuroses' in Berio's theatre while discussing *Melodrama* for tenor and orchestra; David Osmond-Smith, *Berio* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 97. Restagno also emphasizes the 'delirio schizofrenico' of the solo tenor, here represented in the struggle to sing a high G in a musical setting of a Heine poem; Enzo Restagno, ed., 'Opera' in *Berio*, 84. See also Raymond Fearn, *Italian Opera Since 1945* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1997), 125–9.

34 David Metzger, *Quotations and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 93–7; Clare Brady, 'Musical Fragments in Berio and Berberian's *Recital I (for Cathy)*: Questioning an Ontology of the Musical Work in Performance and Re-creation', paper presented at the RMA Research Student Conference, University of Southampton, January 2013.

35 Susan Youens, 'Memory, Identity, and the Uses of the Past: Schubert and Luciano Berio's *Recital I (for Cathy)*', in *Franz Schubert – Der Fortschrittliche? Analysen, Perspektiven, Fakten*, ed. Erich Wolfgang Partsch (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1989).

36 Vila, *Cathy Berberian Cant'atrice*.

37 Placanica, 'Cathy Berberian'.

38 Meehan, 'Not Just a Pretty Voice'.

39 Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 156–71.

40 Berio, *Recital I (for Cathy)* 1972. Sanguineti wrote some of the most successful libretti for Berio's stage works and shared literary and musical ideas with him, as well as a lifelong friendship. On more than one occasion, both creators described in writing the nature of their work partnership, focusing especially on their most substantial operatic settings; Edoardo Sanguineti, 'La messa in scena della parola', in *Berio*, ed. Restagno; David Osmond-Smith, 'Voicing

of Berio's stage works carry a subtitle that identifies his concept of the work and testify to the engagement he sustained throughout his career with the concept of 'genre', *Recital I*, just like *Opera*, lacks any reference to genre in its subtitle 'Per mezzosoprano e 17 strumenti (1972)'.<sup>41</sup> Biographical entries on the composer list the work among either his vocal works or theatre pieces.<sup>42</sup> This ambiguity is actually noted by Raymond Fearn, who again mentions *Recital I* in association with *Melodrama* and *Opera*:

It is clear that in the work of Berio, not only is it often difficult to isolate 'stage' compositions as a separate and distinct entity for consideration, but that indeed, the interweaving of all his compositions, as well as the often 'theatrical' character of even the smallest solo or chamber composition could almost draw such compositions into the orbit of our consideration here, and certainly this is the case with *Recital I (for Cathy)*.<sup>43</sup>

Fearn also makes observations on the musical construction of the work, based on multiple musical quotations that piece together the pathological condition of the protagonist, who is stranded and even 'imprisoned' by the performance rituals she evokes through her polystylistic singing and spoken monologue.<sup>44</sup> Fearn defines *Recital I* as a 'drama of the voice', and scrutinizes the drastic, ritualized epilogue of the singer's neurotic monologue, linking the dramaturgical themes of the work to larger-scale compositions such as *Opera*, *Passaggio*, and *Un re in ascolto*.<sup>45</sup>

As a whole, *Recital I* deploys features recognizable in the majority of twentieth-century melodramas: it is in one act; its duration is less than an hour; it is scored for a solo female interpreter; and, most importantly, it is a large-scale staging of an introspective journey by the psychological protagonist, through a stream of consciousness projected through both the spoken and the singing voice.<sup>46</sup>

The work is, in fact, the 'terrifying revelation' of a *cant'attrice* (a singing actress) who comes to the stage to perform a recital, and whose performance gradually turns into her own

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the Labyrinth: The Collaborations of Edoardo Sanguineti and Luciano Berio', *Twentieth-Century Music* 9/1–2 (2012); Nina Horvath, 'The "Theatre of the Ear": Analyzing Berio's musical documentary A-Ronne', *Musicological Explorations* 10 (2009).

41 Luciano Berio, *Recital I (for Cathy) 1972*.

42 Dalmonte lists it with other theatre works, while David Osmond-Smith and Ben Earle list *Recital I* with Berio's vocal works. See Rossana Dalmonte, 'Berio, Luciano', in *Dizionario della Musica e dei Musicisti, Le biografie I* (Turin: UTET, 1985); Gianmario Borio and Joachim Noller, 'Berio, Luciano', in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Personenteiler*, ed. Friedrich Blume (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2008); David Osmond-Smith and Ben Earle, 'Berio, Luciano', *Grove Music Online*, ed. Stanley Sadie, [www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02815](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02815); Giorgio Pestelli, 'Berio, Luciano', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, [www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luciano-berio](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luciano-berio) (Dizionario-Biografico)/.

43 Fearn, *Italian Opera Since 1945*, 129–30.

44 See also Björn Heile, 'Transcending Quotation: Cross-cultural Musical Representation in Mauricio Kagel's *Die Stücke der Windrose für Salonorchester*', *Music Analysis* 23/1 (2004).

45 Fearn, *Italian Opera Since 1945*, 129.

46 Payette, 'Seismographic Screams'.

biographical vicissitudes.<sup>47</sup> Her opening number, Monteverdi's *La lettera amorosa*, is suddenly disrupted by the unexpected absence of her accompanist. Outraged, the singer interrupts her solo scene to switch to a fragment of 'Amor' from *Il lamento della ninfa*, seemingly a metaphor for her present condition. After leaving the stage disappointed, the singer makes her way back, this time to deliver a monologue. From this moment on, her personal frustrations become progressively apparent. In her hysterical outbursts, she addresses her absent on-stage collaborators and even her audience in a final dramatic infringement of the fourth wall. Throughout the monologue, her spoken words and scattered musical quotations, the interplay with the orchestra, and the interference of the Wardrobe Mistress, who arrives to piece together her costume, all concur to highlight her breakdown and final descent into madness. Besides the protagonist and the Wardrobe Mistress, five masked instrumentalists enter and quietly gravitate around the singer, accentuating the surreal atmosphere of the drama; an on-stage pianist also interacts silently with the diva, while a few orchestral players from time to time echo the protagonist's words from the main monologue. The theatrical purpose of *Recital I* is also inferred from the score, which provides stage directions and indications about set, costumes, and lighting.

Fearn's definition of 'drama of the voice' fits the psychoanalytic quality of *Recital I*, in which the protagonist's public and private voices are amplified and intertwined to create a progressively dramatic crescendo. Fearn's definition also ties in well with the notion of 'dramaturgy of the voice', adopted by Di Luzio to describe Berio's vocal works. In particular, Di Luzio discusses the relationship between Berio and Sanguineti as vital to Berio's conception of theatre and vocality, and makes frequent reference to Sanguineti's essay *La messa in scena della parola*.<sup>48</sup> In works by Sanguineti and Berio, the gestuality of the 'scene' moulds 'a sound dimension' and a kind of 'implicit theatricality', where the sound gesture transcends the usual modes of visual representation.<sup>49</sup>

*Recital I* fits within the field of 'implicit theatricality', ascribed to the constitutive role played by the dedicatee in the work's agenda. It might easily be inferred that any vocal work conceived for Berberian was destined to be inherently theatrical, since the singer's attitude was unavoidably performative. As Berio also said of *Sequenza III*, these were not only works 'for Cathy' but also 'about Cathy'.<sup>50</sup> The same consideration fits other works inextricably linked with her vocal intelligence and scenic presence, as well as her own contribution to the formulation of the choreography, *mise en scène*, and costumes.<sup>51</sup>

47 This definition is attributed to the critic Andrew Porter, who had reviewed the work in 1972; Dominic Gill refers to Porter's terminology in his review of the British performance of the piece, 28 March 1973, Dominic Gill, 'Berio and Alsina', *The New York Times*, 28 March 1973.

48 Literally, the *mise en scène of the word*, playing with the word 'messa' which is Italian for Mass, and thereby establishing connections between ritual and words; see Sanguineti, 'La messa in scena della parola', 74–8.

49 Di Luzio, 'Sanguineti e Berio', 532–3. On the implicit theatricality of *Recital I*, see also Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 156.

50 Luciano Berio, *Two Interviews with Rossana Dalmonte and Bálint András Varga*, trans. and ed. David Osmond-Smith (London: Marion Boyars, 1985), 94.

51 On Berberian's attention to choreography and costumes, see Placanica, 'Cathy Berberian'.

In his reflection on the embodied performative aspect of *Circles* (1960), Giordano Ferrari refers to the body as a 'site' (*luogo*) per se, which is not subjected to but actually generative of the musical and dramaturgical space. In Berio's theatre, the action springs from the 'site', which is a significant element per se, and not simply an adaptation to the theatrical space. To this end, the body represents one of the most structural devices of Berio's writing for music theatre, through a corporeality that emanates from a vocal writing composed in collaboration with Cathy Berberian; thus, the word becomes the source of corporeal elements that transcend the music to become theatrical, sometimes amplified through electro-acoustic manipulation.<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, Ferrari describes the exploration of the word and its verbal performance as one of the main elements generating this embodied theatrical space. Just as in *Circles*, which Berberian heavily moulded in terms of choreographic and performative devices – eventually becoming integrated into the piece itself – *Recital I* epitomizes the theatrical amplification of the word, expressed through 'vocal modes' and validated by an embedded dramatic corporeality.<sup>53</sup> In *Recital I*, a strong Berberianesque stamp characterizes the virtual identity of the dedicatee *Cathy*, which both Berberian and Berio fashioned through the use of musical quotations as a subjective response to the imagery evoked in the script.<sup>54</sup> In this case, however, the performative manufacturing of the work is profoundly integrated into its textual elaboration.<sup>55</sup>

### ***Recital I: the script***

Translation, textual interpolation, and assemblage are intrinsic to the genesis and development of *Recital I*. Masetti and Sanguineti's original text in the early 1960s did not initially satisfy the composer.<sup>56</sup> According to Berio and Berberian's correspondence, the composer took over the task, and in tandem with Berberian set to work to create both the

52 Giordano Ferrari, 'Berio e lo spazio drammaturgico', in *Luciano Berio. Nuove Prospettive/New Perspectives*, ed. Angela Ida De Benedictis (Florence: Olschki, 2012), 445–7.

53 See Placanica, 'Cathy Berberian', 43–6; Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 58–87.

54 Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning* tabulates all musical quotations, while Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 175–8, provides a complete structure of the work, including all musical excerpts.

55 For a detailed account of Berberian's performative study of *Recital I*, see Cestino, "'Yes, Play On, Play On!": *Recital I (for Cathy)*', in 'When She Looks at Music', 156–203.

56 As also recalled by Eco, Berio's approach to a text was never submissive: 'Berio has always looked for writers that would not provide him with a libretto, or a story, not even with sentences that could be recited – I have actually never seen (and I know this from personal experience, as well as Sanguineti and Calvino) a musician more arrogant and imperialist with his librettists, ready to twist the text they gave him, to tear it apart, and use only the debris he needed. Berio never set the words of others to music. He went to look for musical elements that the words of others potentially (or already) contained, and this was also a consequence of a nearly, I dare say, scientific competence in the linguistic phenomenon, of a philosophical attention to the mystery of word and voice', Umberto Eco, 'Ai tempi dello studio', in *Luciano Berio. Nuove Prospettive/New Perspectives*, ed. De Benedictis. Translation by this author. A transcription from the original text and editorial changes is presented in Appendix A.

monologue and the collection of excerpts to be inserted into the piece.<sup>57</sup> In 1966, Berberian wrote to Andriessen that she was 'busy translating Andrea Mosetti's libretto for *Recital I*.<sup>58</sup> This revision process resulted in a text forged specifically by Berio, 'with occasional reference to texts by Andrea Mosetti and Edoardo Sanguineti' and defined by Berberian as a 'minestrone'.<sup>59</sup> In fact, throughout the whole process, the primacy of Berio's hand in compiling, collating, and editing the Italian libretto is indisputable. A collage within the collage per se, the literary text contains a number of more or less identifiable quotations by other authors, and even excerpts from letters and private exchanges between the composer and his friends and colleagues.<sup>60</sup>

In a letter dated January 1972 from Berberian to Elena Hift, a musicologist working as a consultant at Universal Edition, Berberian describes early preparatory work undertaken on *Recital I* but also announces that Berio has asked her to perform *Melodrama* in Lyon:<sup>61</sup>

Dear Elena

- 1) Included is a list of the excerpts I've submitted to Luciano to be set into his 'Recital I for Cathy' – as you will see, I have attempted to save you extra work by putting Public Domain on one page and the others on the other. Aren't I a good girl?
- 2) Next item – I can give you more or less the instruments Luciano has 'provvisoriamente definitivo' decided for 'Recital I': 2 clarinets, 2 oboes, 1 bassoon, 1 horn, 1 trumpet, 1 trombone, 4 strings, percussion, 3 keyboards, harp (?) – plus conductor Nicholas is still negotiating for Lisbon.
- 3) Luciano has intention of using me in 'Opera' at Lyon. As a matter of fact he is thinking of changing *Melodrama* around to suit me – besides some other things. *Melodrama* is not one of my favorite pieces but maybe if he changes it, I can do something with it. But I cannot get to Lyon before October 2nd in the evening.

...

57 This passage is well described in Meehan, 'Not Just a Pretty Voice', 102; an extensive account of the gestation process up to the work's premiere, as well as its early documentary sources, are provided by Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 156–84.

58 Meehan, 'Not Just a Pretty Voice', 102.

59 Cathy Berberian, interview with Silvana Ottieri (1981), tape 21, side B (now preserved in the PSS, SCBE). Accessed by courtesy. Also quoted in Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 164.

60 During my research, I stumbled on a few of these textual quotations while going through Berio's correspondence. Cestino notes the presence of concepts and sentences borrowed from Berio's writings on voice and musical theatre; see Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 165–6. For a wider discussion of literary references and works contained in the appendix, see my chapter, 'Intertextuality and intersubjectivity in Berio's and Berberian's *Recital I (for Cathy)*', in *Intertextuality in Music since 1900*, ed. Federico Celestini and Paulo De Castro (forthcoming).

61 Cathy Berberian's letter to Elena Hift, 3 January 1972 (PSS, SLB, Depositum UE, 'Korrespondenz'). Source accessed by courtesy of the PSS and the Berio Estate. This letter is also cited in Meehan, 'Not Just a Pretty Voice', 103; and in Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 163.

- 6) I tried to discuss the French translation of *Opera* [*sic*] with Luciano explaining how difficult if not impossible it was to do anything without the music but he evaded the issue. Anne [*sic*] Neuberger is worried but feels that UE has everything in hand.<sup>62</sup>

From a biographical perspective, this letter illuminates Berberian's prominent administrative role in her work partnership with Berio, even after their separation in 1964/65. Indeed, Berberian kept a strong hold on the works that Berio composed for her, and regularly supervised negotiations in the performance and publication processes. In this case, Berberian, whom Berio had asked to realize a musical collage with excerpts from her repertoire, contacted the publishing house herself to ascertain whether copyright issues regarding the quoted excerpts had been resolved. This concern remained constant throughout the composition of the work, as shown in extensive correspondence with Universal Edition.<sup>63</sup> The passage also highlights the simultaneous vicissitudes of *Opera* (composed in 1969, revised between 1970 and 1977), and in particular *Melodrama* and its season of revisions. Ultimately, Berberian's letter to Hift provides insights into Berio's *modus operandi* with regard to translation, which was a constant preoccupation in his work, and an interest cultivated with and supervised by Berberian from the earliest years of their partnership.<sup>64</sup>

In an unedited interview released by Berberian in 1981, the singer provides a few insights into the premiere of the work:

I'm trying to remember the year ... I believe we were supposed to go to Lisbon first; we were doing this piece with the London Sinfonietta; either that, or we went first to London; but I don't think so, no, no,<sup>65</sup> ... It was Lisbon, because I remember that I did all the work on the score in Lisbon. That is, I searched for the musical references because there were about forty fragments from my repertoire that needed to be inserted in the text, and I inserted them where I thought they would go well, while taking into consideration my own vocal requirements, you know?<sup>66</sup>

62 Annie Neuberger acted as Berio's French agent at the time.

63 This correspondence is accessible at the PSS, SLB, Depositum UE, 'Korrespondenz', and discussed in greater detail in Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 162–3.

64 For an insightful discussion of Berio's relationship with both musical and linguistic translation and his work ethics, see Susanna Pasticci, "In the Meantime, We'll Keep Translating": The Strength of the Ethical Dimension in the Creative Thought of Luciano Berio, in *Luciano Berio: Nuove Prospettive*, ed. De Benedictis, 459–73. It should also be mentioned that, from the early years of their marriage, Berberian acted as a linguistic bridge between Berio and other foreign musicians travelling to Milan, and that Berberian herself authored the Italian translation of numerous works, including Patricia Hutchins's *James Joyce's World*, translated as *Il mondo di James Joyce*, with R. Sanesi (Milan: Bompiani, 1960); Woody Allen's *Getting Even* (1966), translated as *Saperla lunga*, by Alberto Episcopi and Cathy Berberian (Milan: Bompiani, 1973); see Vila, *Cathy Berberian Cant'atrice*, 297–8. For a full list of works translated by Berberian, see also De Benedictis and Scaldaferrì 'Cathy Berberian'.

65 The London Sinfonietta performed *Recital I*, with Berio conducting, in its first Italian performance at the 35th *Festival internazionale di Musica Contemporanea* in Venice, 1972.

66 Cathy Berberian, interview with Sivana Ottieri, Tape 22, Side B, 1981. Unedited interview, original in Italian, accessed by courtesy of the Berberian Estate and the PSS.



Despite Berberian's hazy memory of the episode, it seems nevertheless clear that Berio asked the singer to insert musical excerpts from her repertoire into the script while he worked on the orchestral setting, and that she busied herself with this task right up to the time of the premiere, to the point that she was unable to memorize the piece for the premiere:

That's fine, but I didn't have the time to learn it by heart! So I thought – I already had the collage with the text and music, that I had someone photocopy for my accompanist, the pianist . . . but how will I manage to do it on stage? Well, I already had the costume, which had been commissioned from an Austrian friend.<sup>67</sup> I had already done my rehearsals and I had the costume. So . . . what did I do? I went and asked the artistic staff there at the foundation for help: I had these huge sheets of paper for the score, I mean, for the text and this musical insertions, and I had someone make these collages on the back of each page, with different colours, artful, so that when I was holding this stack of papers in my hands, that is what you would see on the last one ... and then I would pull one out and throw it on the floor just like a diva throws her script pages on the floor, one by one, as she reads them, get it? It was the only trick that would save me for the premiere because I didn't have any time [to memorize it].<sup>68</sup>

Prior to the premiere, Berberian apparently urged Berio to shorten the piece, advice that the composer ignored at the time.<sup>69</sup> In Berberian's view, the work's mixed reception at the premiere was due to its excessive length, whereas its success was due mainly to her vocal virtuosity in delivering the different vocal styles.<sup>70</sup>

After the premiere, Berio and Berberian decided to edit the Italian text, so the singer undertook the work of editing and translating the existing script:

So then we decided to do it in English, because in Italian it was too boring . . . well, you know, it's that only some of the things that Andrea had written had a certain colour, and the things that Luciano had written were not too . . . interesting. So I translated it into English, inserting some sentences of my own, a little bit provocative, like phrases between me and Luciano that he would recognize, and then we performed it in Holland.<sup>71</sup>

Berberian translated the script into English and inserted some of her own sentences for the Dutch premiere. Between the first and second performances of the piece, Berio was finally persuaded to shorten it.

67 Cestino identifies the costume designer as Hubert Aratym and its realization by the Atelier 'Marie Gromsteff' in Paris; Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 188.

68 Cathy Berberian, interview with Silvana Ottieri, tape 22, side A, 1981. Unedited interview, original in Italian, accessed by courtesy of the Berberian Estate and the PSS.

69 Cathy Berberian, interview with Silvana Ottieri, tape 22, side A, 1981.

70 Reviews from 1973 to 1974 accessed at the PSS highlight the flamboyance of Berberian's singing on one side, and the mixed feelings about the overall work on the other. See, for instance, Gill, 'Berio and Alsina'; Peter Heyworth, 'Berio in the Round', *The Observer*, 1 April 1973; Max Loppert, 'London Sinfonietta', *The Guardian*, 7 August 1974.

71 Loppert, 'London Sinfonietta'.

So I believe that I performed it by heart, but I kept saying:

Luciano, it's too long; the text needs to be cut, cut!

– No, no, no, no.

We had the premiere and after the premiere he says:

– We have to cut.

And I say:

– Well, how should we do it?

There was only a day off before the second performance, and he says:

– You do it and then show it to me.

And so I did it with a friend of mine, who was also his friend, an Armenian lady<sup>72</sup> . . . We did it together, but mostly me, and then we showed it to him. He said that it was fine, that it was fine just like that. So I learned it by heart, I learned the cuts, and we did it, and it was already so much better – so much better. And this was *Recital*.<sup>73</sup>

Primary sources relating to the editing work undertaken by Berberian after the premiere in Lisbon are given in Appendix A, where I include my transcription of the full script, here partially presented in [Figures 1, 2, and 3](#). Berberian's handwritten English translation appears between the lines or alongside the typed libretto, which also presents a number of cuts, erasures, and insertions. The latter were possibly the result of further re-elaboration, proposed by Berberian and supervised by Berio, that occurred between the two Dutch performances.

Through her editorial work, Berberian produced a more subjective and concise interpretation of the existing monologue and its symbolic unfolding, thus further personalizing and adding to the underlying refined, ironic commentary on the protagonist's stream of consciousness. In fact, much of the text deleted on this occasion does not appear in the published score, which was possibly the result of a further stage of editorial work carried out by both singer and composer for the first Italian performance in Venice in September 1972 and its subsequent recording in 1973.<sup>74</sup>

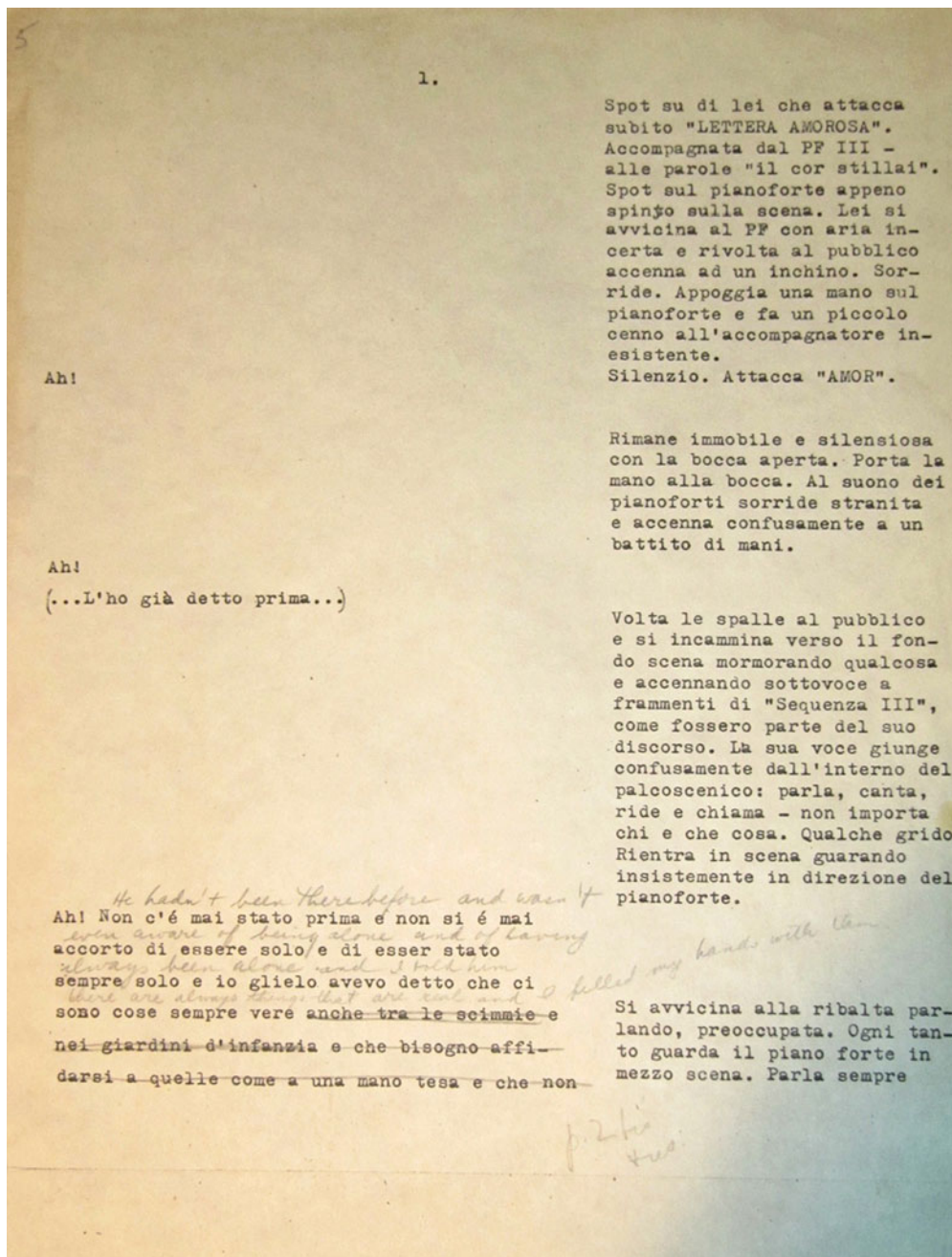
Having provided insights into the costume and set for the first performance, Berberian thus concludes her description of the work:

It's a sort of catharsis that this woman, this former singer, experiences in a nursing home, and at this moment, at this point, she loses control of her voice. I mean, she gets stuck in three notes and cannot get out, and the text is from *Libera nos*. And it is

<sup>72</sup> I was unable to identify this collaborator at this stage.

<sup>73</sup> Cathy Berberian, interview with Silvana Ottieri, tape 22, side A, 1981.

<sup>74</sup> Luciano Berio, *Recital I (for Cathy)*, Cathy Berberian, London Sinfonietta, Luciano Berio, LP, RCA 1973 (Red Seal ARL-0036), then remastered in *Recital I (for Cathy)*, *Folk Songs, 3 Songs by Kurt Weill*, Cathy Berberian, London Sinfonietta, Juilliard Ensemble, Luciano Berio, CD, BMG 1995 (RCA Victor Gold Seal 09026 62540 2).



**Figure 1** (Colour online) Page 1 of typescript copy of *Recital I* monologue with Luciano Berio's and Cathy Berberian's handwritten annotation (PSS, SCBE).



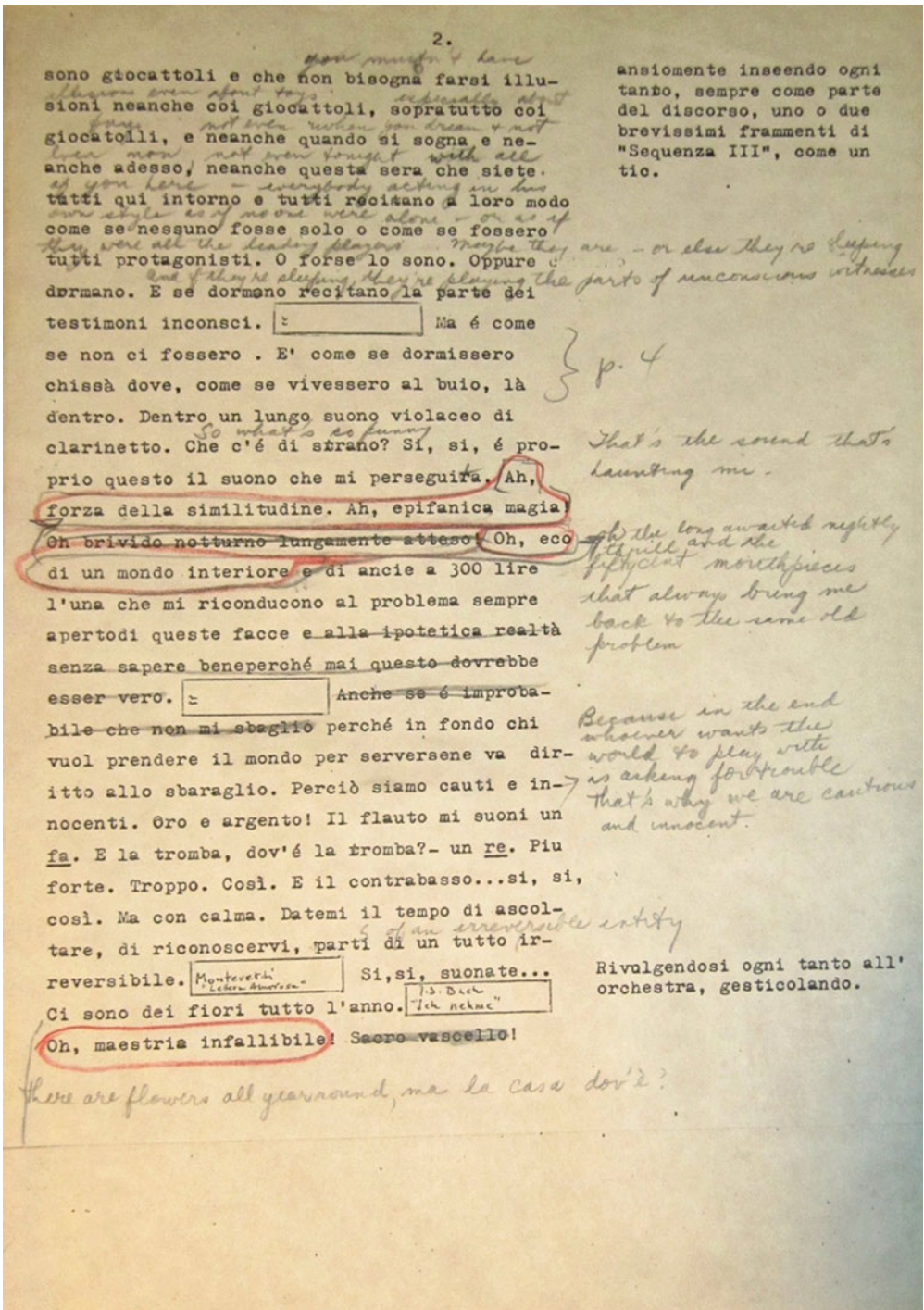


Figure 2 (Colour online) Page 2 of typescript copy of *Recital I* monologue with Luciano Berio's and Cathy Berberian's handwritten annotation (PSS, SCBE).

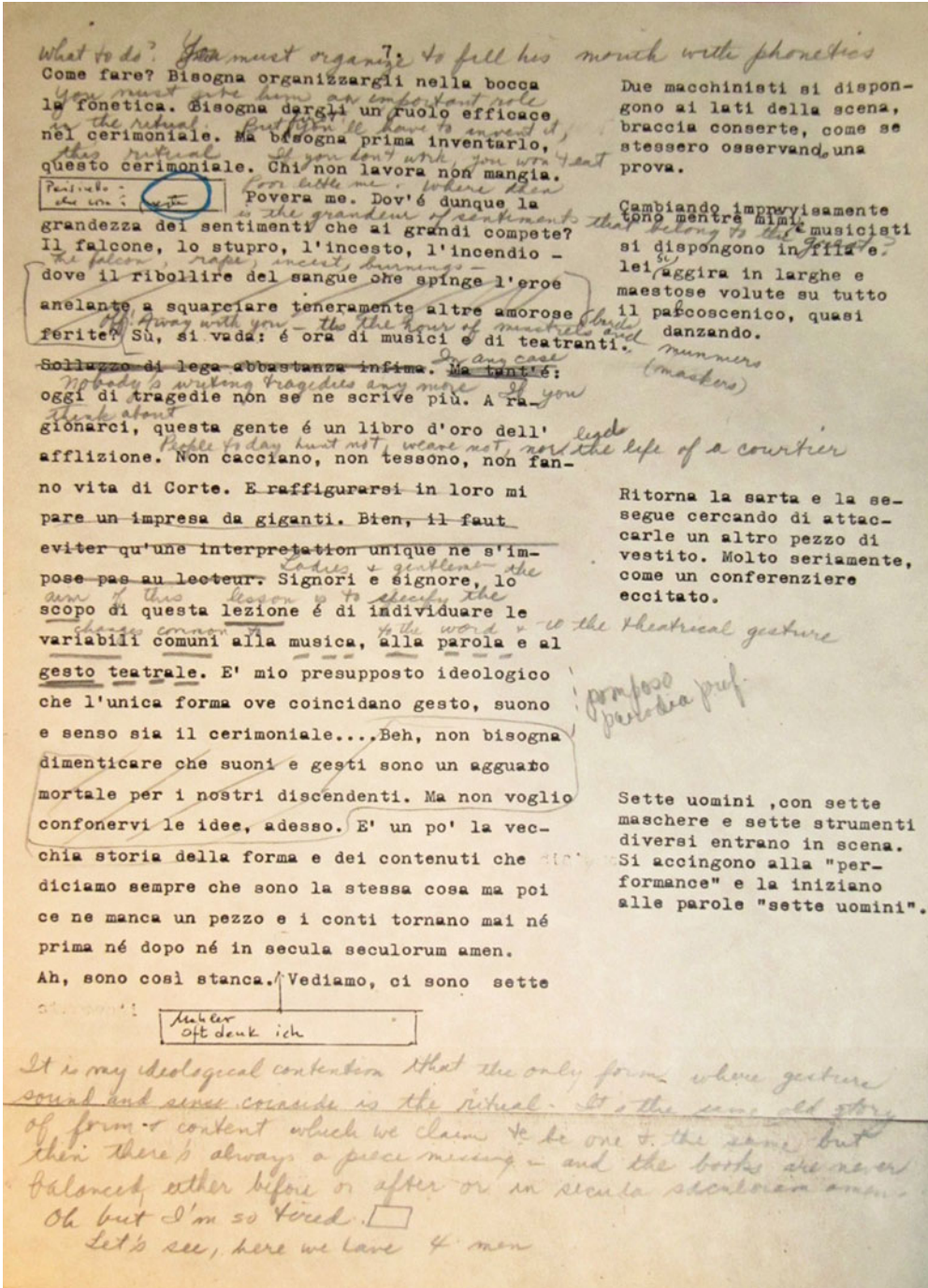


Figure 3 (Colour online) Page 7 of typescript copy of *Recital I* monologue with Luciano Berio's and Cathy Berberian's handwritten annotation (PSS, SCBE).



absolutely excruciating, you know, excruciating. You have to listen to it to understand how excruciating it really is, and see it too. We might do it in December in Milan. Anyway, it's a work that affects you. It hasn't always been highly appreciated because people usually say it's just a collage and so on, but I believe it will be re-evaluated in the future, because besides that, there's the fact that it can also be suited to other singers with their own repertoire.<sup>75</sup> Because for each musical insertion, he planned two or three different keys; so, if someone is a soprano, and does not feel like doing, I don't know, Carmen, she can use something else as a musical insertion, you know: it's flexible.<sup>76</sup>

Berberian reveals that *Recital I* was conceived as an 'open work', designed to leave the performer free to piece together the musical collage suggested by the monologue. Apparently, in the early stages, the adaptability of the work was not limited to the vocal collage, but also applied to the spoken improvisation that Berberian would perform in the 'Lesson' section of the work.<sup>77</sup> The 'flexible' nature of the 1972 work recalls the values expressed by Eco in *Opera aperta*, and which other avant-garde composers of the time adopted on many occasions.<sup>78</sup> However, possibly soon after Berberian's 1981 interview, *Recital I* had already undergone structural changes. The full score published by Universal Editions presents in fact all insertions outlined by Berio and Berberian in their exchange embedded in the musical text.

Further work in conjunction with the autograph score of *Recital I*, which is currently unavailable for consultation, would allow further insights. Although new documents are apparently being acquired and catalogued by the Paul Sacher Foundation, the only currently accessible full score manuscript looks more like a *Reinschrift* than the working draft to which Berberian and Berio may have been referring in the script of the work.<sup>79</sup> This score has blank spaces in place of the excerpts selected by Berio and Berberian, perhaps as a consequence of copyright issues raised by Universal Edition in the early stages; it may also indicate the original intention of the composer (certainly embraced by the performer) to keep the work flexible and open. In its early performances, the work kept its musical insertions in a separate source. In 2009, two new editions of *Recital I (for Cathy)* appeared after Berio's death (in 2003): one is in English and closely follows the 1972 second version, and this score was also used for the 1973 recording; the other, mainly an Italian translation of the English edition, deftly shifts

75 Berberian is possibly referring to Berio's apparent disdain for the collage, which he mentions in an interview; Berio, *Two Interviews*, 117.

76 Cathy Berberian, interview with Silvana Ottieri, tape 22, side A, 1981.

77 Cestino, 'When She Looks at Music', 167.

78 See Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta* (Milan: Bompiani, 1962). For discussion of the concept of the open work in European avant-garde, see Angela Ida De Benedictis, 'Indeterminacy and Open Form in the United States and Europe: Freedom from Control vs. Control of Freedom', in *Crosscurrents: American and European Music in Interaction, 1900–2000*, ed. Felix Meyer and Rathert Oja (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014); Claudia Di Luzio 'L'opera è aperta: Luciano Berio's experimental music theatre from his American years', 451–63, in *Crosscurrents*, ed. Meyer and Oja, 451–63.

79 I believe that the full score held at the PSS is the *Reinschrift* for its first published version, which was only available for hire near the time of its completion. This version is very close to the final published version.

between English and Italian idiomatic expressions and literary quotations, borrowing a trope emerging from Berberian's translation work visible in Appendix A.

Whether the decision to actually fix the collage in print was made by the composer or by Universal Edition, as a consequence of its concerns about copyright issues, would be worth exploring through a more rigorous critical and philological approach.<sup>80</sup>

The nature of *Recital I* is intimately connected with the creative agency of Cathy Berberian, as well as the 'intrinsic theatricality' of its literary monologue, development of which remained fluid in its initial stages. As far as genre specification goes, it might easily be inferred that stage works destined for Berberian's performative intelligence were all born with an intrinsic theatrical quality. Berberian's eclectic creativity also provided safe territory for Berio to plan an open work, varying according to the performer's textual suggestions and vocal modes and 'moods'.

### ***Recital I at the confluence of the New Vocality and 'vocal gesture'***

Questions remain regarding the gestation and current appearance of the work. What was *Recital I* originally? What is *Recital I* now? On the one hand, the prominence assigned to the display of vocal styles and gestures, as psychoanalytic stimuli to and prolongation of the imagery furnished by the monologue, made *Recital I* a formidable arena for Berberian's symbolic revisiting of her repertoire through a more or less independently instituted mechanism of memory and response. On the other hand, Berio's agency in overseeing and validating the selection is evident, and resulted from a profound familiarity with the repertoire of Berberian, his 'instrument'. The result of this combined agency, as previously glimpsed in *Sequenza III*, is a work that fully explores the potential of the embodied voice and its modes and gestures, this time articulating each vocal idiom through a musical rather than phonetic quotation, and thus amplifying the symbolic unfolding of its vocal gestures. The vocabulary adopted here is not that of the intrinsic theatricality of the vocal phoneme but that of an extended musical clause: 'everything in the voice is citation, symbol, experience'.<sup>81</sup>

With its destabilizing range of vocal styles and quotations, *Recital I* is also a perfect compendium of the phenomenology of the *New Vocality*, a term coined by Berberian herself, which emphasizes the capacity to act vocally as a process stemming from the corporeal and intellectual engagement of the performer:

I do not want to be misunderstood: the New Vocality is emphatically not based on the inventory of more or less unedited vocal effects which the composer may devise and the singer regurgitates, but rather on the singer's ability to use the voice in all

<sup>80</sup> This was not the first time that Berio 'closed' works that had been conceived as 'open'. For instance, *Sequenza I per flauto* was initially conceived for Severino Gazzelloni and had an open rhythmic notation, but was then formally fixed by Berio, who felt that later flautists were too arbitrary in many of their performance choices; Berio, *Two Interviews*, 108–9.

<sup>81</sup> Berio, *Un Ricordo al futuro*, 41.



aspects of the vocal process; a process which can be integrated as flexibly as the lines and expressions on a face.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, *Cathy's* voice enters the composition, creating the illusion that she subjectively produces her musical references to the text. Each vocal style is conceived as a linguistic unit; each musical quotation as a phonemic part of a text, in which music and words are intermingled to synthesize the poetic and biographical reminiscences of the personage *Cathy*, to whom the work is dedicated. In a letter from Berio to Berberian, which may have preceded the second or third performances of the piece, Berio thus advises the singer, who is apparently taking care of the programme notes for the evening:

Dear Cathy,

I went through the text of *Recital I* (I also have the Italian one) over and over again.

I thought about it a lot, and I definitely don't want it to be printed in the programme. There are a thousand reasons. The spoken words in the vocal fragments are too interconnected and broken up. The images of the spoken text only have a meaning when linked to the musical images. The text, like the music, always has to come off as a sequence of 'surprises' linked together. If you provide a text, you make people think that the piece is actually a text set to music – and this is the most serious issue. Everybody knows that isn't the case, yet the listener has to be allowed to believe that the text is improvised by you on the spot. To be scrupulous, one would also have to print the score of your vocal part: what you say is no more important than what you sing.<sup>83</sup>

The spoken monologue is therefore on an equal footing with the sung part. Furthermore, the sung passages must be so completely integrated into the piece as to create the illusion of a free improvisation by the singer on the spoken monologue. With its combination of spoken and sung text, *Recital I* unfolds as a true expressionist mimesis of the baroque *recitar cantando*. It is possibly this rhapsodic quality that makes *Recital I* not only a drama 'of the voice' but also a drama 'through the voice', an impossible task unless one can trust the interpreter's performative voice.<sup>84</sup> Not only was Berberian's contribution crucial to the actual writing of

82 Francesca Placanica, "La nuova vocalità nell'opera contemporanea": Cathy Berberian's legacy', in *Cathy Berberian: Pioneer of Contemporary Vocality*, ed. Karantonis, Placanica, Sivjuoja, and Verstraete, 47.

83 'Cara Cathy, ho guardato e riguardato il testo di RECITAL (ho anche quello italiano). Ci ho pensato molto e proprio non desidero che venga stampato sul pro-/gramma. Ci sono mille ragioni. Le parole dette sono troppo allacciate e sbricciolate [*sic*] nei frammenti vocali. Le immagini del testo parlato hanno un senso perché collegate alle immagini musicali. Il testo, come la musica, deve giungere sempre come una sequenza di 'sorprese' imbricate una nell'altra. Se dai un testo fai pensare che il pezzo sia /fatto, appunto, di un testo nesso in musica – e questa è la cosa più grave. Tutti sanno che non è così, ma chi ascolta deve essere messo nelle condizioni di credere che il testo lo improvvisi tu, al momento. A rigore, bisognerebbe allora stampare la partitura della tua parte vocale: quello che dici non è più importante di quello che canti', in *Korrespondenz*, 1972? PSS, SLB. Accessed by courtesy; with thanks to Prof. De Benedictis for directing me to this source.

84 On this topic, see Pamela Karantonis, 'Cathy Berberian and the Performative Art of Voice', in *Cathy Berberian: Pioneer of Contemporary Vocality*, ed. Karantonis, Placanica, Sivjuoja, and Verstraete.

the work but also her performative and vocal skills, as imprinted in the creation and repetition of the work, uniquely affected its reception, as well as its legacy to future performers.<sup>85</sup>

In fact, we have yet to come to terms with today's view of the work. The existing version crystallizes Berio's and Berberian's musical choices, yet Berberian's extensive contribution to the collaborative process remains mostly unacknowledged. Moreover, the closure of the open form of *Recital I* has somewhat domesticated the performer's textual rewriting of the work. However, even if we completely ignore the originally open nature of the work and validate its current fixed form, the formidable agency entrusted to the performer still makes it an exquisite *locus* for any singer's unique performative identity. The performer's body and her oral response to the drama becomes a compelling extra layer of text.<sup>86</sup>

Berio also built in a silent correspondence with the audience's expectations, as in many of his compositional programmes. In *Recital I*, vocal gesture meets music theatre, and the voice as a material capable of triggering expectations of genres and styles becomes the currency of the implicit dramaturgy sought by Berio's *messa in scena della parola*. In fact, *Recital I* might be seen as his performable manifesto on the problems expressed in his American lectures: the lively amplification of the concept of the voice as experience, quotation, and gesture on a macroscopic level; an embodied response to the vocal and dramaturgical speculation first addressed in *Sequenza III*, and here expanded and articulated on a larger scale. This multiplicity of fragments may have been intended to further disorientate the listeners, rather than to orientate them within a familiar vocal soundscape. Furthermore, the occurrence of short operatic passages from famous arias abruptly halts any mechanism of self-enjoyment by either the opera lover or the performer herself. This purposely negated fulfilment of the audience's horizons of expectation establishes a correspondence between composer, performer, and listeners. They are teased and virtually dragged into the drama, and prompted to recognize the musical sources of the protagonist's musical reminiscences, thus associating their own musical experiences with *Cathy's* subjectivity.

## Conclusions

I have argued that *Recital I* establishes an intimate link between Berberian's *New Vocality* and Berio's theories on musical theatre and vocal gesture; it should legitimately be included in discussion of the 'problems' of Berio's music theatre, providing a clear example of the use of the voice to inflect expectations of genre in the audience's perception. While Berio formulated the theoretical background to his vision of sound and gesture, incarnated in the semantic weight embodied by the voice, Berberian provided the vocal and bodily tessitura to that exploration, as well as her own semantic contribution to both the literary script and the musical collage. Looking at Berio's overall theatrical production, stage works like *A-Ronne*, *La vera storia*, *Un re in ascolto*, *Outis* and *Cronaca del Luogo*, capitalise on a

85 Measha Brueggergosman is among the few contemporary interpreters to have engaged with the work in recent times (Gran Teatre del Liceu, 2010–11).

86 Discussed in Placanica, 'Intertextuality and intersubjectivity' (forthcoming).

similar sensitivity and on the fractured narrative distinctive of *Recital I*. Works like *Passaggio*, *Esposizione*, *Opera* maintain as a common thread a dramaturgical quality and symbolic references to Monteverdi's *dramma per musica*, along with open references to twentieth-century psychoanalytic drama featuring largely in *Recital I* (and *Melodrama*). *Recital I*, with its ritualistic staging and sporadic references to the operatic language, fully embodies Berio's criticism of the utilitarian conventions of the 'operatic self-protective supermarket'.<sup>87</sup> *Recital I* is an ideal incarnation of Berio's view of music theatre in its earliest formulations. Its genealogy establishes it as a drama unfolding not only through music, but also 'through the voice' – the dedicatee's unique performative vocality. This quality is originally engendered by an intersubjective practice between composer and performer, through a number of musical responses dictated by memory and subjectivity, but it affects the sphere of meaning, and ultimately its musical substance. Moreover, this fragmented flow stimulates an interactive mosaic of responses in the audience, challenged to reconstruct the new meaning of each strand in association with its specific placement in the monologue, and de-territorialized from its safe original position in familiar operatic and vocal repertoire.

Looking at the larger framework from which this research work stemmed, ascribing *Recital I* to the monodramatic repertoire raises further issues, and expands the parameters of an already slippery, if not impossible, homogeneous definition of the genre. *Recital I* challenges notions of vocal consistency extant in pieces such as *La Voix humaine* and *Erwartung*, while its dramaturgical plan differentiates it from works such as *Neither*, in which, despite clear reference to genre, there is no sense of conventional dramaturgical development. In any case, *Recital I* is yet another anomaly or, better, *unicum* in the repertoire of twentieth- and twenty-first-century staged works for female soloist. In these widely differing works, the only common element is the agency of the performers who first embodied them. In Berberian's case, as in most cases, these exceptionally gifted performers represented not only an intelligent *medium*, but also a formidable living collaborator who field-tested the limits of the composition in the making. This occurred either during the creative process or at its performative stage, or both, yet the singers' contribution has usually remained unrecognized. Making some of these voices 'visible' and audible again would provide a greater understanding of the cultural and political implications of that exchange, behind and beyond the score.

## Appendix A: Transcript of textual monologue for *Recital I*

### Editorial criteria

Appendix A presents a transcribed edition of a literary source preserved in the Cathy Berberian Collection at the Paul Sacher Stiftung (Sammlung Cathy Berberian, SCBE). The source is the full script of the textual monologue of *Recital I* in nine pages in A4 format, presenting Berberian's handwritten editing work as well as Berio's annotations of musical titles for the musical collage. Three facsimiles of the sources are visible in [Figures 1, 2, and 3](#).

<sup>87</sup> Berio, 'Of Sounds and Images', 297.

The original source presents three layers. The first layer is the typescript version of the Italian text drafted by Berio, possibly dating to the second performance of *Recital I* (The Netherlands, 1972); the typescript text presents two columns, one for the monologue, the other for the stage directions. The second layer includes Berberian's pencilled annotations and translations annotated on the typescript. The third layer features Berio's handwritten annotations carrying the titles of the musical excerpts in the boxes interspersed in the text.

Even if it strives to be faithful to the original as much as possible, my transcription does not aim to be diplomatic, or a critical edition of the source.

Original punctuation and interlining of the typescript text was maintained, as well as the recurrence of lower case in the first word of each line. The division in syllables from a line to the following was kept as well. Spelling, grammar mistakes, and typos were corrected without specification in both the typed and the handwritten text.

In transcribing handwritten work carried on the typescript, I chose to maintain the original position of the handwritten text throughout, in order to provide a visual translation of the immediacy of the translation and editing work carried by Berberian on the original script. Her pencilled annotations in fact appear either across the lines of the typescript, at the bottom, or alongside each page. I distinguish the two different layouts in all instances, using normal text for the typescript and italics for Berberian's handwriting. Throughout the typescript text, some passages appear deleted by pencil, and not translated. I barred those passages throughout using a grey strikethrough line and maintained the same font in the text. Where handwritten annotations appear at the margins of the text, and are unrelated to the monologue, I used italics within square brackets to differentiate them from editorial work carried on the text. The occurrence of page numbers written in pencil in Berberian's hand, and which perhaps refer to a different working score, were as well rendered in italics, and their position in the Italian text maintained where possible in correspondence to the lines of text. I also chose to omit a few marking and scattered annotations irrelevant to the ends of this transcription. I rendered underlined passages in two distinct ways: those typescripted were maintained in the font colour of the text. Those underlined in pencil marking were underlined in grey. In both cases, I distinguished between dashed underlines and continuous underlining. Where blocks of text are circled, I used round-cornered boxes to recall the original drafting. Where the circles are in colour in the original, I indicated the different colouring in footnote.

References to musical snippets, all encapsulated in boxes, recur throughout. Where boxes appear in the margins of the page and connected to the text by darts, I inserted them directly in the text. In some places, boxes are left blank, probably because too obvious or because not needed anymore. To distinguish Berio's insertions of titles from musical excerpts, I maintained the italics, but used bold and a smaller size font.

### Notes to the reader

- ✓ Normal font for typescript passages – for example, *Volge le spalle*, Standing in the middle, two wrong
- ✓ Italics for Berberian's handwritten annotations: i.e. *he hadn't been there before*
- ✓ Pencil marks in Berberian's hand:

- Strikethrough for erased passages – for example, ~~le nebbie e si specchia nei fumi~~
  - Underlines:
    - Continuous – for example, variabili comuni
    - Discontinuous – for example, al gesto teatrale
  - Circles around text – for example, confondervi le idee
  - Other scattered annotations – for example, [p. 4]
- ✓ Smaller-sized bold italics for Berio's handwritten insertions – for example, Donizetti, "Alfin son tua".

## Transcript

1.

Spot su di lei che attacca subito “LETTERA AMOROSA”. Accompagnata dal PF III – alle parole “il cor stillai”. Spot sul pianoforte appena spinto sulla scena. Lei si avvicina al PF con aria incerta e rivolta al pubblico accenna ad un inchino. Sorride. Appoggia una mano sul pianoforte e fa un piccolo cenno all’accompagnatore inesistente. Silenzio. Attacca “AMOR”.

Ah!

Rimane immobile e silenziosa con la bocca aperta. Porta la mano alla bocca. Al suono dei pianoforti sorride stranita e accenna confusamente a un battito di mani.

Ah!

(... L’ho già detto prima...)

Volta le spalle al pubblico e si incammina verso il fondo scena mormorando qualcosa e accennando sottovoce a frammenti di “Sequenza III”, come fossero parte del suo discorso. La sua voce giunge confusamente dall’interno del palcoscenico: parla, canta, ride e chiama – non importa chi e che cosa. Qualche grido. Rientra in scena guardando insistentemente in direzione del pianoforte.

*He hadn't been there before and wasn't*  
Ah! Non c'è mai stato prima e non si è mai

*even aware of being alone and of having*  
accorto di essere solo e di esser stato

*always been alone and I told him*  
sempre solo e io glielo avevo detto che ci

*there are always things that are real and I filled my hands with them*  
sono cose sempre vere anche tra le scimmie e

*nei giardini d'infanzia e che bisogna affi-*

*darsi a quelle come a una mano tesa e che non--*

Si avvicina alla ribalta parlando, preoccupata. Ogni tanto guarda il pianoforte in mezza scena. Parla sempre

2.

*you mustn't have*  
 sono giocattoli e che non bisogna farsi illu-  
*illusions even about toys, especially about*  
 sioni neanche coi giocattoli, soprattutto coi  
*toys, not even when you dream + not*  
 giocattoli, e neanche quando si sogna e  
*even now, not even tonight with all*  
 neanche adesso, neanche questa sera che siete  
*of you here – everybody acting in his*  
 tutti qui intorno e tutti recitano a loro modo  
*own style as if no one were alone, or as if*  
 come se nessuno fosse solo o come se fossero  
*they were all leading players. Maybe they are. Or else they're sleeping.*  
 tutti protagonisti. O forse lo sono. Oppure  
*and if they're sleeping, they're playing the parts of unconscious*  
*witnesses.*  
 dormono. E se dormono recitano la parte dei  
 testimoni inconsci.   Ma è come  
 se non ci fossero. È come se dormissero  
 chissà dove, come se vivessero al buio, là  
 dentro. Dentro un lungo suono violaceo di  
*So what's so funny?*  
 clarinetto. Che c'è di strano? Sì, sì, è pro-  
 prio questo il suono che mi perseguita. Ah,<sup>88</sup>  
forza della similitudine. Ah, epifanica magia!  
Oh brivido notturno lungamente atteso! Oh, eco →  
di un mondo interiore e di anime a 300 lire  
 l'una che mi riconducono al problema sempre  
 aperto di queste facce e alla ipotetica realtà-  
 senza sapere bene perché mai questo dovrebbe  
 esser vero.   Anche se è improbabile  
 che non mi sbaglia perché in fondo chi  
 vuol prendere il mondo per servirsene va dir-  
 itto allo sbaraglio. Perciò siamo cauti e in- →  
 nocenti. Oro e argento! Il flauto mi suoni un  
 fa. E la tromba, dov'è la tromba? – un re. Più  
 forte. Troppo. Così. E il contrabbasso... sì, sì,  
 così. Ma con calma. Datemi il tempo di ascol-  
*[part]s of an irreversible entity*  
 tare, di riconoscervi, parti di un tutto ir-  
 reversibile. Monteverdi, "Lettera amorosa" Sì, sì, suonate... Ci sono dei  
 fiori tutto l'anno J. S. Bach, "Ich nehme"  
Oh, maestria infallibile<sup>89</sup>. Saero vasecche!//  
*There are flowers all year round, ma la casa dov'è?*

ansiosamente inserendo ogni  
 tanto, come parte  
 del discorso, uno o due  
 brevissimi frammenti di  
 "Sequenza III", come un tic.

[p. 4]

*That's the sound that's  
 been haunting me.*

*Oh the long-awaited nightly  
 thrill and the  
 fifty cent mouthpieces  
 that always bring me  
 back to the same old  
 problem.*

*Because in the end  
 whoever wants the  
 world to play with  
 is asking for trouble  
 That's why we are cautious  
 and innocent.*

Rivolgendosi ogni tanto  
 all'orchestra, gesticolando

88 Circled in red in the original.

89 Circled in red in the original.



3.

Suonate, suonate! Ah; Così, sì! Guardate, i loro occhi aspettano una cerimonia ufficiale e forse hanno ragione. **J. S. Bach, "Freude"** Chi non cerca il suo cerimoniale? il suo rituale? Non c'è nulla da aspettarsi da un teatro senza occhi che aspettano, da una città senza architettura, da un anno senza giorni, da viso senza proporzioni, da un paese senza abitudini.

*What shall we do? Question. Answer.*  
Ma cosa ne facciamo? Domanda. Risposta. Suonate, suonate, continuate a suonare! **J. S. Bach, "Freude"**

*Look at them waiting  
for an official ceremony  
maybe they're right.  
[p. 6]*

[p. 6]

*one more question*  
No, ancora una domanda. Perché, pensate che tutte quelle cose sono vere e il cerimoniale è un'illusione, una finzione? Risposta. Perché

*Why, do you think  
all those things are  
real and the ritual  
is just an illusion?*

*ritual elements*  
l'oggetto è il cerimoniale delle sue parti?  
Forse che l'occhio è meno vero di una pietra?  
Ma io chiamo pietra il cerimoniale dei giorni.  
Perché, forse che l'anno è meno vero della  
pietra? Suonate, suonate! **Purcell, "Prepare", Fairy Queen** Aven-

*Is the object the ritual  
of its elements. Is the  
eye less real than a stone.  
But the daily ritual  
is what I call a stone.  
Mentre sta cantando, una  
sarta, in camice bianco. Le  
aggiunge un pezzo di vestito.*

do a teatro questa sera un vecchio banchiere mi ha detto che la vita è soltanto accumulazione e allora io ho pensato alla parte di qualcosa, al qualcosa, all'uno; al tutti

[Arbasino]

e alla grande varietà della permanenza. ~~An-~~  
~~che se tutto sembra continuamente annunciare~~ [p. 9]  
~~una trasfigurazione che però tarda sempre a~~  
~~venire perché non sa da quale porta deve~~  
entrare. **M. Ravel, "Chanson épique"**

4.

Le circostanze non sono mai chiare anche quando si stabiliscono dei principi. **Purcell, "Soft, Soft"**

*Where's that fool? God knows*  
Eccolo, eccolo, quello scimunito. Chissà dove è

*where he is. I am so exhausted.*  
stato fino ad ora. Sono così stanca. Ah, non

l'ho mai visto così e lui non si è mai accorto di essere solo, di essere stato sempre solo. La

vita ci aveva diviso, la vita ci unirà.<sup>90</sup> **Marlene**

Il nostro amore è eterno. Però ho pianto

tanto. l'u sei l'amore mio, il cuore mio, lo sai.<sup>91</sup>

**Ad lib.** Che triste cosa, la solitudine!

L'anima si spegne a poco a poco, come in aperta campagna a Novembre, quando il sole declina tra le nebbie e si specchia nei fiumi delle grandi

pianure, tra rossi folgori che lentamente si

dissolvono. **De Falla, "Polo", Malaya.** Come posso non ri-

evocare, adesso, l'immenso vuoto, l'infinita angoscia che mi sta alle spalle?

Anche il viaggiatore, che ha attraversato un lungo deserto, se perviene infine – cammina, e cammina – alla sua terra promessa, si volge a guardare ancora, un'ultima volta, la grande sterminata distesa di sabbie che ha finalmente

varcato. Ho già visto tutto, ormai. **Poulenc "Je ne veux pas travailler"**

Ho già sentito tutto. E rimango un po' paralizz-

zata, infatti, lì, vicino, con la mano sul pia-

noforte, che guardo tutte quelle facce che non

importa più guardarle, ormai. E poi sento tutte

quelle cose che non importa più cantarle.

**Wagner "Sanfter deiner Brust"** Così quando ho finito di //

*In the end I've already seen everything.*

*I've " heard " In fact I'm almost paralyzed standing here with my hand on the piano looking into all those faces I couldn't care less about seeing. And then I hear all those things I couldn't care less about singing.*

Entra il pianista, in punta di piedi. Le porge timidamente un foglio. Si siede al pianoforte e "studia" silenziosamente.

*Oh, I never saw like that and he never knew he was alone, that he's always been alone and always will be.*

Tende le mani verso il pianista che la ignora  
*Our love is forever.*

Il pianista esce e ritorna Poco dopo con un bicchiere d'acqua

*Lord, how I cried!  
We're each of us alone—so sad, this loneliness like red flashes that dissolve slowly.*

Ritorna la sarta con un altro pezzo di vestito; prima di attaccarglielo l'aiuta a bere  
*How can I not remember recall now that immense void, the infinite anguish Even the traveler who has crossed the long desert, reaches the promised land. Walking + walking— Turns around to gaze once more, for the last time, that vast expansion of sand that he has finally passed.*

90 Cirled in red in the text

91 Cirled in red

5.

*try to smile into the void*

Charpentier, Louise, "Trop heureuse" (canta)... E cerco di sorridere, così nel vuoto H Wolf "Träne auf Träne"

(canta).... Perché tutto qui nei miei occhi,

adesso, è ancora come Milhaud, "Bonne semaine"

(canta) ..... Coperto di luce tranquilla.....

I saw pale kings, and princes too, Purcell, "Remember Me"

Pale warriors, death pale were they all;

Who'd cry – La belle Dame sans merci

Hath thee in thrall!!"

Imperiales fantaiesies, Bartók,

amour des somptuosités;

Volupteuses frénésies,

Rêves d'impossibilités,

Romans extravagants, poèmes

De haschisch et e vin du Rhin,

Courses folles dans les bohèmes

Sur le dos des coursiers sans frein,

On voit tout cela dans les lignes

De cette paume, livre blanc

Où Vénus a tracé des signes

Que l'amour ne lit que tremblant.

I saw pale kings, and princes too. Massenet, Manon

Quando arrivo qui, io mi meraviglio un pò, si capisce. È vero che faccio tanto l'addolorata e che sembro invecchiata di colpo, ma invecchiata

Di tanti e tanti anni. E allora io ho capito che

lui voleva uscire, subito, e che lei continua,

invece, ad abbracciarselo sempre, intanto, ma

con fatica, e che si stringe addosso a lui, ab-

bracciandoselo tanto, tutto. Insomma è come

quando tu vai a ballare in quei posti che ci

sono le luci che corrono per tutta la sala e

*When I get here, I wonder a little, obviously. It's true that I play the suffering victim, and that I seem to have aged overnight,*

*but aged so terribly. Then I understand that he wanted to leave immediately and instead she kept on twining herself around him, but with difficulty, holding him tighter, gluing herself to him completely.*

*But there's no signal anymore that can give me a happy twinge.*

*When you get down to it it's like going dancing in those places where the lights flick all over the walls and*

*Because everything here in my eyes now is still as if covered with a quiet light*

Trombone e flauto entrano (vedi schema)

Ritorna la sarta con un altro pezzo di vestito

Entra una violinista (suonando)

Guardando la violinista Sulla scena

[twining]

6.

*flash flash like the*  
e che fanno come fläsch, fläsch che sono come

*lighting shaking the tempest*

i lampi dietro la tempesta **Berio "Domani uscirà primavera"** e che le ragazze

sono come quasi nude, intorno, e certe volte anche  
tutte nude, se ti va bene, a te che un porco,  
proprio, se ne stanno lì, un po' in aria, bal-  
lando per conto loro, che tu le guardi, allora,  
porco, lì sopra i tamburi luminosi. Ah, ah!!!

**Stravinsky, Berceuse, KOT** Are you honest? My lord! are  
you fair? What means your lordship? That if you  
be honest and fair your honesty should admit no  
discourse to your beauty. Could beauty, my lord,  
have better commerce than with honesty?

*[P.S. per dare più*

*tempo al pianista di*

*salire dalla fossa]* Ma io

*[p. 5]*

voglio sognare al buio, con gli occhi tutti  
pieni di suoni. **AVENDO GRAN DISIO** Chi non si

*Who doesn't take a piece out of my life?*

*porta via un pezzo della mia vita? Ma tant'è:-*

*Anyway, tomorrow it will be your turn*

*domattina tocca a voi. Sembra che stia per suc-*

*inevitable*

*cedere qualcosa di ineluttabile.* **Bernstein (NOIR)** Cara amica,

*Maybe what I lack is memory. Ladies and gentle-*

*fore è la memoria che ti manca* **Pierrot L.** Signori e si-

*men, tonight it's not my memory that's lacking.*

*gnore questa sera non è la memoria che mi manca,*

*I can remember everything to the point of boredom.*

ricordo tutto fino alla noia. **Dallapiccola, Nadie, Satie** Ricordo tutto, an-

che quando tutti i protagonisti e i possibili

testimoni dormono o fanno finta di dormire o

sognano bugiardi nei letti pieni di buona notte

*stupid happiness*

e di felicità cretina. **Ax Lele** Ah che spettacolo, non c'è

nulla che vi diverta. Forse l'avete già visto

fuori di qui. \*Ma non voglio confondervi le idee.

**Casella + Ravel (Princesse) Schubert (Bin Freund) Chaliapin.**

Se un musicista parla invece di

suonare diventa socialmente imbarazzante come

un disoccupato che accetta qualsiasi mestiere.

*I remember everything even*

*when all the leading players and possible witnesses*

*are sleeping or pretending to sleep or dreaming of lying in 64 ways*

*in beds full of good nights and stupid happiness.*

*Oh what a show. Nothing entertains you. Maybe you've*

*seen all this conference before. Not to worry.*

*If a musician talks instead of playing,*

*he becomes socially embarrassing,*

*like an unemployed man, pleading to get any kind of a job.*

*and the girls there*

*half naked, and*

*sometimes even all nudes*

*if you're in luck, you*

*dirty pig— and they*

*stand there waving*

*in the air, dancing by themselves*

*on the lighted drums*

Rivolta al pianista,

come recitando un copione.

*while you look on, you pig!*

*Hah!*

*I want to dream in the dark*

Canta "Avendo Gran Disio"

*with my eyes full of sounds*

Molto accesa, improvvisi  
cambiamenti d'umore

Avvicinandosi al proscenio  
dà un "attacco" perentorio  
all'orchestra.

7.

*What to do? You must organize to fill his mouth with phonetics*  
Come fare? Bisogna organizzargli nella bocca

*You must give him an important role*  
la fonetica. Bisogna dargli un ruolo efficace

*of the ritual. But first you'll have to invent it,*  
nel cerimoniale. Ma bisogna prima inventarlo,

*this ritual. If you don't work, you won't eat.*  
questo cerimoniale. Chi non lavora non mangia.

*Poor little me. Where then is*

**Paisiello: che cosa è questo** Povera me. Dov'è dunque la

*the grandeur of sentiments that belongs to the great?*  
grandezza dei sentimenti che ai grandi compete?

*The falcon, rape, incest, burnings—*  
Il falcone, lo stupro, l'incesto, l'incendio –

dove il ribollire del sangue che spinge l'eroe  
anelante a squarciare teneramente altre amoroze

*Off! Away with you. 'tis the hour of minstrels (bōws) and mummers (maskers)*  
ferite? Su, si vada: è ora di musicisti e di teatranti.

*In any case*

Sollazzo di lega abbastanza infima. Ma tant'è:

*nobody's writing tragedies any more. If you*  
oggi di tragedie non se ne scrive più. A ra-

*think about,*  
gionarci, questa gente è un libro d'oro

*people today hunt not, weave not, nor lead the life of a courtier.*  
dell'afflizione. Non cacciano, non tessono, non fan-

*no vita di Corte. E raffigurarsi in loro mi*

*pare un'impresa da giganti. Bien, il faut*

*éviter qu'une interprétation unique ne s'impose—*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

**pas au lecteur.** Signore e signori, lo

*the aim of this lesson is to specify the*  
**sco**po di questa **lez**ione è di individuare le

*the changes common to [music], to the word and to theatrical gesture.*

**variabili comuni** alla **mus**ica, alla **par**ola e

al **gesto** **teat**rale. È mio presupposto ideologico [pomposo, parodia prof.]

che l'unica forma dove coincidano gesto, suono

e senso sia il cerimoniale... **Beh, non bisogna**

**dimenticare che suoni e gesti sono un agguato-**  
**mortale per i nostri discendenti. Ma non voglio**

**confondervi le idee, adesso.** È un po' la vec-

chia storia della forma e dei contenuti che

diciamo sempre che sono la stessa cosa ma poi

ce ne manca sempre un pezzo e i conti tornano mai né

prima né dopo né in saecula saeculorum amen.

Ah, sono così stanca. **Mahler Oft denk' ich** Vediamo, ci sono sette

*It is my ideological contention that the only form where gesture,*  
*sound and sense coincide – is the ritual. It's the same old story*  
*of form and contents which we claim to be one and the same but*  
*then there is always a piece missing and the books are never*  
*balanced, either before or after in saecula saeculorum amen.*

*Oh but I'm so tired.*

*Let's see, here we have 4 men*

Due macchinisti si dispongono ai lati della scena, braccia conserte, come se stessero osservando una prova.

Cambiando improvvisamente tono mentre mimi e musicisti si dispongono in fila e lei si aggira in larghe e maestose volute su tutto il palcoscenico, quasi danzando.

Ritorna la sarta e la segue cercando di attaccarle un altro pezzo di vestito. Molto seriamente, come un conferenziere eccitato.

Sette uomini, con sette maschere e sette strumenti diversi entrano in scena. Si accingono alla "performance" e la iniziano alle parole "sette uomini".

8.

uomini con sette maschere e sette strumenti diversi. Naturalmente, dipende dall'uso che se ne fa e da quanto hanno studiato La vita e l'opera. Ah, maledette parole, c'è sempre bisogno di parole. Ah! L'autonomia dell'arte! Seusate la gaffe. Il teatro in musica è abominevole. . . . Comunque, questi sette uomini avranno sempre una faccia diversa e . . . Trasformazione soprannaturale! Mettiamo siano persone normali. Potrei fare questo.

**Prende il fiato come per cominciare a cantare** Ora mi guardo le mani. Ma non c'è più niente dentro. Guardatevi le mani

Anche voi. Fanno tenerezza: un po' sporche e un po' vuote. **How tender!** **Mahler Wer hat** Guardatelo, quello scimunito. Me ne hanno detto tante! La caduta degli dei. Qui ci vuole il linguaggio

interiore il linguaggio affettivo. **Lakmé I "où tinte"** No, il linguaggio intellettuale. **Lakmé II coloratura** Il linguaggio poe-

tico. Il linguaggio della comunicazione teorica. **Rossini, un sogno un gioco** Il linguaggio della comunicazione pratica. **Rossini, Ah fu un lampo**

Ho meditato ogni notte su questa semplice Nozione. Si: "reluctantly, remorsefully, sorrowfully, helplessly; he, he, he, he, remorsefully stumbles, now and then, on love ... **Donizetti "Alfin son tua"**

**Standing in the middle of this street I dream miles of houses and farewells closed between two wrong letters, a birth certificate and a**

**grave stone.** Sembra sempre che stia per succedere qualcosa di grave e di ineluttabile.

O forse è la memoria che manca, come un attore Che non sa dove mettere le mani, con

*Why don't you all look at your hands, too? They're so touching – a little dirty, a little empty. Che tenerezza. [ ] Look at that fool. You should hear what they say about him! The fall of the gods. Here we need an interior language. An emotional language. [ ] No, an intellectual language. [ ] A poetic language – the language of theoretical communication. [ ] The language of practical communication. [ ] Every night I've dwelt on this simple notion [ ] ----- [ ] I always have the feeling that something serious and inevitable is about to happen. Or maybe I've my memory like an actor who doesn't know what to do with his hands with all those faces devouring him*

*with 4 masks + 4 different instruments. Naturally what they do will depend on the use they make of them and how much they've studied. Oh damn words, anyway. We always need words. The theater in music is abominable. Anyway, these 4 men will always have a different face. I could do this...*

*Now I'm looking at my hands But there's nothing inside them*

*Resta immobile e silenziosa per circa 5 minuti*

*Urlando*

*I due macchinisti se ne vanno.*

*I movimenti della "lezione" dietro di lei si fanno più calmi. A poco a poco tutti escono.*

tutte quelle facce che lo divorano.

*It's not my*

**Webern** *Der Tag ist vergangen* Signori e signore non è la me-

memory I am missing.

moria che mi manca. **Ombra leggera**, "A me ti dona"

**Milhaud**, *Nous pardonne nos péchés* Piut-

*Let's have some calm rather, give me time to listen.*

tosto, un po' di calma: datemi tempo di

ascoltare. **Schubert** *Seufzen* Dalle vetrate

scivola una luce mutevole. **Prokofiev** *A poi doo*

Vi sarà un luogo che non sia il teatro? C'è

sempre bisogno di parole. Questa sera, signori,

e signore, non è la memoria che mi manca. **Ombra leggera**

La lezione continua, noi parliamo e nessuno

sospetta quello che pensiamo. La lezione con-

tinua, noi parliamo e nessuno sospetta quel-

lo che realmente pensiamo mentre ci preoccup-

priamo di conservare quella maschera frusta

dell'intelligenza, della sensibilità, dell' [sic]

onore, della pietà, della coscienza e di-

tutto quello che anch'essa nasconde: dall' [sic]

omicidio alla fame, dai feelings alle limo-

nate, dall'egoismo alle etimologie senza senso

e all'oscura sensazione – si dice così? – che

dentro le vostre facce, le vostre pance e

le vostre tasche piene di indirizzi non c'è

assolutamente nulla. . . . Suonate, suonate; ma

con calma: datemi tempo di ascoltare. Di guar-

dare. Quello che succede qui lo avete già

visto prima e lo vedrete ancora. Anche senza

questo mio inutile sacrificio e senza quegli

strumenti che suonano e suonano e che mi fan-

no impazzire e mi divorano. Ridete, ridete,

fate qualcosa. Applaudite, non abbiate

paura, applaudite, applaudite. . .

Lei rimane sola  
sempre più agitata col  
pianista che ogni tanto la  
guarda perplesso.

*An inconstant light slips  
through the stained glass.  
There must be some place in this world  
that isn't a theatre. There is  
Da qui alla fine in crescendo  
esasperante.  
always this need for words.  
Tonight, ladies + gent,  
I haven't lost my memory.*

Ritorna la sarta  
*This lesson goes on and nobody  
even knows what we're  
thinking. We speak and  
no one dreams of what we  
really think. And we worry  
about keeping on that  
ragged mask of intelligence,  
sensitivity, honor, piety and  
conscience – from homicide  
to hunger, from feelings to  
petting, from selfishness  
Il pianista si alza guardando-  
la fisso e rimane irrigidito  
accanto al pianoforte.*

Singhiozzando; la sarta con  
un gesto improvviso e autori-  
tario manda via il pianista  
che si allontana impaurito.  
La sarta chiama con la mano,  
rivolta alle quinte. Si ac-  
cascia disperata. Accorrono  
inservienti che la sorreg-  
gono come fossero infermieri.  
Altri inservienti depongono  
al proscenio con gesti an-  
noiatissimi mazzi di fiori finti.  
*to senseless etymology,  
and from the obscure sensation  
(is that we say) and  
that behind your faces,  
inside your bellies  
and your pockets full  
of addresses there is abso-  
lutely NOTHING! SILENCE*



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