

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: LUCIANO BERIO'S *NATURALE*: A STORY
COMBINING FOLK MUSIC AND ART
MUSIC

Leonardo Piermartiri
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Directed By: Professor Katherine Murdock
School of Music

The study of a score by a serious performer is a fundamental step in the process of arriving at a knowledgeable and deeply informed approach to performing a piece of music. In order to obtain this knowledge numerous aspects of the score must be taken into consideration. It is the intent of this dissertation to gather and analyze the information concerning *Naturale*, a work written by Luciano Berio in 1985 for viola, percussion and recorded voice, based on Sicilian folk songs.

All the aspects surrounding *Naturale's* existence are taken into consideration in this study. First, it is important to reflect on Berio's compositional style and traits, the manner in which he relates his works one to another, what he sees in folk music and his own personal desire to intertwine art music and folk music. For Berio *Naturale* is not an isolated venture into the realm of mixing folk music and his own avant-garde style; it is instead one of many works resulting from his long-standing relationship with folk music.

Another essential aspect in this case is the study of Sicilian folk music itself, and the sources used by Berio to find the songs by which he was inspired. The work

is examined section by section with figures showing both excerpts of *Naturale* as well as the original songs with their translations. An analysis containing harmonic, thematic and formal aspects of the score was developed in order to arrive at a better understanding of the structure and pacing of the piece.

For this research the author went to Italy to conduct an interview with Maestro Aldo Bennici, the Sicilian violist for whom *Naturale* was composed. This interview helped in the discovery of two more songs used by Berio that have not to this point been identified in any other document. Bennici's outstanding testimony portrayed the expressive character of this music and the evocative imagery behind this score. I hope to bring this knowledge to other performers, that they may fully understand and appreciate the unique beauty and power of Berio's *Naturale*.

LUCIANO BERIO'S *NATURALE*: A STORY COMBINING FOLK MUSIC AND
ART MUSIC

By

Leonardo Piermartiri

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Advisory Committee:
Professor Katherine Murdock, Chair
Professor David Salness
Professor Evelyn Elsing
Dr. Robert C. Provine
Dr. Peter Beicken

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Preface

What we do either small or big, is history. Because we all take part in history but we don't notice it. We take part in history with our little contributions. What is important is the existence of one more piece for the viola. I contributed with my tiny grain of sand to the creation of new pieces for viola. And this, I believe, is our duty. Otherwise, if we don't think this way, we end up obscuring the beauty of what we do.

Aldo Bennici

Foreword

To a certain extent, the decision to have *Naturale* as the topic of this dissertation is based on personal reasons. As I am of Italian descendant I feel connected to the culture of that country; being a violist I sought a significant association with music for this instrument that might have a more direct cultural connection with my heritage. After thorough research of Italian works for viola I found this spectacular piece, and writing about it has taken me into an unexpected but incredibly meaningful journey.

Dedication

To my parents, Francesco and Maria Luisa,
for their unconditional love and everlasting support.

Senza di voi non ce l'avrei fatta.

Vi Amo!

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to my wonderful teacher and advisor Prof. Katherine Murdock for the inspiration and editing of this dissertation, and for all the extraordinary support and care she gave me these four years. Her great artistic skills and passion for music will influence me for the rest of my life.

I also wish to thank Maestro Aldo Bennici for his immense kindness in conceding the interview for this dissertation, sharing with me and all the readers several fascinating aspects about *Naturale*, Berio and Sicilian music.

Thank you also Kim Kashkashian for her interview, Dr. Robert C. Provine for his help in editing, Dr. James Fry and Dr. Carlos Fernandes for the analysis insights, Paul Keesling for performing beautifully in my recital and sharing the percussion set-up, Mario Tranchina for his help in transcribing and translating from the Sicilian and Corrado Piermartiri for contacting and mailing the material from Italy to here.

I also want to thank Universal Edition for kindly allowing the reprint of short excerpts of *Naturale* in this dissertation.¹

Finally, thank you Lord Jesus Christ for enlightening my life and blessing me with my wonderful wife Tet, which encouragement and support was essential for this accomplishment. I also want to remember my precious daughters Lidia and Naomi, for the time I had to be away and for the hope and happiness they give me.

¹ Luciano Berio "*Naturale (über sizilianische Melodien) für Viola, Schlagzeug und Zuspieldband (sizilianischer Volkssänger)*" © Copyright 1985 by Universal Edition A.G., Wien/UE 32565

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Introduction

This document intends to examine and illuminate the piece *Naturale* by Luciano Berio, in order to emphasize and elaborate upon its role as a substantial and significant work in the viola repertoire. This spectacular work, based on Sicilian folk songs, carries great cultural significance, however is not well-known by either audiences or the academic community.

Berio composed *Naturale* using the same material as *Voci*, a concerto for viola and two orchestras composed by Berio in 1984. Both works use Sicilian folk songs extracted from the transcriptions of Italian ethnomusicologist Alberto Favara. These songs collected by Favara were published in four volumes between the years 1907 and 1959. In *Naturale* the viola, percussion, and voice form three different musical layers that, when combined, have an unusual and compelling interaction. The viola takes the central role, alternating between improvisatory passages and folk material such as work songs, love songs, street cries, and lullabies, all modified and adapted by the composer. For the most part, the percussion provides the supporting background to the viola, as if simply providing commentary. As a last layer Berio adds the recorded CD which punctuates the work with seven street vendor songs. These songs are performed by Sicilian storyteller-singer Peppino (Giuseppe) Celano, who completely seizes the listener's attention with the surprisingly raw and intense quality of his singing.

The subject of Sicilian folk music seems rather remote from the disciplines studied by music performers in most academic circles. Berio himself mentioned that

his intent in composing works based on these folk songs was to contribute to an increased awareness of this most fervent form of expression.² In order to close this gap, special attention is given in this document to the sources of these songs, their meaning, the environment and the occasions on which they were sung. Two articles, both published in 2006 by the Italian researchers Felici³ and Vendrasco⁴, have already initiated the identification of the songs used by Berio. Felici's article focuses primarily on *Voci*, while Vendrasco studies the connection between *Naturale* and *Voci*. As a result of this present research, I have identified two more songs used by Berio in these two pieces, which are not mentioned in those articles.

In July 17, 2012 this author had the privilege to interview Maestro Aldo Bennici, the Sicilian violist for whom *Naturale* was composed. The interview took place at his artistic director's office at the prestigious Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, Italy. Being from Sicily himself and the one that introduced Berio to those Sicilian folk songs, he had a fundamental role in unveiling their performance-practice as well as the story behind the creation of *Naturale*. In order to portray the correct expressive character of this music, Bennici sang abundantly and meaningfully during the interview, using many gestures, as the great Italian artist that he is. This fascinating hour-long interview was originally recorded in Italian; it has since been transcribed and translated into English by this author. Parts of the interview are cited

² Composer's note in the CD *Luciano Berio. World-Premiere Recordings. Requies-Voci-Chorale*, RCA Victor Red Seal BMG (1990).

³ Candida Felici, "Voci di Luciano Berio", *Per Archi*, anno I, no.1, Rome: Squilibri (November 2006): 11-45.

⁴ Cecilia Vendrasco, "Voci e Naturale di Luciano Berio: procedure di una filiazione." *Per Archi*, no.1, Rome: Squilibri (November 2006): 47-71.

throughout this dissertation where pertinent, and the entire text can be found as appendix A.

Because of the Italian and Sicilian nature of this subject, there were several texts that needed to be translated in the course of this research, such as articles, websites and song lyrics. All the Italian to English translations were done by this author. The lyrics of the Sicilian songs were partly translated into Standard Italian by Mr. Mario Tranchina⁵ as well as by this author, with the help of the websites <http://scn.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wikizziunariu> and <http://www.linguasiciliana.it/A.htm>.

In the process of gathering information for this document, three other appendices were produced. Appendix B is a brief internet interview I conducted with violist Kim Kashkashian, who recorded *Naturale* while working closely with Berio himself. It provides helpful insights into what Berio was looking for when his music was being performed. Appendix C was generated after the performance of *Naturale* by the author and percussionist Paul Keesling. It is a sample of the percussion set up, different from the specifications in the score, which was developed to enhance the work's performance.

No study of a musical work can be complete without an analysis of its structure. By investigating *Naturale* in the harmonic, thematic and formal fields, it is possible to better understand how Berio organizes his material, contrasting and bringing together the two worlds of western classical music and folk music. The rehearsal letters written in the score by the composer (from A to R) divide the music into sections, which generally correspond to the different folk songs used. These

⁵ Mr. Tranchina is a Sicilian, born in Palermo, and teaches the Italian language at the Instituto Dante Alighieri in Curitiba, Brazil. The seven recordings used by Berio in *Naturale* are sung in the same dialect spoken by Mr. Tranchina.

sections are studied one by one, illustrating Berio's elaboration of his own music and the songs, and gathering information for subsequent analysis.

The author hopes to form a compendium of information that will hopefully serve as a valuable resource for the serious performer who wishes to have a knowledgeable and deeply informed approach to performing Berio's unusual and compelling work, *Naturale*.

CHAPTER 1 - Luciano Berio's Works and Folk Music

When writing about the music of Luciano Berio it is inevitable that one must talk about his involvement with the twentieth-century avant-garde movements. The search for new compositional styles in the post-World War II era, characterized by the rejection of tonality, was a prevailing ideal among young composers.

Berio was in his twenties after the war and had given up pursuing a career as a concert pianist after a hand injury due to a gun accident while in the army. Instead, he decided to focus on composition. It was in Tanglewood, under the influence of Dallapiccola that Berio first gained interest in twelve-tone music. This interest led to his association with a group of composers formed at the Darmstadt Summer Festival for New Music in the late nineteen fifties, a group which included such names as Boulez, Stockhausen, and Ligeti. They were composers who shared the same compositional ideals of serial music. Also, this quest to produce music that was ahead of its time lead to his association with Bruno Maderna, and together they created a studio devoted to electronic music in Milan. Years later at the invitation of Pierre Boulez, he also became director of the electro-acoustic division of IRCAM in Paris in the nineteen seventies.⁶

Experimental music, unusual fusions of different genres, and tendencies towards a modernist style are expected traits in Berio's compositions. However, this search for new forms of expression through sound did not prevent him from searching back in music history to find inspiration. Many of his compositions have been in

⁶ IRCAM stands for *Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique*.

some way inspired by works of great masters such as Bach, Beethoven, and Mahler.

According to Berio himself, the third part of his well-known *Sinfonia* has:

...a skeleton which is the scherzo from Mahler's *Second Symphony*...it's accompanied throughout by the "history of music" that it itself recalls for me, with all its many levels and references...⁷

The use of musical references to other composers and also to his own works (auto-citation) is in fact a recurrence that permeates all his music. He followed the principle that "...for a composer, the best way to analyze and comment on a piece is to do something, using materials from that piece...My *Chemins* are the best analyses of my *Sequenzas*..."⁸

This practice of using materials from his own previously written pieces has generated a connection between his own compositions in such a way that it is possible to find distinct groups, or "families" inside Berio's own output. Works in the same "families" are the ones that share the same material or the same concept: for example, all the works that use folk material. By grouping together works this way, one can understand better the relation between Berio's compositions. Some of these "families" are originated by pieces that quote neither the work of other composers nor his own, but are a starting point for this process.

The best example of this is Berio's series of solo instrumental compositions called *Sequenzas*. There are a total of fourteen *Sequenzas*, which were composed between 1958 and 2002. They explore the fullest possibilities of each instrument, often calling for extended techniques. One of the ways in which Berio creates contrast between sections in these pieces is to relate different thematic areas to specific

⁷ David Osmond-Smith, ed. and trans., *Luciano Berio: Two Interviews: With Rossana Dalmonte and Balint Andras Varga* (New York: Marion Boyars, 1985), 107.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

instrumental techniques (pizzicato, tremolo, double-stops etc.). In this way these sections become more distinct than the traditional “themes”. This aspect is also present in *Naturale*, which in its particular mosaic structure, every song is set in a specific viola technique resembling the structuring of a *Sequenza*.

Several of the *Sequenzas* became the basis for larger works, most notably the series called *Chemins*. For example, as Berio mentioned, *Sequenza VI* (for viola solo) generated *Chemins II* by adding extra instrumental parts around the original solo. In both works, the harmonic spectrum is developed by playing chords using an extended technique where the four strings are played simultaneously in a tremolo. Such passages are also cited in *Voci* and *Naturale* as well, creating a line of reference that connects all of these pieces.

Naturale was built by extracting excerpts from *Voci*, which in its turn was called *folk songs II*, relating it to Berio’s famous vocal work *Folk Songs* (1964). These three pieces form a “family” with similar traits: they have ethnic music as an inspirational source, and they have a specific focus on solo instrument resulted by the close collaboration between the composer and a virtuoso. In *Folk Songs* the composer built a cycle based on eleven folk songs from around the world for his wife, virtuoso American singer Cathy Berberian. One of these songs, “A la femminisca,” comes from Sicily; it is found in the same source in which Berio found his songs for *Voci*.⁹

Berio’s interest in folk music, jazz and even pop music dated back to his early years as a composer. For example, his prize-winner work *Laborintus II* from 1965, has a brief jazz episode amongst other musical references. However, that is “...the

⁹ Vendasco, 49.

most banal thing to appear in the (entirely invented) musical catalogue that is *Laborintus II*.”¹⁰

On the other hand, his relationship with folk music was not anecdotal as it was with jazz and pop music. That interest had his origins when Berio was a young boy, writing pastiche folksongs.

My interest in folklore is very long standing—even as a boy I was writing pastiche folksongs. Recently this interest has put down deeper roots, and I've tried to gain a more specific and technical understanding of the processes that govern certain folk idioms...I tend to be interested only in those folk techniques and means of expression that I can in one way or other assimilate without a stylistic break, and that allow me to take a few steps forward in the search for unity underlying musical worlds that are apparently alien to one another.¹¹

Some of Berio's works that show this interest throughout his career are the following: *Tre Canzoni Popolari* (1948), *Folk Songs* (1964), *Coro* (1974-76), *Cries of London* (1974), and finally *Voci* and *Naturale*.

These masterpieces are the result of Berio's utopian dream of creating a unity between folk music and western classical music. According to Berio himself there are three conditions which can be identified in the act of transcribing, as in translating:

...the transcriber can identify emotionally with the text, the original text can become a pretext for experimentation; or, finally, it can be overwhelmed and philologically “abused.”¹²

He believes that, when these three conditions coexist the transcription becomes a real creative and constructive act. *Voci*, and by extension *Naturale*, explores the problem of the convergence of these three conditions.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., 105.

¹¹ David Osmond-Smith, 107.

¹² Composer's note in the CD *Luciano Berio. World-Premiere Recordings. Requies-Voci-Chorale*, RCA Victor Red Seal BMG (1990).

¹³ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2 - Connection Between *Naturale* and *Voci*

Much of Berio's music borrows and cites from his previous works. This is the same approach we see in the creation of *Naturale*, which is in fact a derivation from a work called *Voci*.

Voci (folk songs II) for viola and orchestra was written for violist Aldo Bennici with a dedication to Laura and Paolo Martelli. Its premiere was on October 26, 1984 in Basel, Switzerland with Berio conducting and Bennici playing the solo viola part. To understand where this work stands in relation to Berio's other compositions it is important to consider why he chose that name. *Voci* means "voices" in Italian and refers to the array of expressions found in the folkloric realm. The title in parenthesis (*folk songs II*) recalls Berio's *Folk Songs*, a work for voice and orchestra composed twenty years earlier.

Berio's search for unity between the diverse contemporary musical expressions and the folkloric expression finds a resolution in the solo viola part of *Voci*. Not only did his friendship with Bennici give him strong personal reasons for choosing the viola as the solo instrument, the composer also found in the dark and mellow quality of the viola sound an effective and meaningful translation of Sicilian folk singing. In the setting of the *Folk Songs* of 1964, the viola has an important role opening the work with a solo marked with the indication: "like a wistful country dance fiddler." The appropriate writing and the tone of the viola provide a successful realization of the country fiddler. But it is in *Voci* that the viola finds a voice even

closer to the folk expression, and Berio himself writes in the score the names of the actual Sicilian folk songs in the viola part.¹⁴

Voci, in contrast to *Folk Songs*, does not bring the words in to the context but instead uses extended techniques in the viola as a means to portray the expression found in the voice. The use of quarter-tones to imitate the Sicilian singers, left-hand pizzicato when simultaneously playing with the bow to emulate the glottal stop, intense vibrato, and harmonics are some of the means he uses to portray this expression.

According to my interview with Bennici, the great friendship he had with the composer was the reason why Berio decided to score *Naturale* for viola. The concurrence of a dance company from Reggio Emilia, called Ater Balletto, commissioning a stage work from Berio, along with his friend's desire for a work for solo viola, created the impulse for this composition.

Back when he wrote *Naturale* (this story is very personal but I'll tell it anyway) I was separating from my first wife and there was a heavy financial burden on me. Berio wanted to help me and he acted as a true close friend. He thought of writing this choreography for me, and in about six months performing this piece I was able to pay all that I owed. It is a story very unimportant but of great reciprocal friendship and great love. Berio wrote it so that I would be well.¹⁵

Naturale had its first performance in January 1st, 1985 only a little over two months after *Voci* came out. It took place at the Festival "Taormina Arte" with

¹⁴ Vendrasco, p. 52.

¹⁵ Aldo Bennici, interview by Leonardo Piermartiri, personal interview, Siena, Italy 17 July 2012 (the full text of the interview can be found in Appendix A).

choreography by Amedeo Amodio, with scenery and costumes by Luisa Spinatelli; the dance company was Ater Balletto with Aldo Bennici on the viola.¹⁶

Naturale is in fact a derivation of *Voci*, with almost all the material coming from the earlier work. Entire songs in the viola part are transferred to the new score and set in a different order with nothing but minor adjustments. Only the beginning and some transitions seem to have been created exclusively for *Naturale*.

In order to fulfill the commission of a staged work for the dance company, its creation demanded traits that were essential to a choreographic spectacle; he adapted the material with complete simplification of the orchestral part adding to it only the percussion, making it more agile and flexible. *Naturale* has a clear structure of sections easily adaptable to the needs of a scenic narration by using transition moments between each section. There is much room for interpretation, and the performers can pace the flow with much freedom. Berio specified several metronome markings throughout the piece, but he compensated for the issues of synchronizing the viola and percussion parts with the recorded voice on the compact disc by writing some free repetitions of “ostinato” figures, and fermatas. *Voci* is also built with moments of rest between its sections, leaving the viola the freedom to finish phrases or start new material.

What really strikes the listener as setting the two works apart is the dense and complex elaboration of the orchestra timbres in *Voci*. Berio developed the material with his sophisticated avant-garde writing to create a large scale work, as Bennici describes:

¹⁶ Vendrasco, p. 54.

Consider that when you will play *Voci* with an orchestra, it is a different language even if the material is the same. That piece is a great orchestration manual. In other words, it is a very complex orchestration using magically very few elements that expand becoming a score with two orchestras. These two ensembles are eight meters apart and at the same time create these dissonances that play a game of call. If you analyze well, you'll see that the material is very limited but intertwined, a real model of how you build a score.¹⁷

For *Naturale* instead, Berio decided to have a different sound concept.

Between the folk songs he interspersed seven recordings of street vendor cries, sung by Peppino Celano of Palermo Italy. Berio recorded them himself when he met Celano in 1968. This is how Berio describes Celano:

He was a remarkable story-teller – he could tell tales for days on end, sometimes sang, and he spoke in a rhythmical manner marking the beat with his feet. He even had a sword and beat the rhythm with it. He had an astonishing singing technique which enabled him to sing all the *abbagnate*. That is what the cries of Sicilian street vendors are called... Celano introduced me to these tunes and I recorded them on tape.¹⁸

In *Naturale*, Celano's singing is raw and poignant; it grabs the listeners' attention early on, as the first street vendor cry of Celano comes about one minute into the work. The singer's melody is mostly in step-wise motion, with quarter-tones variation in pitch (as if going out-of-tune). At times he uses glissandi, spoken words, and throughout sings with an intense projection of the voice using no vibrato, which is typical of Sicilian folk singing. These are characteristics that Berio utilizes to build the viola's sonority and discourse, as if "imitating" this way of singing.

This new element in the score of the street vendor cries produces not only a strong impact in the audience but also on the harmonic structure of the work. It generates completely new material not found in *Voci*. That is accomplished by the

¹⁷ Aldo Bennici, Interview.

¹⁸ David Osmond-Smith, 149.

elaboration on the pitches sung by the voice in those seven recordings. This elaboration will be studied in detail later in Chapters seven and eight.

CHAPTER 3 - About Sicily and its Heritage

Geographical and Historical Overview

In order to properly situate the study of folk music in Sicily it is first necessary to understand this unique island in the Mediterranean as well as its heritage. Although the first things that may come to mind when someone thinks of Sicily are “Mafia” and poverty, there is a rich history to this island that is little known, and which has definitely influenced the shaping of its folk manifestations. The dry climate and geography (hilly landscape and extensive area of coastline) have also contributed in determining the character of the Sicilian people.

For centuries Sicily’s economy has been agriculturally based, its fertile volcano soil, as a result of the volcano Mount Etna, has helped grow famous crops of oranges, wheat, lemons, and olives, among other produce. People who lived in the region of the city of Marsala developed Marsala wine, which is known and appreciated worldwide. In the interior of the island, raising cattle and sheep has been a major activity, as is fishing in the coastal towns. The traditional tuna fishing technique called *mattanza* is believed to have been created since the Arab occupation in the Middle Ages. Much less widely used today due to modernization, this type of fishing requires the coordination of several boats, which they do by singing old folk songs. One last but important trait remains, their religious nature. We will see how this religiosity manifests itself in the musical forms in the following chapters.

Sicily’s unique positioning in the Mediterranean facilitated great exposition to several cultures over the course of its history. The proximity to other lands such as

North Africa, the Italian Peninsula, Greece and Spain, has facilitated cultural contributions from all the different peoples and races that have lived in this island. This cultural exchange definitely influenced its music, either purposely or by accident.¹⁹

It is believed that three tribes were the first settlers of the island around 1200 BC, namely, the Elymians, Sicani and the Sicels (the one which Sicily was named after), in addition to some Phoenician colonies. In the eighth century BC, the Greeks started colonizing the coastline founding important cities. Syracuse for example, became a powerful city-state playing an important role in Greek history; Archimedes was one of its most illustrious sons. Among all the Mediterranean lands that the Greek colonized, Sicily was the one in which the music was as fruitful as in Greece.²⁰

Later, in the third century BC, the Romans annexed Sicily as their republic's first province, occupying it for about 700 years. Because of its abundant crops, it was considered Rome's granary, the most important wheat supply. In a sense, the Romans allowed the local culture to remain largely Hellenistic, which stayed that way even after the Romans, roughly surviving the following barbarian occupations by the Vandals, Goths and Byzantines. Around the tenth century, after decades of war, the island was conquered by the Arabs, which added another side to the cultural palette by bringing their advanced culture and agriculture. In fact, the Muslim influence has been present in Sicily not only by occupation but through trade, if you consider that the proximity to Northern Africa is roughly 100 miles at its closest point.²¹

¹⁹ Sandra Benjamin, *Sicily: Three Thousand Years of Human History*. (Hanover, N.H.: Steerforth Press, 2006).

²⁰ Ottavio Tiby, *Corpus di Musiche Popolari Siciliane*, vol. 1

²¹ Benjamin, p. 129.

The Normans (Viking descendants) took control of Southern Italy and Sicily from the Arabs in the mid-eleventh century, creating the base of the soon-to-be Kingdom of Sicily. The new rulers of the island didn't expel the Arabs; instead they kept the Muslim population and their law system intact. It became the most luminous cultural center in the Mediterranean, a mix of diverse ethnicities, attracting artists, scientists, scholars and artisans of all kinds. Splendid buildings were created with the work of Normans, Muslims, Jews, Lombards and Byzantine Greeks.

As a consequence of wars and political disputes, from the twelfth to the nineteenth century, this Kingdom was under the rule of several dynasties, from the Hauteville (Norman), to the Hohenstaufen (Germans from Swabia), to the Aragon (Spanish), to the Bourbon (French), until the unification of Italy in 1860 by Garibaldi.

With such a rich and diversified historical background, it is possible to realize the influences that took a part in shaping this land and its art. In music, more specifically, the Sicilian people were exposed over the years to different styles: the Greek modes, the Byzantine hymns, the Arab *maqam*, the troubadour's songs, the Minnesinger Lieder, even the rich polyphony of the Renaissance.²² All of these surely contributed to make Sicilian folk song so unique.

²² Tiby, p. 23.

CHAPTER 4 - The Source of the Songs

Around the second half of the nineteenth century, in the heart of the Romantic Era, an interest in documenting folk manifestations started in many countries of Europe which before then had been neglected. That interest was the first sparkle to what became today's ethnomusicology, although in Italy that discipline was not consolidated until the mid-twentieth century. In Sicily, the first prominent figures in this field were Giuseppe Pitrè,²³ Corrado Ferrara and Alberto Favara.

This study will focus in the work done by Favara. According to Felici and Vedrasco, his anthology called *Corpus di Musiche Popolari Siciliane* (Corpus of Sicilian Popular Music) (1957), is the most important source Berio used to find Sicilian folk songs for his compositions. This is a monumental collection of more than a thousand songs, narrated stories, procession chants, lullabies, drum and church-bell calls among other expressions. Alberto Favara (1863-1923), a Sicilian composer and scholar, was also a serious folksong collector who engaged in field work, transcribing ethnic music between 1898 and 1923, the year of his death. According to Tiby, he was among one of the first to pose the problem of “objective documentation” when collecting material from definite groups (farmers, seamen, herdsmen); in other words, he would only select songs which he felt were from traditional roots, discarding those based in external models.²⁴ The discernment of

²³ Giuseppe Pitrè (1841-1916), a great Italian folklorist also a medical doctor, professor, and senator. Pitrè was exceptional in his work as a folklorist. He was the first scholar to study and collect systematically Sicilian folk tales, legends, songs, and customs between 1871 and 1913; he compiled a collection of Sicilian oral culture in impressive twenty-five volumes called *Biblioteca delle Tradizioni Popolari Siciliane*, first published in 1870.

²⁴ Tiby, p. 5.

what really comes from the core of a specific culture is a controversial issue. External influences are a normal development to all folk manifestations, making it impossible to track far back in the past. Favara set new research procedures, under the climate of positivism, attempting to find the true expression of Sicilian folk music. In addition to being objective in his documentation, what makes his work distinct from other collections of the time is that Favara is true to the source. In a note he writes: “I reproduce the songs the way I found them, striving to write them exactly the way they were presented to me, without stylizing it.”²⁵

It is interesting to notice in the preface of this edition that Favara started his research eight years before Bartók and Kodály were transcribing and collecting Hungarian music. For many years they did not know of each other’s work and yet they had identical conditions of work and the same ideal to penetrate the spirit of folk music.²⁶ For the ethnomusicologists of today *Corpus di Musiche Popolari Siciliane* is “... a confirmation of an ethnic foundation of Italian music, different... from the character of Italian classical music and decidedly different than the altered and adulterated picture which some of the music collectors of the 1800s had attributed to it.”²⁷

Favara never saw the publication of his complete work, which happened in 1957. After he died in 1923, Ottavio Tiby²⁸ organized and edited all the 1090 songs. Favara, in order to create attention and interest to this music heritage, had actually

²⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁶ *Corpus di Musiche Popolari Siciliane* pp. XIII-XIV.

²⁷ Diego Carpitella, *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, Vol. 11, No. ½ “Ethnomusicology in Italy”, Special Issue: Folklore Studies in Italy (Jun. - Aug., 1974), p. 89.

²⁸ Ottavio Tiby (1891-1955) Italian ethnomusicologist was one of the pioneers of the scholarly study of Sicilian folk music and also son-in law of Alberto Favara.

published two smaller anthologies of songs arranged with piano accompaniment named *Canti della Terra e del Mare di Sicilia*, the first in 1907 (25 songs), and later in 1921 (20 songs). Both were published by the known Italian publishing house Ricordi. These first publications were followed by two posthumous volumes that were edited by Tiby, and published later in 1954 (30 songs) and 1959 (15 songs). By harmonizing these folk melodies Favara himself added his own external influence to them. Berio comments about these harmonization made by Favara saying that at times they are arbitrary, but made by a musician with a sensitive ear.²⁹

But it is in *Corpus* that the monumental work of the scholar is consolidated. *Corpus* was published in two volumes, the first and smaller one is an introductory study written by Tiby explaining the organization and the attempt to classify the material collected by Favara. The second volume comprises the actual transcriptions Favara collected in the field. According to Tiby, the typical Sicilian folk song is based on the modal sensation instead of the tonal. That is the most important element in this music. The modal song is usually associated with a melody of serene calm and minor tonalities, which in fact, is generally the distinctiveness of the Sicilian folk song.

Of the 703 songs in the first part of *Corpus*, 500 are modal, subdividing them into 335 Doric, 145 Lydian, 23 Phrygian and 5 Mixolydian. The other 203 are mostly tonal or are difficult to define due to incompleteness. Tiby thinks that it is possible to observe the profound intimate analogies between the Greek poetic musical art and the Sicilian folk song. In a way, the interior of the island became less affected by the different invasions and its soul retained the musical forms of the culture that first colonized it. He found no proof that Sicilian folk music comes directly from the

²⁹ David Osmond-Smith, 149-150.

Greek culture; there are just not enough samples of that ancient music to make that a statement, but what they certainly have in common is the modality.

In fact, Paul Collaer, in reviewing the findings of Tiby, noted that the modality of Sicilian and Mediterranean ethnic music is not a “descendant” from the classical Greek musical theories, “but is a basis of musical expression, pre-Hellenic and verifiable in diverse and distant civilizations and cultural areas.”³⁰ Collaer’s observations of traits found in Sicilian music free the critical analysis from its “learned prejudices by establishing historical precision and freeing studies from literary provincialism.”³¹ Literary provincialism was the general thought before serious ethnomusicology practice was established in Italy in the twentieth century.

Tiby mentions that it is common to find altered intervals in many Sicilian folk songs; they were added with the passing of ages and cultural influences or even modern innovations. He gives us the example of the augmented second, which was probably added by the influence of the Arab mode *asbein*, or Byzantine hymns of the II mode. This interval was incorporated and became a common melisma in the island songs, bringing with it a Mid-Eastern flavor.³² Although, one needs to be careful not to label an “original mode” to a song, when the only evidence one has is the current “polluted” version of it.³³

³⁰ Carpitella, “Ethnomusicology in Italy,” p. 93.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

³² Tiby, p. 32.

³³ Robert C. Provine, conversation.



Figure 4.1: *Corpus* Lyrical Song n. 92

According to Carpitella, there are two styles of Italian folk music, the ancient and the modern, and the division between them is clear. The modern style is the one that evolved influenced by the growth of European art music, starting to use major and minor tonalities and harmonic accompaniment that in turn influenced its melodies. The ancient style, in turn, remained with the traits of the medieval and renaissance period, using church modes and short scales up to five tones.³⁴ This style is generally found in the mountains of south and central Italy, and the islands of Sardinia and Sicily. These places are generally less developed than the north of the country.

In order to investigate the state of folk music across Italy, Carpitella and American ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax went for an eight-month exploratory field trip in 1954 that resulted in many findings.

It is also necessary to consider the fact that during the period 1952-1954, the situation, particularly in southern Italy and on the Italian islands, was still quite favorable for the conservation of traditional heritage, while from 1954 on, the processes of urbanization, of emigration, both internal and external, have created many lacerations in the tradition.³⁵

Carpitella's study found a relation between the use of the ancient style and the fact that these places have not developed and modernized at the same pace as the rest

³⁴ Diego Carpitella, *Folk Music: "Italy"*, *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), X, 137.

³⁵ Carpitella, *Ethnomusicology in Italy*, p. 87.

of the country in the twentieth century. In fact, because Sicily is geographically distant from most European countries, its folk culture was not influenced as much as the northern part of Italy. Perhaps the powerful presence of ancient style in Sicilian folk music is one of the reasons that lead Berio to mention "...I hope to contribute to bring out a deeper interest in Sicilian folk music, that, along with the Sardinian it is surely the richest, the most complex and incandescent of our Mediterranean culture."³⁶

³⁶ Luciano Berio, composer's note on *Naturale*, <http://www.lucianoberio.org/en/node/1396>

CHAPTER 5 - Classification of Songs

There are some common elements that characterize the music-making in Southern Italy; some of these features are: predominance of solo song, melody oriented (as opposed to harmony oriented), a tense high-pitched voice singing style, frequent melismas,³⁷ a modal system, predominance of eleven-syllable textual meter, and freedom of rhythms. The Sicilian creates his music spontaneously and instinctively. Usually, the process of combining melody and text is not planned out, as described by Nino Pirrotta:

...the relationship between the verbal and musical text and the processes of production and performance... is based on creative actions that make an impromptu union of text and music, using a 'way of singing' specific to a social group or geographical zone, or both, whose realization is based on principles shared by the whole community.³⁸

This "way of singing" is improvisatory and can be applied to a wide variety of texts, not specific to a single song genre.

Tiby explains in his introductory study of *Corpus*, that he was faced with a problem when he set out to classify and organize the folk song repertoire collected by Favara. In most of the songs, there is no clear division of purpose between text and melody. Because of this "way of singing," it is possible to find the same melodies, or its variants, with texts of love or texts of disdain and threat. He consulted Pitre's collection and realized the division of the songs was according to the content of the text, for example: beauty of woman, desire, hope, etc. That division presents a

³⁷ When melisma is mentioned, it is understood that there is no musical meter or beat that frames the singer.

³⁸ Nino Pirrotta, et al. "Italy." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40063>.

problem when you consider that, because of the freedom from the “forms,” the same melodies and some variants were applied to completely different poetic texts. Having that in mind, his decision was to create a large and most important category called “Lyrical Songs,” which in fact considers the poetic content independent from the melodic structure. Other classifications found in *Corpus* are: Stories, Lullabies, Repiti, Songs of the Sea, Religious Songs, Games and Nursery Rhymes, Dancing Songs, Instrumental Music, Abbanniatine, Drum Calls and Other Musical Means.

We will have a brief overview of the most important genres and their functions, focusing more on the ones that concern *Naturale*.

1. Lyrical Songs

The first and largest section of *Corpus*, the Lyrical Songs section contains 492 different songs. As mentioned before, the lyrical singing is a creative act, where words and music are combined without preparation. The text can express a wide variety of feelings and meanings: work, pride, despair, and happiness, the beauty of a horse, daily life or simply the love of a woman. The verse form of the text is usually hendecasyllabic (eleven-syllable) varying from eight to six lines, called the *strambotto*. Also known as *Canzona*, this is one of the oldest Italian verse forms, dating back to the Renaissance, particularly popular in Tuscany and Sicily. Composed of a single stanza, it has only two alternate rhymes.

In *Corpus*, the great majority of the songs do not have time signature or bar lines, only breath marks (as opposed to the instrumental tunes which are usually in triple meter). Favara wrote the songs as he heard them, without altering them to fit in

a predetermined metric. He captured the music exactly as the singers performed to him, including elongated notes (creating caesuras in the verse line), and elisions between verses. The peasant finds that these long notes, usually the highest note of a phrase, give sweetness to the song; therefore, these sounds are the ones that give merits to the singer.³⁹ Despite these deviations, the prevailing rhythm observed is ternary. Another observation is that most beginnings start with ascending up-beats.

Tiby organized and grouped the songs in “families” of songs with the same melodic material regardless their origin or names. Some of them are: *Sciacchitana* (from Sciacca), *Furnarisca* (from Furnari), *Vicariota*, *Carinisa* (from Carini), *Carrittera* (carter’s song), *Tubbiana* (harvest) to name a few. Most of the time the name of the song is related to a profession by which it was sung, or a town name. A melody can be found, however, in the same “family” with the name of one town and next to it a slight variant with the name of another town. The melody is the primary and universal matter that generates a variety of texts; in the population’s naive evaluation, this is the most important thing.⁴⁰

In fact, it is common to see very similar melodies that were collected from distant regions of Sicily. These melodies were learned and transferred over the years from the contact that carters, storytellers and sailors from different parts of Sicily had with each other. Favara comments on this:

The Sicilian carter sings by profession and knows the singing style of all the towns he visits for his trade. In the slow night trip he spends the time singing sometimes in one style, sometimes in another. When many carts line up slowly driving the road, then immediately under the

³⁹ Tiby, p.35.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.13.

moonlight the singing contest starts. Taking turns they sing in their different styles.⁴¹

In Favara's depiction, those songs would probably be the carter's songs or *carrittera*.⁴² This is traditionally a highly melismatic song, usually in descending manner. It can be sung solo as well as in a group, where the first performer sings a long couplet, repeated by the others in turn. The group singing used to happen often at warehouses when they all met after delivering their goods.

Other work songs like the one above are very common, for example: *canti alla mietitora* (harvesting songs), *boare*, *canti alla falciatora* (scything songs), *canto alla monnarella*, *Tunazione de li Catitari*, and the tuna fisher's song used during the *Mattanza*. Some work songs are associated with a synchronized rhythm movement.⁴³ In others the voices simply overlap antiphonal sections, or form harmonies off a drone bass, melismas and ornaments are also common. These songs can have a social function as well; for example the *serenata* is one in which a man addresses his beloved, publicly announcing the relationship, or alternately, he would inform the community that an engagement had been broken off.

Tiby made a separate classification for "songs of the sea," which are considered lyrical work songs. In this, he did not include songs by sailor wives, because they are in fact songs of the land.

2. Stories

⁴¹ Alberto Favara, *Corpus di Musiche Popolari Siciliane*, p.135.

⁴² For an example, look at the song A la Marsalisa, *Voci* pp.75-86.

⁴³ See *Tunazione de li Catitari* on Chapter 7, Section M.

The *storie* are lengthy pieces that narrate events of a hero or an outlaw's life, matters of honor and blood, and sometimes about political events as well. The traditional *cantastorie* (storyteller) sings these elaborate narratives in the town piazzas using the *cartellone*, a placard in which the main events of the story are depicted.⁴⁴ They sing in verses that are generally in a strict strophic form using eleven-syllable metric. Often the melodies are short with descending scales of four or five pitches.

3. Lullabies

Called *ninna-nanna*, these songs are identified uniquely by the occasion in which they are used: the moment of the intimate relationship between mother and child. Other than just using it to make the child sleep, they arose as an outlet for women to express their feelings musically. Many *ninne-nanne* derive from lyrical songs and have an ample variety of imagery, using stories of the saints, the sea, and daily life. There are forty-five examples in *Corpus*.

5. Repiti

Repitu is a song of mourning present at funerals or even sung in memory of someone's death years after. Most of the texts are sung by women crying about their deceased husbands or son or daughter. These laments have become part of a ritual mourning that includes particular verbal, musical and gestural behavior that helps overcome the burden resulted from the experience of death. The text usually talks about how the deceased was beautiful and why he or she had to die.

⁴⁴ See in Aldo Bennici's interview how he suggests to violists to approach the interpretation of *Naturale* as a *cantastorie*.

6. Religious Songs

The religious narrative is a form more commonly used during the festivities such as Christmas, Epiphany and Easter, but not limited to these events. They tell the sacred stories of Christ and the Saints, and traditionally, they used to be performed by beggars and blind musicians called *orbi*, since the medieval times. Around 1660, these blind storytellers, with the help of the Jesuits formed an association named Immaculate Conception that gave them shelter and organization. When the Jesuits were dissolved by the Pope in the late eighteenth century, they became independent. They are the trustees of a wealth of *novene* and *triumfi*, songs commissioned by a believer in honor of a saint who has bestowed a grace.⁴⁵

Novena is a reciting of prayers or songs for the nine days preceding a religious feast day. *Viaggiu dulurusu*, sung by the *orbi*, is the most famous *novena*, it tells the story of the Nativity. Usually the violin, accompanied by a guitar or the *ciaramedda* (bagpipe) plays in between the stanzas, in a pastoral 6/8.

Ladata (*chant*) and *Lamintazioni* are chants sung solo, joined by a choir only at the cadences. The choir part alternates between open fifth and the tonic unison, resembling Renaissance influence. These chants are often used at processions. According to Bennici *ladata* means *laude*, which is defined as:

The principal genre of non-liturgical religious song in Italy during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance... The religious *lauda* endured into the 19th century, and extant repertory remains an important source of popular Italian texts and music.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Fara Misuraca, *The Songs of the Blind*, translation by Nino Russo. http://ilsiciliano.net/page23_christmas_in_sicily.php.

⁴⁶ Blake Wilson, "Lauda." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 3 Apr. 2013. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/43313>.

All the examples of *ladata* and *lamintazioni* present in *Corpus* are from the interior of the island, Caltanissetta and surrounding towns.

7. Games and Nursery Rhymes

Several children songs are tongue-twisters (*sciogghilingua*) and rhymes. They are used for amusement or speaking development. Also, some adult game songs are common, like the one from Palermo that was used to commemorate the town horse race, the *palio*. Once a race was over the crowd would use the same song and go through town announcing the name of the winner.

8. Dancing Songs

Several dances are present like the *jolla* and the *tarantella* which in this collection appears under the name “*Mi Pizzica*” (It Pinches Me). In Southern Italy from the 14th to the 18th centuries they believed by dancing this song, people bitten by a spider, especially women during the summer, would expel the venom and be cured. Because the spider in question is the tarantula, over the years, this 6/8 rhythm turned out to be a famous dance, the *tarantella*.

9. Instrumental Music

Also in instrumental music, the musical idioms are more improvisatory and based on open forms. It is common to see the use of processes such as repetition, variation and the connection of elements, which may have no phrase-like character. The principal instrumental music traditions found in Italy are mostly of dance music

that use traditional instruments like the violin, guitar, drums and tambourines, *friscalettu*, and bagpipes.

The *zampogna* or *ciaramedda* is a bagpipe used not only in instrumental music and dances, but also is used as an essential part in processions and novenas. It is made of an inside-out goatskin bag, with two or three drone pipes mounted together with the two chanter, although there are some variations to its set up. The violin and the tambourine are commonly used for accompanying all music not just dances. The *friscalettu* is a Sicilian penny-whistle of Greek origin, usually not bigger than 30 cm.

The songs in this section are mostly in triple meter, and some of them present a time signature of 6/8 or 9/8, as the rest of the collection. There are also some carnival songs, and several *jollas* and *quatrigghias*.

CHAPTER 6 - The Sicilian Folk Songs used in *Naturale*

Berio had both *Corpus* and the harmonized version (*Canti*) at hand for composing *Voci* and *Naturale*. He used them at different times: certainly, he used *Corpus* for the instrumental dances, and *abbagnatas*, which are not included in the harmonized edition. Of the seventeen songs he used in *Voci*, only twelve were transferred to *Naturale*. He chose a wide variety of songs to elaborate his portrayal of Sicilian folk music.

Lyrical Songs	<i>A la Marsalisa (Voci only)</i> <i>A la Muntagnisa</i> <i>Nota di Monte Erice (Voci only)</i>
Songs of the Sea	<i>A la Sciacchitana (two of them)</i> <i>Canto dei Pescatori di Corallo</i> <i>Cialoma quando s'issa la vela (Voci only)</i>
Working Songs (land)	<i>Tunazione de li Catitari</i>
Religious Songs	<i>Ladata</i> from Riesi <i>Lamintanzi</i> from Caltanissetta (<i>Voci only</i>)
Repitu	<i>Chiantu</i>
Instrumental Songs	<i>La Scala and LuViddanu</i>
Ninna Nanna	one from Petralia Soprana one from Carini
Dancing Song	<i>Tubbiana</i> <i>Ballettu di ciamedda (Voci only)</i>
Abbagnata	<i>Persichi</i>

Table 6.1: Sicilian folk songs used in *Naturale*

Each song used in *Naturale* will be studied in the next chapter in context, according to the section of the work in which they belong. The five remaining songs used only in *Voci*, and their translation, can be found in this dissertation's Appendices.

There is another form of musical expression, the *abbagnata*, which has not yet been mentioned. It is also present in *Corpus*, but I decided to study it separately because of its importance in *Naturale*.

Abbagnata

The seven voice recordings used in *Naturale*'s score are *abbagnatas*, as Berio himself described:

The original texts used in *Naturale* are Sicilian songs commented by the voice of Celano, maybe the last true Sicilian storyteller, whom I had the privilege and luck to meet (and record) in Palermo in the summer of 1968... Celano's voice inserts itself in the viola's instrumental path singing *abbagnatas* (street vendor cries) of rare intensity.⁴⁷

This traditional form of expression is named in different ways: in *Corpus* they are classified as *abbanniatine*,⁴⁸ and it is also common to see *abbanniata*.⁴⁹ These particular cries of street vendors are typical from Palermo, Sicily's capital, but also found in other localities as well. They can also be considered songs, usually with short melodies, very imaginative, and full of metaphors. The rhythmic division of these cries is absolutely free; it is subject only to the accents of the words and phrases. Usually the metric consists of two short phrases, but there are some rare examples that are longer, using ABA or ABAB forms.

They are used to call the attention of the customer and sometimes to spread news, but with modern times, during the twentieth century, they started to lose ground to advertising and big stores. Sadly, nowadays the *abbagnata* have become a series of

⁴⁷ Luciano Berio, composer's note about *Naturale*, <http://www.lucianoberio.org/en/node/1396>.

⁴⁸ I could not find an official way of writing the name in any Italian dictionary.

⁴⁹ For this study, I am going to keep it as Berio uses, which is *abbagnata*.

“short shouts” without much musical content. It is rare these days to hear even one *abbagnata* with the many flourishes and artistry as a century ago.

Here, in one example from a strawberry vendor found in *Corpus*, Tiby calls attention to the softness of this melody: “Happy is the Land in which the artistry of its humble son, knows how to express so sweetly, in order to make a living.”



Figure 6.1: *Corpus* Abbagnata n. 864

Some of the street markets in Palermo have been active for centuries. Among them, the most famous are: Vucciria (which means confusion), Ballaro and Lattarini.⁵⁰ The street markets are usually crowded with people, especially because the streets of the Palermo are narrow, so in order to call attention the vendor sings, praising his product. This way, following the sound through the crowd, the customer has an idea in which direction to go for the vendor he or she is looking for (i.e., olives, fish, meat and so on).

As Pitrè said:

Some of these *abbanniatore*'s voices are hard to understand. These *abbanniatas* are like riddles with their double meanings, nicknames, poetic and figurative expressions and truncated words.⁵¹

In the next chapter, I will present the seven *abbagnatas* sung by Peppino Celano in *Naturale*, with the original text in Sicilian language and its English translations.⁵² I am calling them VOCE I through VII, since that is how they are

⁵⁰ This market is from Arab origin. Lattarini comes from the Arab *Suq el attarin* which means spice market.

⁵¹ Tiby, p. 96.

⁵² Sicilian transcription from the recording, and translation to Italian by Mario Tranchina. Translation to English by the author.

labeled in the score. Berio did not seem to have developed on the meaning of their words, although it is still interesting to find amusement in many of those aphorisms.

Some use metaphors, like in VOCE II: “Berries recreate your heart and at this time (of the day) refresh you.” Others have jokes or double entendre as in VOCE VI, he says: “you are sweet now,” (as in, you ate the blueberries and became sweet). Sometimes they use aphorisms, VOCE V: “There is no table without a plate of olives.”

CHAPTER 7 - *Naturale*: The work Section by Section

Beginning

The image shows the beginning of the musical score for Luciano Berio's *Naturale*. It features two staves: Viola and Tam-tam. The Viola staff starts with a series of dissonant chords, and the Tam-tam staff has a large initial stroke. A tempo marking of quarter note = 84 is present. A performance instruction in Italian is at the bottom: "Con sonagli che, appesi col Tam-tam, ne toccano la superficie".

Figure 7.1: Beginning of *Naturale*

The piece starts with a big stroke of tam-tam, followed by the viola playing dissonant chords of three and four notes. In these chords, Berio uses the outer open strings C and A, to explore the natural resonance of the instrument. The middle strings play a perfect fifth (C# and G#), which generates dissonances (minor 9th and minor 2nd) against the open C and A strings respectively. Throughout this entire beginning dissonant intervals are constant, creating a feeling of unrest. Alternating between binary and ternary rhythms, the viola keeps playing alone vigorously, reminding the dance rhythms so common in Sicilian music.

This is a powerful opening that sets the stage for what it is to come in *Naturale*: the unveiling of several pictures of folk life in Sicily. In my conversation with Bennici, he mentioned that this beginning portrays a scene in a crowded street market, where there is confusion, loud noises, talking, and perhaps dancing.

The predominant pitches heard at the viola line are at the top voice, which alternates between the notes A, B and C#. One important detail of the harmonic structure is found in the viola's middle register, which early on alternates between the

C# and the D#. In a subtle and skillful transition, these two notes become later the “ostinato” that will accompany VOCE I.



Figure 7.2: Entrance of VOCE I

Berio extracted these two notes from the *abbagnata* sung by Peppino Celano in the VOCE I (recorded tape). These notes are the tonal center (C#) and its long sustained second grade (D#). This relation between C# and D# will be present in the viola line for the entire section.



Figure 7.3: Transcription of VOCE I⁵³

With a very intense and poignant voice, Celano sings nothing more than a simple descending pentachord in the mixolydian mode on C# (G#-F#-E#-D#-C#). What really creates tension and interest during this VOCE I is the contrast of the voice against the viola’s dissonant pedal on the C string,

Berio purposely built in some freedom for these moments when viola and recording play together. It is up to the violist to decide when exactly to move on once the voice approaches the end. That is also necessary because this work was conceived as a dance production. After the thirty-four-second duration of VOCE I, the viola continues with the same rhythmic pattern, not settling on the C#, but instead

⁵³ During the transcription it was not possible to recognize any word sang in this *abbagnata*.

introducing a new pitch of F# which will be the pitch center of the following Section A.

For a short time there is going to be a game of push and pull between the two pitch centers, the old one C# and the new F#.



Figure 7.4: Introduction of F#

A brief motive is introduced here, which will not reappear until later on in *Naturale*, at Section P, setting up the transition to the end of the work.⁵⁴

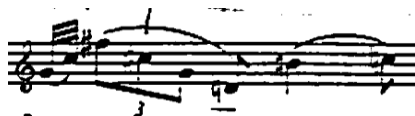


Figure 7.5: Brief Motive

A few notes before Section A, the percussion finally makes its first entrance since the initial tam-tam stroke. Notice how the choice here was to make a connection between these two sections instead of starting exactly where *Sciacchitana* begins. The percussion part is scarcely written, and repeats itself throughout the next section.

Figure 7.6: Beginning of Section A

⁵⁴ This motive appears in *Voci* only once at page 5 (UE 31 122).

Section A (*A la Sciacchitana*)

This is the first Sicilian song to appear in the score. In *Corpus* (1957: 340-341) Favara writes three versions of *Sciacchitana* that are slightly different from one another, although the overall melodic structure and the key remain similar. All three of them were collected at Mazara,⁵⁵ and sung by Jacu Trinca, a sailor. The two first songs, n.583 and 584, match completely to the two big phrases of Section A. In *Canti* (1921) Favara arranged a harmonized version that presents a combination of these two (583, 584) in a form AABB. *Canti* also has a translation in Italian to the original Sicilian text. A note accompanying these songs say that they are sung by sailors in a ship that had a “bad fishing day”, while other ships had a day of abundance. From that statement, one is to expect that this is a melancholic song.

This is the text for n.583:

Sea, you are right to shout!
The wind and the storm are on your side.
If my ship goes out to sail,
I'll answer to who gave it to me.

The song n. 584 is very similar to the previous song, and in *Naturale* is the second part of Section A. This is what the text says:

I've seen the marble blossom,
I've seen the snow remain dense on the sea.
If I throw straw overboard it will sink,
Others throw lead and it will float.

⁵⁵ Mazara is a city in Southwestern Sicily in the Province of Trapani. One of Italy's leading fishing harbors, it is located approximately twenty miles West of Sciacca.

583. SCIACCHITANA

Mazara
JACU TRINCA
(Fav. II, 61)

1. E ra-giu-ni n'ha' ma-ri-na e di-ghi-ra-ri,
Lu ven-tue-la fur-tu-ra e vo-li-a-ti-a.

2. Si la me' na - vi ne - scia na - vi - ca - ri,
Du-gnu ri - spo - sta a cu' l'ha - da - tu - a mi - a.

584.

Mazara
JACU TRINCA
(Fav. II, 61)

1. Er ha - iu vi - stu la - mar - mu-ra ciu-ri - ri,
La ni-via - ma - ri - la vit-ti - quag - ghia - ri;

2. Er et - tu la - pagghia a ma - ri e mi va 'nfun - nu,
Ad a - tru - vit - ti - lu chium - mu - na - ta - ri.

Si canta dai marinai d'una barca che ha fatto cattiva pesca, mentre altre barche l'hanno avuta abbondante.

Figure 7.7: *Corpus-A la Schiacchitana*

Berio follows very closely the strophic structure and the intervals of the original version. He adds quarter-tone inflections, upwards and downwards glissandi, intense vibrato and melismas. In the setting of the second song, he achieves a surprising effect by having the violist pluck a left-hand pizzicato on each note while simultaneously playing with the bow, imitating a glottal-stop. All of these effects add intensity to the traditional song's dramatic character, in a sense, emulating how a Sicilian singer would perform it. As opposed to the song's cadences that fall in C, G

and F respectively, here the composer substitutes the pitches to C#, G# and F# maintaining F# as the pitch center of Section A, most likely to match the overall pitch plan of the piece.

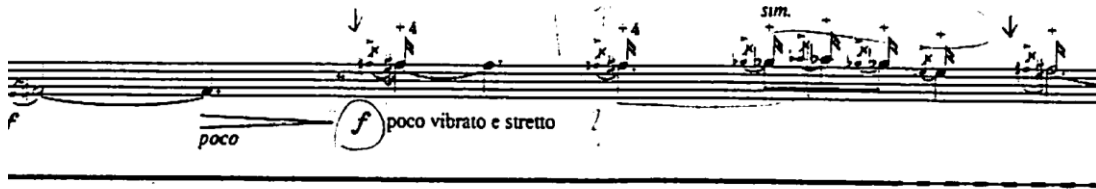


Figure 7.8: Beginning of Section A Second Song

This is a major difference from the same passage in *Voci*, in which the setting of the second *Schiacchitana* is exactly as the original song, cadencing in C, G and F.

In my interview with Bennici, he was emphatic about the particular expressivity this song requires. The quarter-tones for example, should be played with an undulation of the finger, imitating the variations in the pitch found in the voice of a Sicilian folk singer.

In this other place, instead we have the quarter-tones fluctuation that Berio asks. Hold your finger in place and oscillate it, slowly, do not slide your finger. There are two sensations, one that does exactly the quarter-tone and you get an abrupt change of pitch. The second is the one that happens like a wave and the pitch changes smoothly.

About the glissandi added by Berio, he says: “Especially for these glissandi, do not play them straight because they need to linger and be very intimate.”

He sang it several times, demonstrating how a performer should strive to find a sound that reproduces the soul of the Sicilian people, the way they sing these songs.

It is very distinct from the performance-practice of contemporary music.

I can tell you this: precision is not fundamental... what it matters is the tension. You must keep the tension because otherwise they become

insignificant things. The tension is what that drives your musical line.⁵⁶

Section B

This section starts with a brief bridge of four notes (two with double stops) moving from the pitch center F# back to C#. Immediately a fortissimo outburst of eight 16th notes, played by viola and percussion together, recalls the same material of the opening. Here the percussion finally takes a more active role, playing the three rototoms.

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of Section B. It consists of two staves. The top staff is a violin part, with the instruction "con tutto l'arco e sempre alla corda" written above it. The bottom staff is a percussion part labeled "3 Rototoms". The percussion part has dynamic markings "f", "mf", and "pp". There are handwritten annotations: "ff (str?)" under the first few notes of the violin part, and "trem" under the first few notes of the percussion part. A long horizontal line with a downward-pointing arrow is drawn below the percussion staff, indicating a dynamic change or a specific performance instruction.

Figure 7.9: Beginning of Section B

Once the reprise of the opening material comes to an end the viola plays a repeated rhythmical figure of double stops “accompanying” VOCE II. Here, the viola part clearly creates a sense of ambiguity, almost a bitonality (although, not really defining any tonality). The top part consists of a repetition of E-D#-C# (matching two of the pitches of VOCE II) and later E-D# in pizzicato, while the lower part is C-G (preparing for the C major of the next Section).

⁵⁶ Aldo Bennici, interview.

Figure 7.10: Accompaniment of VOCE II

VOCE II is very similar to VOCE I, and also uses the C# pentachord (G#, F#, E#, D#, C#) always in descending motion.

Figure 7.11: Transcription of VOCE II

This is what was possible to transcribe from this *abbagnata*'s text and its translation into English:

...v'arricrianu u cuooooori...uoeeeeee...cievusi a 'st'ura
v'arrifriscano!!!!

...they rejuvenate the heart...uoeeeeee ...mulberry this time (of the day)
they refresh you!

At the very last note of this *abbagnata*, Celano sings a C natural glissando downwards. It is interesting to notice that, according to the score, this C glissando should overlap with the beginning of the next Section, matching the new tonality of C major presented by the viola. It is not known how many recordings of *abbagnatas* Berio had to choose from, but certainly this one presented itself in a very convenient key for him to make this transition.

Section C (*Abbagnata I*)

This song is based on the tetrachord C-D-E-F, which is heard in the viola's A string. With a vigorous character, the viola plays the entire section alone, strumming a pizzicato on the four strings.⁵⁷ The two lower strings (C and G) are always open sounding, which contributes to the volume and the projection of the harmony. The two upper strings take charge of the song moving within the tetrachord in intervals of sixths, with the exception of some eventual fifths.

C [*Abbagnata I*] [0: 29"]

♩ = 96
con l'indice. la IV corda c
pizz.)
accel. - - - -

Figure 7.12: Beginning of Section C

This *abbagnata* does not have a clear origin; it seems that it was inspired by some of the examples of *abbagnata* in *Corpus* and elaborated according to Berio's intentions. Most likely, he used songs n. 823, 824, 825, 826, 827 sung by Giuseppe Orlando, a street crier from Palermo, born in 1853. Of those mentioned above, the n.823 *Persichi* (Peaches) is the most similar in pitches and structure to the viola's melody.

⁵⁷ The composer instructs the violist to play it without holding the bow.

823. Persichi

GIUSEPPE ORLANDO

Di Ca-ri - ni sta bed - da per - si-ca gian-nu.lid - da!

Ot - tu gra - na di Ca - ri - ni sta per - si - ca!

Figure 7.13: *Corpus* n. 823 *Persichi*

This is a translation of the text:

This is a beautiful ripe peach from Carini!
Eight ... this peach from Carini!

This is the first time a major chord is clearly presented in the piece. Following the pattern of the song, the viola plays short phrases always ending in C. Berio added two quarter notes between the phrases, in which the violist hits all four strings with the palm of the hand (*Col palmo della mano su tutte le corde*). Bennici illustrated it with his great imagery, mentioning that this theme is no longer an *abbagnata*; it is in fact transformed in to a “dance of courtship”. These two quarter notes marked in the score are supposed to be like explosions, as if you are “in love”. The *accelerandos* and *rallentandos* marked in the score help to enhance this effect.

Towards the end of the passage, instead of finishing in a perfect cadence (G major - C major, as it happens in *Voci*) the harmony takes an unexpected turn. In a chromatic modulation, G Major becomes Eb Major. This transition sets up the pitch center of the next section, Eb.

Figure 7.14: Transition to Section D

Section D

This Section contains only VOCE III. The voice sings an *abbagnata* with three notes: Gb, F, Eb. On occasion, the descending line includes an E between the F and the Eb, resulting in an expressive chromatic melody.

Figure 7.15: Transcription of VOCE III

This is the text and its translation into English:

Facciativi ca sunnu asinieddi ru mari ri Carini, asineddielli hannu l'uovaaaaaaa! Asinieddi sunnu a vossia, a ssa vossia s'accatta asinieddi di Carini sunnu cu l'uova. Asineddelli hannu l'uovaaaaaaa.

Look closely to the counter they are Haddock's from the sea of Carini, the Haddock have eggs! Listen they are Haddock, if you buy the Haddock, they are from Carini, they have eggs! The Haddock have eggs!

The viola continues to pizzicato a series of fifths (Eb-Bb and E-B) matching the voice's chromatic line. The expressiveness is heightened by the contrast between

effects: pizzicato followed by “*quasi legno (tratto)*,”⁵⁸ which gives an eerie quality to the sound. A *molto espressivo* warms up the atmosphere and finishes the section.

The percussion returns, now being used as an element of connection between sections. Its entrance is immediately before VOCE III, together with the viola’s last two notes. The score asks for playing the tam-tam in mezzo-forte in a particular way: “drawing circularly on the tam-tam’s surface with a metallic stick.”⁵⁹

At the *molto espressivo*, towards the end of the section, the viola interacts more directly with the voice when both sustain long E flats, with some occasional grace notes, until reaching a final fermata. The mood here is gloomy, foreboding perhaps, and not at all restful. At this point the marimba has its first appearance, it plays the interval of a fifth (C-G) in pianissimo, using the technique called harmonic tremolo. That fifth builds a C minor chord with the viola’s Eb, which is the next section’s harmonic base. Once more the percussion helps to make the connection to the next section.

The image shows a musical score for the transition to Section E. It consists of two staves. The top staff is for the voice, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 54. Above the staff, there is a box containing the letter 'E' and the text '[Ninna Nanna]'. A bracket above the staff is labeled 'pont.' and another bracket below is labeled 'con la voce'. The bottom staff is for the marimba, with a 'pizz.' marking. A bracket above the marimba staff is labeled 'Marimba'. A time signature of 3/4 is visible. A timecode '[0: 33"]' is written above the first staff. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'mf'.

Figure 7.16: Transition to Section E

Section E (*Ninna Nanna*)

⁵⁸ It is played by pulling the bow normally but the stick of the bow touches the string.

⁵⁹ This is the translation from the Italian indication in the score.

This section presents one of *Naturale*'s most touching moments. The mode is C Aeolian and the melody repeats three times, each time with an intensification of the dynamics. This is one of the few places in the piece where we find triadic chords between marimba and viola, without much dissonance.

According to Felici (p.33) Berio most likely used the version found in Favara 1959, n.8 because there the second note C is subdivided in 8th notes. Vendrasco, in her turn says the version in *Trenta Ninne-nanne Popolari Italiane* (1934:XXIX) is a perfect rhythmic-melodic match with Berio's version.

I did not have access to the two previously mentioned publications, therefore I present here the original version collected by Favara, found in *Corpus* n. 526, sung by Pietro Failla (born in 1852) from Petralia Soprana.⁶⁰ All the versions mentioned above are a whole-step higher than the transcription in *Naturale*.

⁶⁰ Petralia Soprana is a municipality located about seventy kilometers southeast of Palermo, Sicily.

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526. NINNA*
(PETRALIA SOPRANA)

PIETRO FAILLA

O dor - mi tu, figghiu, dormi! Ah, fa' a - la - lò e va ar - ri - po - sa!
 San. v' An - na e San Ja. chi - nu quann' e - ra - nu ma. la - ti,
 tut - ti li san - ti li j - a - nu a vi - di - ri.

VARIANTE:

*) Pubblicata con l'armonizzazione di Ottavio Tiby e con altre parole nel volume "Trenta Ninne-nanne popolari italiane, raccolte per iniziativa e cura del Sindacato nazionale fascista dei Musicisti", edizione De Santis, Roma 1934. Diede occasione a tale pubblicazione la nascita della Principessina Maria Pia di Savoia.

Figure 7.17: *Corpus n. 526, Ninna (Petalia Soprana)*

Sleep, my son, sleep!
 ... and get some rest!
 when Saint Anne and Saint Joachim
 were sick, all the saints went to visit them.

The note on the bottom of the page says: “This song was published with harmonization by Ottavio Tiby and different lyrics in the “*Trenta ninne-nanne popolari italiane*” gathered by and edited by the initiative of the National Fascist Musicians Union”, Edition De Santis, Rome 1934. The reason for that publication was the birth of the Princess Maria Pia di Savoia, in the same year. She was the oldest daughter of Umberto II, the last king of Italy.

Bennici had a very expressive approach to this song, as he shares with us:

The song repeats three times. You'll play it this way: at the first statement do not vibrate, do not be expressive but act as a mom does when making the baby fall asleep (AB sings lullaby). Do it like—how would you say in Italian—“*perche?*” (Why?). The point is that you need to build up on it. First you pray, then the second time, you feel

that you need more and it becomes much heavier. Note that there is a triplet here. Always Speaking! Then, she gets nervous a lot with this Lady (Madonna) that gives you nothing to feed the family. It is like you are begging against the situation that you cannot feed your child. That was the second statement. Then, the third one it is like saying: Enough! (AB sings very heavy and marcato).⁶¹

Section F

Section F does not include a song, instead, it is a transition that will introduce the following song, *Ladata* (Section G). The section consists of three phrases: a brief bridge followed by two variations on *Ladata*'s last phrase (the last 12 notes with the preceding grace notes). Berio sets these two variations in a way that they function as a prelude to the actual song.

This section is a good example of how Berio builds transitions and bridges in *Naturale*. He usually substitutes or modifies one element at a time, overlapping the changes, creating in this way a sense of continuity. This element is usually a pitch, either in the viola or in the percussion. For example, in the viola part, he needs to connect the previous section's last note (G open string) to a C on the A string. Note in the excerpt how he keeps a pedal on G while working his way up to the C (passing through Eb and F#). Once the C is achieved, he drops the pedal and continues on with the first variation (mezzo-forte).

⁶¹ Aldo Bennici, interview.

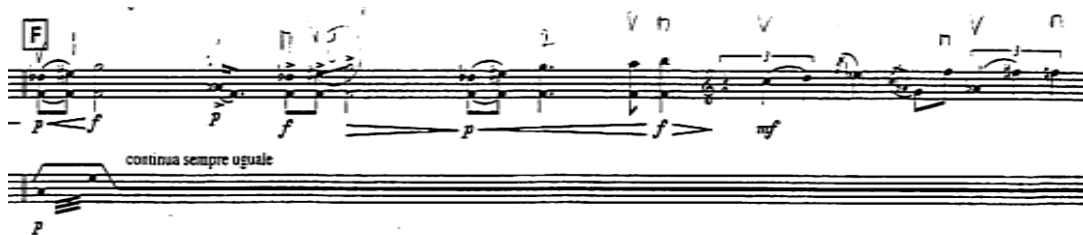


Figure 7.18: Section F

The marimba holds a harmonic tremolo (C-G) throughout the bridge and the first variation. This harmonic tremolo will move up a whole-step to cadence on D-A. The second variation starts with the same C as the first one, but now, above this new pedal (D-A).

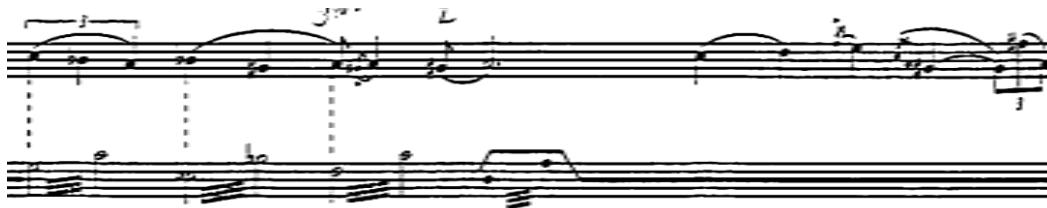


Figure 7.19: Marimba Cadence and Beginning of Second Variation

This second variation, which is not much different from the first one, will arrive at the same A as before, preparing the entrance of Ladata. The marimba will cadence in a similar fashion before returning to D-A, serving once again to make a connection to the next Section (see illustration in Section G).

Section G (*Ladata*)

Without doubt the song at *Corpus* n.673, called *Ladata a la Riisana* (Riesi⁶²), is the one used in this section. Berio only changed certain melismas from the original. He also altered the rhythm making the notes longer than the ones printed in *Corpus*,

⁶² Riesi is a town in the Province of Caltanissetta in Sicily, located about 110 kilometers southeast of Palermo and about twenty kilometers south of Caltanissetta.

probably the reason for that is to indicate the performer a closer interpretation of how this is usually sung. The original was sung at Caltanissetta⁶³ by Francesco Corrente, street-sweeper born in 1845, in the summer of 1905. The key is the same as is in *Naturale* and *Voci*.

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673. LADATA A LA RIISANA

(RIESI)

Caltanissetta, estate 1905
FRANCESCO CORRENTE

PRIMA VUCI

Ag-ghiur - na - tu - lu ven -

CORU (Tenori e Bassi)

Ah!

- ni - ri ma - ti - - nu l'Addi - lu - ra - ta - si - mi -

Ah! Ah!

mi - si 'nea - - mi - - nu.

Ah!

Calogero Bingo, solfataio di Caltanissetta: "Li riisani ci partinu a la parrinisca ed è una bella cosa,,

Figure 7.20: *Corpus* n. 673 *Ladata*

Friday morning rises
The suffering one (Mary) has taken the path.

Note in the bottom of page says:

Calogero Bingo, ...from Caltanissetta: "The people from Riesi left (probably in the morning) and it is a beautiful thing."

⁶³ Caltanissetta is the capital of the province of Caltanissetta located in the western interior of Sicily.

Ladata is a religious song usually performed during the penitential practices of the Holy Week. It is sung by a male voice accompanied by a male ensemble that joins in at the cadences, singing “Ah!”⁶⁴ It is defined by a slower pace and an extremely tense emission of the voice. Berio wants to emulate that kind of sound indicating in the viola part: “tense, always without vibrating and with the bow very adherent (to the string)”. The text of the actual song brings the image of a procession through the town’s narrow streets; the worshippers follow in line remembering the sufferings of Jesus and Mary.

Bennici suggests one play this passage in a lingering manner, not neglecting the little notes. For example, when approaching the cadences (Bb-G#-A) the emphasis should lean more on the G#, rather than playing all notes with the same intensity.

There are a total of four slow phrases in this chant. The marimba continues to hold the soft tremolo on the fifth (D-A) until the end of the first phrase, while the viola plays the melody centered in A. Berio creates here a special sonority resulting from the ambiguity of the melody in A on top of the accompaniment in D-A. He reinterprets the song by adding another dimension, making it somewhat bimodal.

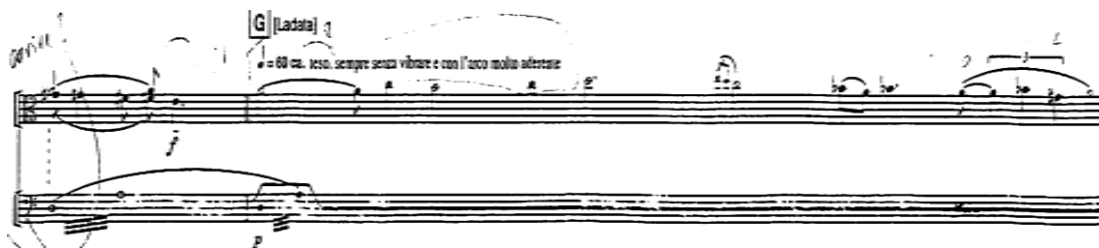


Figure 7.21: Transition to Section G

⁶⁴ For a sound reference on the performing style listen to the recording of the *Lamento per il Venerdì Santo* on CD ECM New Series 1735 (2001).

When the second phrase starts, the marimba fades out upon the score indication *sparire* (disappearing), and the viola continues its lonely path until reaching the final A, as if the procession passed by.

Immediately VOCE IV starts in the same pitch the viola ended (A), keeping a thread of continuity to the next section.

Voce IV

NUN E' VE RU CA VUO NNU NA FIE DA MA RU CI

(Spoken)
I gelati aviemu stasira, gilati! Una fiedda due soldi, chi beddu culuri, vossia avvicina! I gilati aviemu stasiraaaaa!

Figure 7.22: Transcription of VOCE IV

This is what was possible to transcribe from this *abbagnata*'s text and its translation into English:

...nun e' veru ca vionnu na fieddaaaaaa, ma ruciiii! I gelati aviemu stasira, gilati! Una fiedda due soldi, chi beddu culuri, vossia avvicina! I gilati aviemu stasiraaaaa!

...truly, you want a slice, it is sweet! We have "ice cream or cold dessert" this evening, "ice cream"! One slice two "moneys", what beautiful color, come closer! We have "ice cream" tonight!

The ambiance here suggests that the streets are back to normal after the procession; the street vendor cries out, and the viola starts to warm up with the first notes of a dance tune, marked *esitando*. The tam-tam adds to the scene with a mezzo-forte strike, followed by the rototom's scattered rhythms in pianissimo.

The viola pitches during VOCE IV are repetitions of the following section song's first notes: a drone on open string A over quarter notes with G# appoggiaturas, the final one has a long glissando from G# to A. Bennici suggested here to play little glissandi and sudden crescendos on all notes, taking time on every one of them.

You should play this in a courting manner, like you are talking to someone. Here, you have to keep the drone on the note A very strong, and everything moves above it. There are always these first two notes that you drag their beginning (sings glissando tiiii taahhii). Then, at Section H, it is simpler, you have to move it.⁶⁵

Figure 7.23: Accompaniment to VOCE IV

Section H (*Abbagnata II*)

The two songs that form this Section are the very first songs in the Instrumental Music chapter of *Corpus*; there is no information available on why Berio called this section *Abbagnata*. They are respectively n. 749 *La Scala* (The Scale) and n. 750 *Lu Viddanu* (The Peasant) both for ciaramedda (bagpipe), and heard by Favara in Palermo as played by Santu Pinnino. Pinnino, born in 1850, was from a family of ciaramedda players; he said that *La Scala* used to be played before all the ciaramedda tunes, like a prelude. *Lu Viddanu* is instead a tune that he learned from his grandfather, who died in 1861 at the age of 84 years old. His grandfather learned this dance from the peasants that used to come to Palermo, naming it after them.

⁶⁵ Aldo Bennici, interview.

749. LA SCALA 447

Palermo
SANTU PINNINO
di famiglia di ciaramiddara

VARIANTI:

1) ecc. 2)

La Scala precede tutte le sonate di Ciaramedda, come un preludio .

750. LU VIDDANU

Palermo
SANTU PINNINO
che la apprese da suo nonno, morto nel
1861 a 84 anni. Questi intese questa
danza dai contadini (viddani) che veniva
no a Palermo e le diede nome da loro .

★) Da questo punto mancano nel ms. le indicazioni dell'accompagnamento e del pedale .

Figure 7.24: *Corpus* n. 749, *La Scala* and n. 750, *Lu Viddanu*

In both *Voci* and *Naturale* these two tunes are set in the form ABA, *La Scala* – *LuViddanu* – *La Scala*. For *La Scala*, Berio changes only some of the appoggiaturas

probably doing so in order to keep the passage on only two strings, he also omits the original bass line for instrumentation reasons.

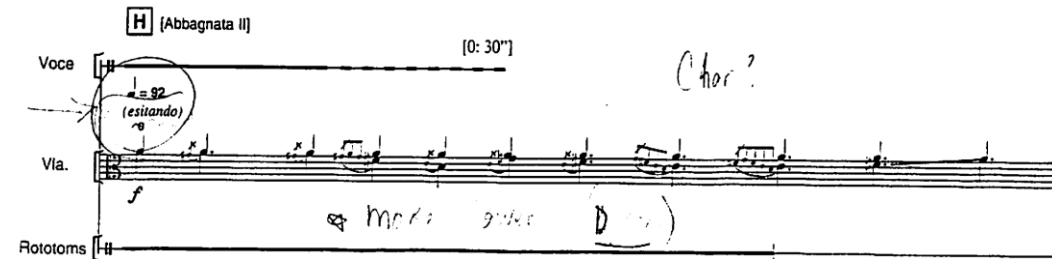


Figure 7.25: Beginning of Section H

To create greater contrast between the first and second parts of *Lu Viddanu*, other than the original major/minor, the composer changes the first part to triple meter and sets a faster metronome marking to the second. The excitement increases as if a party of peasants is cruising the night.

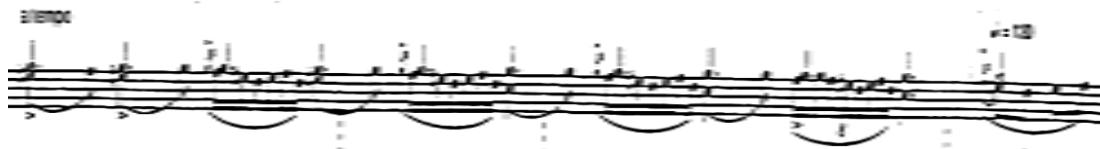


Figure 7.26: Change to Triple Meter

In this transcription from Favara, at a point four measures from the end, still in the minor part, there is a brief change of tonality to major (for one measure only), followed by a rapid return to minor to end the tune. In *Naturale*, Berio decided to keep it major all the way to the end.

With the drone and all its grace notes and drone this section is a true country dance. In order to portray this effect Bennici recommends playing it with heavy accents, moving the tempo to contrast with the previous *Ladata*.

As we arrive to the end of the ABA form, the viola plays a long open string fifth (D-A). A decrescendo to a piano generates a certain expectation for the next section.

Section I

This entire section comes from *Voci* (pp.70-74) where it serves as transition between *Tubbiana* (Section N in *Naturale*) and *A la Marsalisa* (non-existent in *Naturale*). There are no original folk songs set in this section; instead, Berio takes liberties in elaborating on the folk material from the songs. The pitch is still centered around D and for the entire section the music revolves around the viola's open D string, which is constantly played. The music is erratic in character with abrupt changes of dynamics, as if there are two parts in lively discourse. It is possible to identify these two parts or voices by the divergent high and low registers as well as by motivic differences.

The first motive identified is a group of three descending notes (C-B-A) played in the A string. These are the same three first notes of the song *A la Marsalisa* (found only in *Voci*). An ascending chromatic scale of three sets of sixteenth note triplets leads in a crescendo to the three note descending figure in the both first and last appearances of the motive, as if framing the transition.

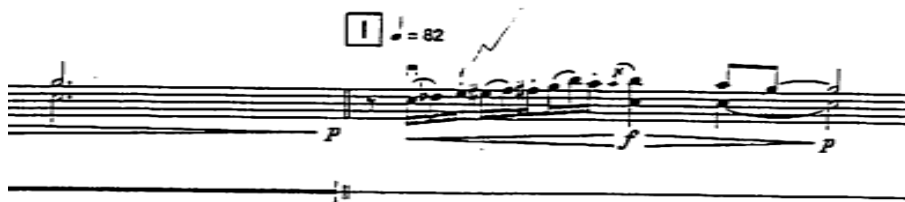


Figure 7.27: Chromatic Scale with *A la Marsalisa* Motive

Later in the piece, this combination happens twice, as a bridge, connecting sections: 1) at the end of VOCE V to Section K, and 2) at the end of Section N (*Tubbiana*).⁶⁶

Responding to this motive, the answers in the lower register are always played in the G string. This musical discussion does not seem to reach any conclusion. All the efforts of the lower part in trying to find a way out always conclude in a glissando, which closes the unison with the open D string.

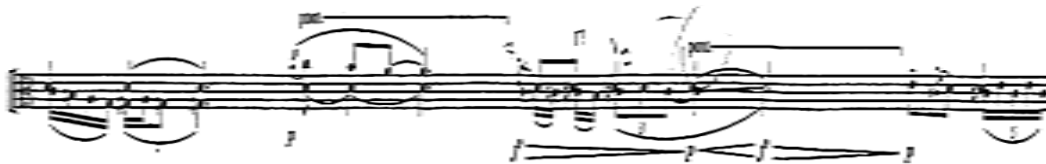


Figure 7.28: Higher Versus Lower Register in Section I

As suggested by Bennici these glissandos need to be unpleasant and played fast at the end of the initiating note to arrive at the D, not slowly and regular as notated. That roughness is also portrayed by the alternation between ponticello and ordinary sound occurring six times, which heightens the contrast between the two voices.

Section J



Figure 7.29: Beginning of Section J

⁶⁶ In cutting and pasting these sections from *Voci to Naturale*, Berio used the same scale twice: beginning of Section I is the same as the end of the tune in Section N.

This section starts with a fortissimo outburst, breaking the “vicious circle” that ruled the previous section. The viola plays a four string tremolo, reminding the same technique used in Sequenza VI; the marimba simultaneously plays a D trill to intensify this rude disruption. After two beats of tremolo, the viola comes back to the work’s introduction material, alternating the rhythm between binary and ternary. The cluster is formed this time by C-Bb-G-A. With slight chromatic movements in the inner voices, the pitch passes briefly through the same C#-G# (from the beginning of the work) only to settle a half-step lower on G-Bb.

After the outburst’s brief intervention, the music calms down and the C-B-A motive from the previous section is heard. Immediately VOCE V starts, and we hear Celano’s voice singing a descending melody in D major.

Voce V

QUA TTRU A LI VI CA SU BIE -DDI QUA TTRU A MI CI SUO DI RI CHI DDI NU O VE AN CUO RA N'AIU

CHI SU BIE LLI ST'OO LI VE (Spoken) Unn'e' tavola si un c'e' un prattinu c'oliveeee!

Figure 7.30: Transcription of VOCE V

This is the text and its translation into English:

Quattru alivi ca su bieddi quattru amici suoooddi; ri chiddi nuove ancua n'aaaaaiu. Chi su bielli st'oliveeee. Unn'e' tavola si un c'e' un prattinu c'oliveeee!

Four beautiful olives, four friends of yours; I still have the fresh ones, they are beautiful these olives, there is no table without a plate of olives!

Along with the voice recording, the viola plays a line built over a sequence of thirds (G-E, F#-D) extracted from the end of the singer's part.⁶⁷ This sequence is repeated six times using different rhythm, double stops, and also ponticello. The percussion is active during the VOCE V playing written out scattered short notes, mostly around the pitch D. To close the section the viola synchronizes with the end of the recording, playing the same ascending chromatic scale from Section I, only this time the last notes are C-B-Bb and in a faster rhythm. Note how the crescendo to a fortissimo will catapult this scale to the striking start of Section K.

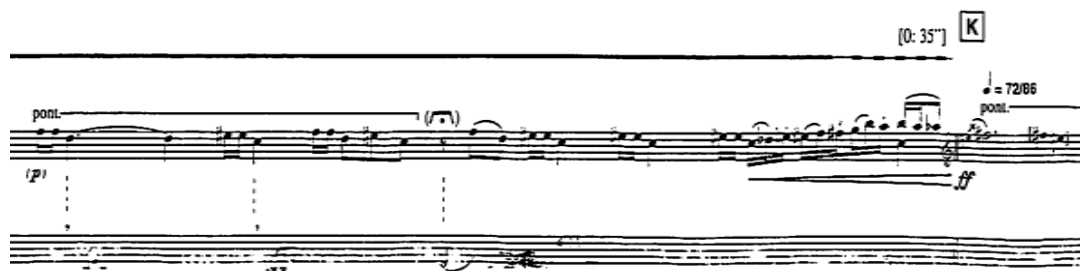


Figure 7.31: Sequence of Thirds in VOCE V

Section K

This section is the dramatic center of the entire work, where death definitely makes its presence. The range of the expression pallet goes from the mournful and inconsolable to the weeping and suffering. It is the section with most fortissimo markings in the piece and perhaps the longest one; therefore it can be divided in two parts. There is no indication in the score about any folk song source for this section's first and second parts. By following clues in Bennici's interview, I found in *Corpus*, the song which inspired Berio's elaboration on this section's first part.

⁶⁷ These descending intervals of 3rd heard in VOCE V are similar to the ones found in a couple *abbagnatas* in *Corpus*, especially n.826 and 827. Perhaps these intervals are common in the folk ear.

Yes, indeed, they are called *repitu*, they are mournful expressions. ...this motive has a tragic meaning, and there is no indication of it in the score. In Sicily, like in ancient Greece, up until the beginning of the twentieth century, they used to have the *prefiche*.⁶⁸ The *prefiche* were women who cried for a fee at funerals. For example, this is a song they would often sing: *fiiiiigliu* (son), *figliu meu* (my son) *garofano mio* (my flower). (AB sang several times two notes, matching the two syllables of *figliu*, with a falling interval of 4th and also 3rd, the first note was fading away and there was almost no energy in the breath when the second note was sung). After this the *prefiche* began to cry, then all the commotion would start. That's how you do this motive. It represents death. You will find this figure later on in the score; he uses it in another way, as a lament.⁶⁹

It is the *Repitu* (mourning song) n.569 called *Chiantu*, sung by Antonina Vario from Erice,⁷⁰ also known as “goldfinch”, born in 1826.

⁶⁸ *Prefiche* is also explained by Salomone-Marino in *Customs and Habits of the Sicilian Peasants* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981) p. 208.

⁶⁹ Aldo Bennici Interview

⁷⁰ Erice is a town in the province of Trapani in Sicily.

569. CHIANTU

Erice
ANTONINA VARIO
(Fav. III., 65)

Cu cori attiratu

Fig - ghiu, cia - tu meu! Fig - ghiu, ga - lo - fa - ru meu!

Co - mu mi las - sa - sti, cia - tu meu!

Co - m'ha - iu a fa - ri, cia - tu meu!

Comu fussi chi calma

Cia - tu meu, cia - tu meu, cia - tu meu!

Aisa di novu

Cia - tu meu, o cia - tu meu! Cia - tu meu, o cia - to meu! || Grida strazianti

Nota- Diceva la Vario: “St’usu di chianciri c’è ancora. Lu cori sfoga vuciannu. Comu si po’ stari senza aisari li vuci? Lu stessu stimulu di la natura lu porta!,, Diceva poi che “la musica funebri la pigghiaru supra lu chiantu di ’na fimmina.,,”

Figure 7.32: *Corpus n. 569, Chiantu*

The title of the song, *Chiantu*, meaning “cry,” is already evocative of its content. At the top of the song there is an indication, “*Cu cori attiratu*,” which means “with a broken heart, in pieces,” setting the emotional state on how this is sung.

Here is the translation of the compelling text:

Son, breath of mine! Son, my carnation!
 How did you leave me, breath of mine!
 How am I going to do, breath of mine!
 Breath of mine, breath of mine, breath of mine!
 Breath of mine, oh breath of mine! Breath of mine, oh breath of mine!

At the fourth system the emotional state changes where it reads, “*Comu fussi chi calma,*” indicating to sing as someone that is calming down. But that state does not last long. The last system is the dramatic peak of this song, with the indication “*Aisa di novu*” the singer indicates to raise the voice again. Reaching the highest pitches in the song, this last line it is supposed to be sung with heart-rending cries!⁷¹

In the note at the bottom of the song’s page, Favara transcribes the singer’s moving testimony:

The use of weeping still exists. The heart vents, crying also the brain. How can you not raise your voice? It is the actual urge from nature that moves it. Funeral music was created after a woman's weeping.⁷²

Perhaps in this vivid description of how these mothers and women live this heartbreaking moment, +we can find the inspiration behind this work. The name *Naturale* could have been chosen to illustrate the “actual urge from nature” that moves the folk expressions in this work.

Through an intervallic comparison it is possible to conclude that *Chiantu* and the first part of Section K are directly related. Berio elaborates on the song’s intervals (mostly in F minor) and intertwines it with figures, some of them quoting elements from his previous works. He uses left-hand pizzicato (from *Naturale*’s Section O), pizzicato bariolage, two finger pizzicato, four string tremolo (from *Sequenza VI*), and repeated notes (from *Sequenza VIII*).

Note how the song’s second system starts at the fortissimo, and the pizzicato effects that precede it, provide a poignant mood. The percussion contributes to that effect by playing eight notes on the rototoms with wood mallets.

⁷¹ The indication *Grida strazianti* is in Italian and probably from Favara. The three previous ones are in Sicilian; I believe they are from Antonina Vario, the singer.

⁷² The same text with a few extra words appears in *Corpus* vol. 1, p. 153.

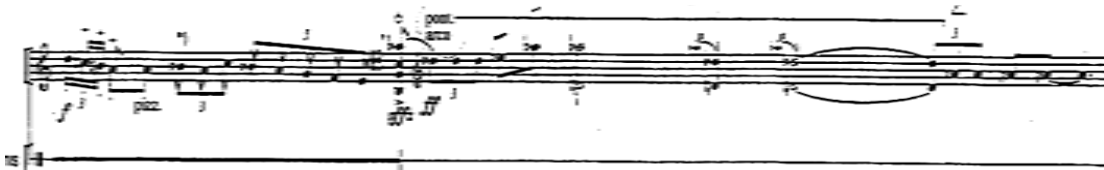


Figure 7.33: Berio's Transcription of *Chiantu* Second System

In *Naturale* the very first note in this section is a F#, different from *Voci* and the original song that start with F. Two explanations are viable for the disparity in this important note in the scheme. It is either because of a misprint (which a fair amount is found in the piece), or Berio wanted it that way to match the key of the preceding passage (VOCE V), which was in D.

In *Chiantu*'s fourth system there is an important motive that will permeate *Naturale* until the end (Ab-Ab-F, repeated three times). I am labeling it the "mourning motive" after Bennici's comment:

There's always this kind of declamation, as in ancient Greece, these women stay around the coffin and say: "You were so beautiful!" Realize that when you die you are always remembered as a better person than what you are. They could also say: "You that smelled like carnations, you had a mouth like this or like that." Then, it could get excited and become more intimate "you were so good that..." there were no limits. And in all, there is always what mothers say: "*ciatu meu*" my breath, "*core meu*" my heart... In this rhythm there are two notes and the pain of humanity.⁷³

Berio did not seem to develop it much in *Voci*, but in *Naturale* it becomes a connecting motive, almost like a leitmotif. It appears several times in the first part of this section, also before and during VOCE VII, and as an interruption of the final and last song, *NinnaNanna di Carini*.

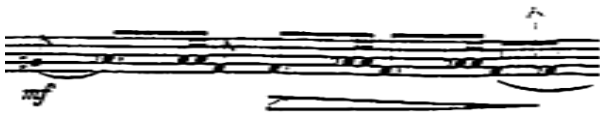


Figure 7.34: Mourning Motive

⁷³ Aldo Bennici, interview.

Bennici was very emphatic when talking about these notes: “Never play them separate and placed. Remember we are talking about a (deceased) son, play it without hope and strength.”

Continuing, after the first song there is a brief bridge in which the viola plays double-stops with the open G string, preparing for the second part of this section. The percussion returns after a brief tacet, this time playing a written-out part with 16th notes in accelerando, adding a sense of instability to the ambiance. At this point the viola starts the second thematic zone in this section: a long passage in pizzicato in a Baroque-like bariolage with the open A string. This passage reminds Bach’s Chaconne from his *Partita II*, which in its turn inspired Berio to compose his *Sequenza VIII* for violin.



Figure 7.35: Section K Second Part

The pitch center here is D, and it seems to be in Aeolian mode with some altered intervals (more specifically, raised 7th and lowered 9th). These intervals bring a Middle-eastern flavor to the melody, enhancing its expressivity. This is, in fact, another folk song, according to Bennici: “Here (pizzicato sequence before L), it is a simple thing, as well. It is another version of a simple song, also an *abbagnata*, of one that sells”.⁷⁴ This unknown *abbagnata* was not found among those present in *Corpus*, although it is possible to find several lyrical songs that are built with the same intervals and have similar phrase shape. The song that resembles it the most is *A la*

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Muntagnisa, *Corpus* n. 38.⁷⁵ The key is in E, one step above from the melody in *Naturale*.

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38. A LA MUNTAGNISA

Termini Imerese
FR. PAOLO MULE'

Ha . iu li vi . ni mei su' tut . ti az . zo - li,

E san . gu mi ne . sei di mil . li eu . lu - ri

Figure 7.36: *Corpus* n. 38, *A La Muntagnisa*

Other songs in *Corpus* with similar traits are numbers: 34, 40, 41, 54, 210, 213, 355, and the *abbagnatas* number 881 and 900. There should not be exclude the hypothesis of Berio adapting these intervals to create a line that would better suit his intents. Once this pizzicato melody arrives to its end, a confirmation of the pitch center D is heard in the continuous repetition of D and A open strings. One last pizzicato chord in *sforzandissimo* defines the end of the section. The next sound to be heard is Celano's crude voice in the recording.

Section L

This section encompasses only VOCE VI, which is in D major. The melody Celano sings alternates cadence points in the first and second grades of the scale, similarly to VOCE I and V.

⁷⁵ Francesco Paolo Mule', was a journalist and writer from Termini Imerese that lived in Palermo.

Voce VI

MA PI VI E RU RU PU GNA TI N'A DEA RI U NA PU ZZIE DA

VE RA RU CI UO RE Titidda, Rusidda comu t'a passi uora? Bedda ruci uora, MUR TI DDA

Figure 7.37: Transcription of VOCE VI

This is the text and its translation into English:

*Ma pi vieru ru pugna ti n'a deeari,...una puzziedda vera ruci uoreee!
Titidda, Rusidda comu t'a passi uora? Bedda ruci uora, murtidda!*

But I need to give you two handfuls, (one portion) very sweet now!
Titidda, Rusidda, how are you feeling now? Very sweet now,
blueberries!

The marimba plays an ostinato in tremolo alternating melodically the pitches of the D major tetrachord (D-E-F#-G) over a bass pedal on the note D. I will call this a “melodic tremolo”. The score instructs the viola to play the two open strings G and D in double stop repeating at will with accents.⁷⁶ Even though the voice and the percussion are clearly in D major, the viola’s lower note gives a different flavor to the passage suggesting another pitch center, G. We can consider the viola G-D in a way as anticipation to next section’s tonality, G major (even though an open 5th does not characterize a tonality). This game of pitch center “displacement” will continue all through Section M, only resolving at the end of it.

⁷⁶ Out of my own experience playing this work, I recommend to play these double-stops in an uneven quarter-notes and half-notes rhythm, close to the following song’s tempo. This will give the effect of warming up for the song keeping a connection to it.



Figure 7.38: Section L

Section M

The song set in this section is marked by a rhythmically strong pulse. It is called *Tunazione de li Catitari* and is the same found in *Voci* p.37-43. Favara collected this song from Giuseppe Romano, a sailor from Trapani; it is found in *Corpus* as n. 214 in F major, and in the harmonized version *Canti della Terra e del Mare di Sicilia* (1907) n. 20, in D major. Most likely Berio used the later version for the rhythmical similarities at the cadences and because of the key. I am including both versions here, the first is the harmonized and the second is from *Corpus*.

It is an ancient female work song used by the women of the Catitu, a sailor neighborhood of Trapani. They used to sing it while beating the Mauritanian grass cordage on to marble blocks to make hawsers. Favara states that the way they sung it was crude and rough, for the grotesque character and the guttural quality of the voices in the cadences. He also brings to attention the fact that its rhythm and character are different from the usual melancholy of the Sicilian songs. The binary rhythm, the accents and the character are strictly connected to the action of the workers beating.

'TUNAZIONI DI LI CATITÀRA

Modo delle donne del Catitu, quartiere marinairesco di Trapani. Canto di lavoro,
nel battere cordami su blocchi di marmo.

(elaborazione di Alberto Favara)

♩ = 100
ALLEGRO

p *cres.* *poco a poco* *f* *dim.*

CANTO

'Stanot ti 'n son nu mi vin ni 'na vec chia...
Stanotte in sogno u n' e - gra vec chia - rel - la...

pp *cres.*

pp

f *dim.* *p*

Mi ris-si: 'Pep-pi,
Mi dis-se: 'Beppe,

ti,..... ti vo-i ma-ri - ta - ri?...
ti,..... Bep-pe, ti vuoi spo - sa - re?...

mf *p* *cres.*

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Figure 7.39: Canti della Terra e del Mare di Sicilia n. 30, Tunazione de li Catitara

214. 'TUNAZIONI DI LI CATITARA

Trapani, quartiere del Catitu
GIUSEPPE ROMANO
Nota antichissima
(Fav. I, 88)

1 Sta. not. ti'n son - nu mi - vin. ni 'na vec - chia Ah!
Mi dis. si: "Pep-pi, ti ti vo - i ma - ri - ta - ri? Ih!

2 Al l'oc. chiu te - gnu 'na pic - ciot - ta bed - da, Ah!
Bed - da, chi - na di ro... di rob. ba e di di - na - ri,, Ih!

3. Sor. ti co. m'è a fa - ri cu sta vec - chia, Ah!
Chi 'nta lu son. nu mi i ve. ni a 'ntan - ta - ri? Ih!

4. Cu pig - ghia la mug - ghe - ri pig - ghia det - ta, Ah!
La det. ta ci va a cri... a cri. sci. rie man - ca - ri. Ih!

5. La cosa chi vi dicu è lesta lesta: Ah!
E jeu munacheddu mi 'ogghiu fari. Ih!

Nota - Nella Relazione al citato Congresso di Scienze storiche, pag. 103, così scrive il Favara a proposito di questo canto: "In ritmo pari è la *tonazioni* o *modo del Catitu*, che è il quartiere popolare di Trapani; è una cantilena antichissima che le donne usano quando nei cortili e nei vicoli battono su grossi blocchi di marmo la *adisa* per farne gomeno... La *tonazioni* delle *Catitara* è giudicata dal popolino rozza e grossolana (*grussàli*), per le messe di voce gutturali delle sue cadenze. È un canto di *fimminazzi*, di carattere grottesco, che insieme agli altri canti ci dimostra qual ricca varietà di toni abbia la Musa siciliana, mentre comunemente le si attribuisce la sola nota malinconica...
Nell'edizione Ricordi il Favara ha dato al canto il sottotitolo: "Modo delle donne del *Catitu*. Canto di lavoro, nel battere i cordami su blocchi di marmo..."

Figure 7.40: *Corpus n. 214, Tunazioni di li Catitara*

The text is somewhat humorous; it is about a man called Peppi telling a dream he had. This is the full text of the song:

Last night in my dream came to me an old woman. Ah!
She told me "Beppe do you want to get married? Ih!

I have seen a beautiful girl; Ah!
beautiful, full of money and land". Ih!

How come this old woman, Ah!

comes to tempt me in my sleep? Ih!

Who gets a wife gets in debt; Ah!
the debts grow and you'll be in need. Ih!

I'll tell you this right away: Ah!
I want to become a monk! Ih!

The viola plays two full statements of the melody, each statement follows the couplet's pattern of the text: first line is the first phrase and cadences in the dominant, second line is the second phrase and finishes in the tonic. The four, sometimes three, accented half-notes present in all the cadences were added by Berio to keep the rhythmic drive and it is very similar to what would be the beating of the cordage on the marble blocks.

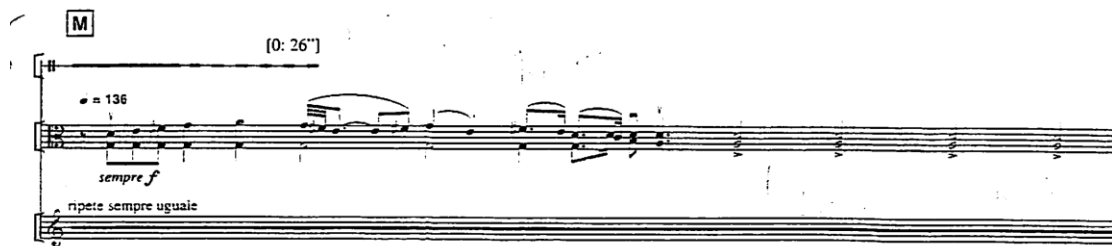


Figure 7.41: Beginning of Section M

At the end of the first statement, when the viola arrives at the tonic, G-D open strings, the marimba changes the pitches of its pattern to B-C#-D-E over a G in the bass, continuing the game of “displacement” Berio started last section. These notes in the marimba (B-C#-D-E) plus an A, are the same notes that start the melody in the viola's second statement, which is now in D major.



Figure 7.42: Displacement of Harmony

Again, there is an ambiguity created by the “displacement” between the melody (in D) and the accompaniment (B-C#-D-E over a G) which will finally resolve when the final cadence is reached: viola in D, marimba D-E-F#-G (no drone in the bass).



Figure 7.43: Final Cadence on D (Section M)

In his interview Bennici proposed an imaginary conversation between a man and a woman:

This song is a call and response. So, you will play it like this: (sings strongly at M) this is you, man. This will be her, who will answer the same thing (sings the second statement starting with the note A in feminine voice and gestures more like a courtship). You have to play the first statement like this (male, with accents). The bow here at the accents should not be long, you really have to feel that your muscles work to make the (accented) sound: yamm yamm. That way you will be able to portray her as the opposite. It is a play between man and woman. You will play her the same way but much lighter and delicate.

Mediterranean people are very theatrical...⁷⁷

The cadenza's dotted 8th note rhythm, with its accented half-notes, is repeated twice as if establishing the arrival point, but that does not last long. In an abrupt break

⁷⁷ Aldo Bennici, interview.

of the established resolution, a new conflict arises as the viola outbursts in a fortissimo four string tremolo followed by three accented chords. The marimba stops playing while this brief transition evocates the beginning of the piece. These chords played by the viola present similar interval display as the ones that started the piece (7^{ths}, 9^{ths} and 2^{nds}). The two outer strings are kept open while the middle voices move ascending until only G# and A remain. They are played *col legno* joined by the rototoms in preparation to the next section, they are note how these are the same two pitches that start *Tubbiana*.

Figure 7.44: Viola Outburst Before Section N

Section N (*Tubbiana*)

Tubbiana is a dancing song from Palermo found in the instrumental chapter of *Corpus* under n. 753. This is what it Bennici has to say about this tune:

... it is a dance for the wheat harvest, and *tubbia* means to harvest, and this one is also played on the frog. Always think that you are not alone, but that you are always two people (sings the little motive forte and then piano), even if you have the same color try changing the meaning of it. It is like you would say “Why?” in different tones of voice.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Aldo Bennici, interview.

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753. TUBBIANA ^{*)}

Palermo

*) . Per questa danza vedi il Salomone Marino, Costumi e usanze dei contadini di Sicilia, Palermo 1897, p.202 segg.

Figure 7.45: *Corpus n. 753, Tubbiana*

Like most Sicilian music, the original is in 6/8 but Berio surprisingly transformed it in a simple meter, extracting only the first from the four sections in the original dance.



Figure 7.46: *Tubbiana Melody in Simple Meter*

During this song, a swishy atmosphere is provided by the tam-tam, being lightly struck with metal mallets.

At the end of the tune we find the same scale that started and ended Section I. Berio sets it again as a connection from one tune to the following one. In conjunction with that, he craftily uses a few notes from the next song as an introduction to the new section, like other transitions seen earlier. In this case these notes are the three descending notes (D, C, B).

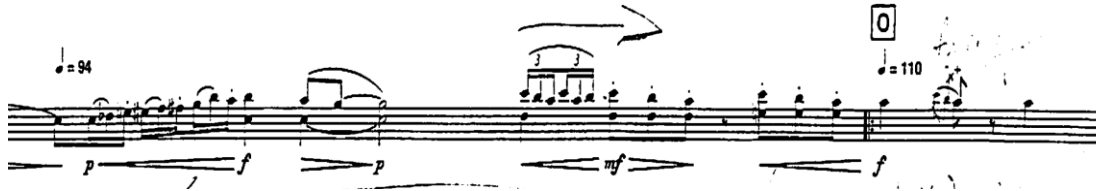


Figure 7.47: Transition to Section O

Section O

It is in *Voci* (pp. 86-89) that is possible to identify this section's song, *Canto di Lavoro dei Pescatori di Corallo* (Work Song of the Corral Fishermen). It is a high spirited song that comes from Trapani according to, *Corpus* n. 580. It is sung in open sea, while the fishermen veer off, turning the winch and singing in cadence with the step. At the end of the song there a comment saying that "is it possible to see the corral coming out of the water."

Between 1875 and 1880, were found corral banks in the sea of Sciacca and Trapani that and attracted several fishing boats, many from Naples, where this industry was very common. Therefore the text of the song is a combination of Sicilian and Napolitano dialects.

580. Canto dei pescatori di corallo *

Trapani
(Fav. III, 95)

In alto mare, mentre i pescatori virano girando l'argano, cantano in cadenza col passo.

CORO

O - hè, Ni - co', o - hè, Ni - co'! Mit - ti cu - ra lu ru - su 'ncoppa 'a ba - scul.
O - hè, Ni - rà, o - hè, Ni - rà! E vi - ri co mu as - sum - ma lu cu - rà.
O - hè, Ni - cò, o - hè, Ni - co'! E sinni ja - mu 'ncoppa 'a sic - ca no.
Ut - ta ca - ta ut! Ut - ta ca - ta ut! E co - mu su' belli i mac - car - rù!
E is - si is - si è, e is - si is - si è! E vi - ri co mu as - sum - ma lu cu - rà!
E ti - rà, e ti - rà! E vi - ri co mu as - sum - ma 'u scia - rab - bà!
O ti - rà, o ti - rà! E vi - ri co mu as - sum - ma lu cu - rà!

Si vede il corallo salire di sott'acqua.

Questo canto è pure dei marinai corallieri di Napoli.

**) La scoperta dei banchi di corallo esistenti nel mare di Sciacca, avvenuta in più riprese dal 1875 al 1880 (cfr. I. Scaturro, Storia della città di Sciacca, Napoli 1926, vol. II, pag. 538-539), unita ai minori banchi del mare di Trapani, provocò sul luogo una straordinaria affluenza di barche, molte delle quali provenienti da Napoli, dove già da tempo si praticava quella pesca e quell'industria. Si venne così formando un gergo siciliano - partenopeo, del quale è un esemplare il presente canto di lavoro.*

Figure 7.48: Corpus n. 580, Canto dei Pescatori di Corallo

The mixing of dialects makes the translation more difficult. Here is the approximate text:

Hey Nico, hey Nico! Put the red corral in the basket.
Hey Nira, Hey Nira! And see how the rope comes up.

Hey Nico, hey Nico! And we will over it
Utta cata ut! Utta cata ut! How great is macaroni!
E issi issi e, e issi issi e! And see how the rope comes up.
E tira, e tira! E viri comu assumma'u sciarabba!
O tira, o tira! And see how the rope comes up.

(Nico and Nira are probably two people.)

Berio maintains the key of G major but presents it in a very interesting way. He transforms many of the notes into acciaccatura, creating a rhythmic ornamentation that enriches the original. These notes are to be played pizzicato with the left hand at the same time they are also played by the bow. Bennici mentions that this effect is supposed to sound like shells.



Figure 7.49: Melody in Section O

This sailor song is the last truly happy moment in the piece and it consists of two repeated phrases. After this melody the music starts preparing for another transition leading to more conflict and sorrow, and finally to the end of the work.. The last four notes of this song (D, C, A, G) are repeated three times, each time slightly different: first with slur in pianissimo, second with a Db instead D, and third with Ab instead of A in mezzo-forte.



Figure 7.50: Transition with Pitch Unfolding

Skillfully, Berio uses pitch unfolding once more, gradually changing the character from joyful to sorrow. *Naturale* is finally moving towards its end when the

pitch center arrives at Db, which enharmonically is the same as C#, this way closing a long trajectory that started at the beginning.

Section P

A frantic run of 16th notes precedes the dramatic entrance of Section P. This is the last fortissimo outburst of the work, a four string tremolo, purposely breaking the relative calmness. It acts the same way as the ones at Section J and right before Section N.



Figure 7.51: Beginning of Section P

This is a transitional section in which is possible to see Berio's process of auto-citation and transformation. The short motive used only once in *Voci* and brought to *Naturale* (Figure 7.5), returns here after the tremolos. This motive suffers the same process of pitch unfolding described in the previous section, where it is transformed into the mourning motive (Figure 7.34).⁷⁹ Note how the F# and the C# become gradually F and C as the music calms down and finally only the F remains, with the return of the two Ab 32nd notes.

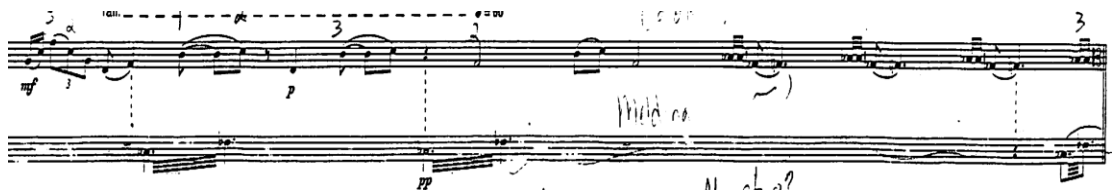


Figure 7.52: Pitch Unfolding to the Mourning Motive

⁷⁹ First seen in Section K

This entire passage requires great artistry from the performer, for it covers a wide variety of emotions and techniques. From the enraged four-string tremolo until the inert grief of the mourning motive, there are several gradual mood changes. Here is what Bennici says about playing the mourning motive:

See, here, we have again the mourning motive (before Section Q). Please remember to play it with suffering. The finger should not only move a quarter-tone, but it should have a meaning behind it. It should move like this (moving the finger slowly and sadly) like a sigh. You should feel it in your flesh, like it is your own pain.
LP: Like the air in the voice that fades away, right?
AB: If you are able to feel it not like a violist you will be in the right path. Forget about playing the viola, it is the only way to be able to play this. When you forget, it then you'll sound great.⁸⁰

Underneath all this turmoil the marimba returns softly playing a harmonic tremolo (Ab-Db). When this interval of fourth meets the F, from the mourning motive, the three pitches of a Db major triad are present, although its treatment does not seem tonal. The fact that matter is that Db (or C#) is established, creating a pitch center return to the beginning of the work.

Section Q

The harmonic return to *Naturale*'s beginning is ratified by the last entrance of the recorded voice, VOCE VII. Celano sings the same descending C# pentachord (G#-F#-E#-D#-C#) as in VOCE I and II, and the viola plays the pitches of the mourning motive (Ab-F) against the open G string creating dissonant intervals.

⁸⁰ Aldo Bennici, interview.

Figure 7.53: Section Q

Once more, as in Sections E and G, the marimba tremolo (Db-Ab) makes a connection between two sections. At a certain point the viola plays the fifth Db-Ab without the low G, but still sounds dissonant, reinforcing the idea that there is not a feeling of tonality in the organization of these pitches. To reinforce the dissonances there is also a glissando to an A clashing with the already established Ab.

The *abbagnata* in VOCE VII is the shortest one, only seventeen seconds long. It seems that he is selling firecrackers, which are very common during the religious festivities.

Figure 7.54: Transcription of VOCE VII

This is what was possible to transcribe from this *abbagnata*'s text and its translation into English:

Quantu amu a spilari a stu iuocu ri fuocu...Bum! Bum!

How much do we have to pay for these fireworks...Bum! Bum!⁸¹

⁸¹ The use of fireworks is very common during religious festivities, especially at the commemorative dates of the local saints.

What follows in the recording, however, is an intriguing sequence of sounds that suggests someone is being killed. Celano's voice shouts "Boom! Boom!" There are some popping noises in the background. Suddenly, loud real gun-shots surprise the listener, dominating the scene. Once the shots are gone, the only sounds left are the viola playing pianissimo and five church bell strikes. To elucidate this sequence, Bennici's tells the amusing story behind those noises and the gun shots:

LP: Here at VOCE VII Celano sings a story that one is shot and dies.
AB: This is a Luciano Berio story, the real story is this: Celano speaks and says "How beautiful the *ocufocu*." *Ocufocu* are the fireworks. And, on this big frying pan, he has chickpeas, do you know what chickpeas are? In Sicily, they throw those in a pan and call it roasted curdled chickpeas. When you put them on the pan it explodes and make the sound pahhh. The same way chestnuts also explode. So, I could not convince Berio that the machine guns had nothing to do with the blows. But, consider that Berio always had in mind the student protests of 1968, those that had police intervention. Despite the fact that I told him it had nothing to do with the mafia. But, he wanted to insert that anyway so he put in those rounds of gunfire. It's quite a story; from machine-gun shots to chickpeas in a large frying pan is a long way. Besides, chickpeas on a pan do not kill anyone.⁸²

With these sound effects Berio certainly achieves a great impact in the listener. His intent is to symbolize the "death" that had being present in the piece for a long time.

Section R (*Ninna Nanna di Carini*)

The actual five church bells inserted in the recording are labeled as part of Section R, and overlap well beyond the lullaby's first phrase. It seems that Berio was seeking to create a special sonority for the end of the work, one that could imply

⁸² Aldo Bennici, interview.

different meanings, an open end. Bennici mentions: “Initially, there was only the viola, at the first edition. Then, as he went on he added other things.”

The song chosen to end *Naturale* is a unique lullaby in B Locrian mode, which Berio called *Ninna Nanna di Carini*. In *Corpus* this song is n. 525 and bears the name *Alavò*, from Carini, a town in the Province of Palermo.

The image shows a page from a music book with the title "525. ALAVÒ (CARINI)" at the top. Below the title are four staves of musical notation in a single system. The first two staves are for the first version of the song, and the last two are for the second version. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first version starts with "1. Ed a - la - vò!..." and the second with "2. Ci da - ti a man - cia - ri ma pa - ni e pi - sei,". The music is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B Locrian mode).

Figure 7.55: *Corpus* n. 525, *Alavò*

The text says:

... San Francis of Paula,
Make him fall asleep at your table. ...
Give us to eat, bread and fish,
And then he will sleep. ...

The song was transcribed by Berio with minor rhythmical adjustments to the original melody. He also added a lower A before the final B, giving a rocking quality to it. The viola plays the melody the entire time with harmonics, an effect that gives an ethereal quality to the sound.

After the first phrase, the music is interrupted by a return of the mourning motive,⁸³ recalling sufferings of the past. That is only a brief disruption of the song's serenity, which soon restarts its second phrase. This time the marimba joins with a harmonic tremolo in triple piano enhancing the delicacy of the moment.



Figure 7.56: Mourning Motive followed by Marimba Tremolo

With a constant D in the top and a chromatic descending line from Ab to E, the marimba line is quite ambiguous, suggesting the mode to be in E Phrygian. However, because this line is not very defining and the melody had been in the viola quite for a while, I will consider that in B Locrian. *Naturale* ends with two repetitions of the melody's last six notes and glissandos between the notes A and B.

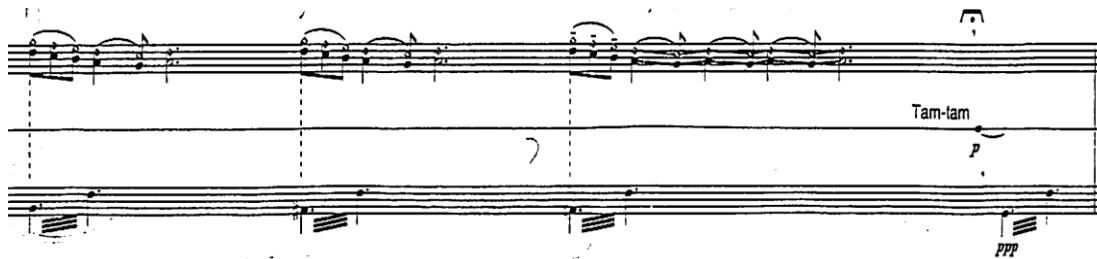


Figure 7.57: End of *Naturale*

Bennici suggest an image as if someone is closing the scene, whistling because he is leaving and getting softer every time. In fact, the interpretation of the scene is personal, both to the performer and the listener. However, there are no better words to describe the summary of this musical journey than Bennici's own words:

⁸³ Originally in *Voci* this interruption is a series of repeated notes recalling *Sequenza VIII*.

At this point, you've already gone through all the love and all the desperation among other things. In 25 minutes you have made love, you have found the woman of your life, you've found Jesus, and you found whatever you want to think of. Then, you find yourself ending up with a lullaby, which can have different meanings. In this case, it may seem like a closure, but the lullaby always has a perspective of future. Think of it not as finishing the piece, but that the lullaby starts something else. Try to find your personal reading of it. For example, this is one of the tenderest things there may be (AB sings the Ninna Nanna). Always play the glissandi as you are dragging the notes. I do not know if you have children, if you have, you will know that there is a different way one caresses them. Not like this (strokes his fingers heavily on his arm) but it is like this (now he strokes his fingers on his arm very gently). In this feeling there is all: there is the hug, the wanting to feel each other. That's what this is. Excuse me, I seem to be rhetorical about this, but this is the beauty of this composition that is not a piece for viola. It is a piece for ... it is a minute (little, short) life, a fraction of life where there is dancing, there is love, there is death, and there is rebirth. All condensed in about 20 minutes.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Aldo Bennici, interview.

CHAPTER 8 - Analysis

I approached the analysis of the work in two phases: first the context, which is studied in the previous chapter and second, the specific analysis. The specific analysis is divided into three main areas which are related to each other: harmonic, thematic and formal.

This way, I started by identifying the original folk songs and the seven recorded *abbagnatas*, followed by all the remaining sections, labeling them in their mode, pitch center or tonality. The collection of all this information resulted in the creation of Table 8.1. In addition to that, the display of the different sections within the work was studied in order to have a general idea of the work's pacing (Table 8.2).

Rehearsal Letters	SECTION			PITCH CENTER, MODE			INSTRUMENTATION		FORMAL FUNCTION
	VOCE	FOLK SONG	FREE	VOCE	VIOLA	PERCUSSION	VIOLA TECHNIQUE	PERCUSSION	
			Intro		C#		chordal	Tam-tam → tacet	Introductory
	VOCE I			C# (major)	C#		ostinato double stops	(tacet)	Introductory
			Bridge		C# → F#		melodic	(tacet)	Transitional
A		A la Sciacchitana			F#		quarter-tones	Tam-tam (metal mallets)	Expository
B			Intro		C#		chordal	Rototoms	Transitional
	VOCE II			C# (major)	C# → C Major		al tallone/pizz/ostinato	Rototoms + Tam-tam	Introductory
C		Abbagnata I			C (major) → Eb		chordal pizz./hand noise	(tacet)	Expository
D	VOCE III			Eb (minor)	Eb		pizz/quasi legno/melodic	Tam-tam (circolarmente)	Introductory
E		Ninna Nanna			C aeolian	C aeolian	tenuto, espressivo	Marimba (harmonic trem)	Expository
F			Bridge		Eb --(atonal)--> A	C aeolian → D	melodic	Marimba (harmonic trem.)	Transitional
G		Ladata			A (D dorian dominant)	D (+ A)	teso, senza vibrare	→ tacet	Expository
	VOCE IV			E (minor)	A (E sub-dominant)		grace notes, gliss/ostin.	Tam-tam + Rototoms	Introductory
H		Abbagnata II			D		double-stops/drone	Tam-tam (tremolo)	Expository
I			Voci's transt.		D		ponticello/drone	(tacet)	Parenthetical
J			Intro (mod.)		D (+ A)	D	arpeg tremolo/chordal	Marimba (trill)	Transitional
	VOCE V			D (major)	D (major) + C and G	D	dbl-stops/tallone/ pont		Introductory
K		Chiantu			(F+Ab) → D aeolian		pont./two-finger pizz.	Rototoms (wood) → tacet	Expository
		K (Muntagnisa)			A (D aeolian dominant)		due corde (pizz.)	Rototoms	Expository
L	VOCE VI			D (major)	D (+ G)	D (major)	open strings/ostinato	Marimba (melodic trem.)	Introductory
M		Tun. de li Catitari			G → D	D → A → D	open strings (+ melodic)	Marimba (melodic trem.)	Expository
N		Tubbiana			D		double-stops/grace note	Tam-tam (tremolo)	Expository
O		Pescatori di Corallo			G (major)		left hand pizz.	Tam-tam (tremolo)	Expository
P			Fig 7.5 Fig 7.34		Db (+ Ab) → unfolding	Db (+ Ab)	arpeg tremolo/melodic	Marimba (harmonic trem.)	Transitional
Q	VOCE VII			C# (+ Bell C#)	→Db		senza vib./drone/ostinat	Rototoms	Introductory
R		Ninna Nanna di Carini			B Locrian	(D → E)	harmonics	Marimba (harmonic trem.)	Expository / Closing

Table 8.1: *Naturale* Section by Section

Harmonic Analysis

The relations of pitch throughout the piece are well thought. Berio used the seven *abbagnatas* sung on the CD to determine how the pitch centers would relate and flow through the whole work. Berio reworked the prime material from *Voci* in a puzzle-like fashion to create *Naturale*. Without any major changes to it, he pasted and

copied major sections of *Voci* rearranging their order and inserting the seven recorded *abbagnatas* sung by Celano. We do not know how many recordings of *abbagnatas* he had available, but he certainly organized these seven in a specific order to create a linear discourse, choosing those that would match the pitches of *Voci*'s sections.

Of the seven *abbagnatas*, three (I, II, VII) are centered in C# and seem to define a major mode (mixolydian): G#-F#-E#-D#-C#. In its turn, VOCE V and VI are a half-step higher: A-G-F#-E-D. The two other left are VOCE III in Eb minor (emphasis on Gb) and VOCE IV in E minor as well.

We can clearly see how he framed *Naturale* so there is a departure point from C# followed by a wandering to different pitch centers (Eb, A, D, G), and finally a closure when C# is back at the end of the piece with VOCE VII. Even the five church bell strikes that Berio inserted in the recording are a C#, making us suppose he chose specifically that pitch among other recordings of church bells he might have had.

The procedures of the harmonic and melodic writing either tries to follow or is inspired by traits found in these vocal recordings, the songs, and dances that Berio uses. Although that happens in a considerably free way, it is possible to see a certain “respect” for the original material, which does not exclude the fact that Berio imprints some of his “modernist” style.

For example in VOCE I, the singer alternates long notes as moments of rest in C# and D# as if staying temporarily in the “dominant” (D#, second grade of the scale) to resolve in C#. This alternation between the two notes (first and second degree of the scale, corresponding to the relation dominant-tonic) is also clearly heard in VOCE

V and VI. This alternation is used in the viola's introductory gestures between A-B in the top voice (later expanding to include C#), and also C#-D# in the middle register.

The work's harmonic structure is based precisely in the half-step relation between the C# (present in the first and last VOCE), and the D that dominates all the area from Section G until Section N. This creates two big zones of harmonic contrast, where it is possible to see a sort of "recapitulation" as if it was a tonal work.

There is also a zone in C Aeolian (*Ninna Nanna*) reached through a short Eb (VOCE III) which form respectively half-steps between C# and D. Finally there are short zones in E (VOCE IV), and B (*Ninna Nanna di Carini*) that expand for another half-step, both ways, the cluster already mentioned (C-C#-D-Eb). This fundamental relation of half-steps can also explain this interval's use to define the sonority at the beginning of the piece.

It is also possible to refer that, as it is known, Berio belongs to the atonal-serial school therefore the dissonant harmonies (minor and major seconds) are almost permanent traits of his style. Comparing *Naturale's* beginning to that of *Sequenza VIII* for violin, in which there is a gradual expansion of the register, it is possible to notice a certain resemblance.

Thematic and Formal Analysis

In modern music it is often difficult to characterize with clarity the procedures in the thematic and formal plans. This happens because in this kind of music, the intent is to contradict the general artistic common-practice (for example sonata-form).

At the same time the non existence of a common-practice among different composers, and sometimes among different works by the same composer, makes it difficult to find “models” of analysis. Therefore it is necessary to create an appropriate model for each work.

Considering the mosaic construction of *Naturale*, I have tried to apply a formal function to each of the sections of the work (in the table’s far right column). Of course, formal functions are used more in tonal music, but that could be a possible way to have an idea about the work’s structure. The problem with this approach is its subjectivity. For example, one could consider each section that presents new material as “expository” (the songs and the seven VOCE), while another would consider the VOCE functioning as an “introduction” to the songs. A third idea could consider the VOCE working as a “transition” between songs. Many of the VOCE, in fact, have multiple functions, they prepare the key for the song to come, but they also have their own material.

In order to solve this impasse, I found in Berio himself a clarification: “The original texts used in *Naturale* are Sicilian songs commented by the voice of Celano.”⁸⁵ Therefore, these “comments” could imply all those different functions at the same time.

I extracted from *Naturale*, the folk songs and VOCE and set them in a less elaborate table. The idea is to find some sort of structure and pacing that guided Berio’s composition. In the middle and right columns, I listed the songs and their respective mood. In the left column I grouped together all introductory and/or transition sections that lead to a song.

⁸⁵ Luciano Berio, composer’s note about *Naturale*, <http://www.lucianoberio.org/en/node/1396>

VOCE/Intro/Transition	SONG	MOOD
Beginning	-	Coarse/Dance
VOCE I	A la Schiacchitana	Sad
B –“Beginning”	-	Coarse/Dance
VOCE II	Abbagnata I	Happy
VOCE III	Ninna Nanna	Delicate/Sad
F (intro)	Ladata	Intense/Suffering
VOCE IV	Abbagnata II	Happy
I – J	-	Disruptive
VOCE V	Chiantu + Muntagnisa	Grieving
VOCE VI	Tunazione	Happy
-	Tubbiana	Happy
-	Pescatori di Corallo	Happy
P (transition)	-	Disruptive/Grieving
VOCE VII	Ninna Nanna di Carini	Delicate/Ethereal

Table 8.2: Thematic Table

This table helps to see more clearly the connection between all the VOCE and the songs, and how Berio distributed the recordings evenly throughout the work. In the Mood column, it is noticeable that in the first half of the work the moods alternate more often. At the center of *Naturale*, after two disruptive sections, there is the most intense and full of suffering song, *Chiantu*. After that intense emotional turmoil, Berio compensates with three happy songs in a row. Section P breaks that wave of optimism, and reminds us once more the suffering by presenting again the mourning motive. After some striking sounds of gun-shots, the work ends by setting a delicate child’s song in an ethereal mood, suggesting an open-ending idea: both death and birth are part of life itself.

Conclusion

No printed document can reproduce the experience of hearing music and the innumerable nuances transmitted by the sound. A serious performer should not only search for knowledge concerning the subject of the score which he or she is studying, but also have the experience of listening to music related to it. By studying and listening to the sources of the songs and Berio's music as well, this research has had a profound impact on how I think of *Naturale* conceptually, and how I would perform it.

I highly suggest to any performer attempting to play either *Naturale* or *Voci*, the listening to original performances of Sicilian folk music, in order to get acquainted to the "way of singing" of Southern Italy.⁸⁶ Listening to Berio's music is also recommended, but one would expect that someone academically trained is familiar with his music. The purpose of getting acquainted to Sicilian folk music is not to create a performance practice of Berio's *Naturale*, but to internalize the elements that define this music and reproduce it according to one's own "voice". This is achieved by finding a deep and personal meaning and connection to the music being interpreted. This process is well described by Bennici: "This is what you need to find on this piece. Otherwise, it is a series of simple songs that do not mean anything."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ The author suggests the listening of two CD with Sicilian folk songs. The field recordings by Lomax and Carpitella: *Italian Treasury, Sicily*, Rounder Records, 2000., and the six recordings from the Ethnomusicological Archives of the *Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* in the CD *Voci*, ECM, 2001.

⁸⁷ Aldo Bennici, interview.

Berio's process of comment and analysis of *Voci* resulted in the creation of *Naturale*. The new element that stirred up the elaboration in the material from *Voci* is the inclusion of the recordings of Celano's crude voice. These seven recordings have impacted the material that came from *Voci* in many ways. They act as a harmonic frame to the work's structure, starting in C# with VOCE I and II, and ending in C# with VOCE VII. Berio also used them to "comment" on the songs by spreading the seven recordings evenly throughout the work. They also have a "multi-functional" nature, as they can be perceived either as introductory or transitional, or even expository because they have their own material.

This multi-functional nature creates different layers just as Berio himself described:

A musically significant work is always made of meaningful layers that are at once the agents and the materials of its existence. They are the actor, the director, and the script all in one...⁸⁸

After examining all the elements at play in *Naturale*, these meaningful layers mentioned by Berio seem clearer. The viola, the recording, and the percussion are already three different layers that interact in this musical journey, and their role may vary according to the circumstance. If we follow Bennici's suggestion and imagine this journey as a story sung by a story-teller it becomes clear how the viola portrays the "actor, the director and the script all in one."

This journey is a story that starts in a street market environment where there is confusion and noise. The viola is the story-teller portraying all the characters: a sailor singing sad and happy songs, a suffering mother with a child, a procession of devout

⁸⁸ Luciano Berio, *Remembering the Future* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 14.

followers, happy dancers in a village, a desperate woman mourning her son, and joyous workers songs. Berio characterizes each song the viola plays by asking for a specific technique that enhances the mood without affecting the transcription of the original song.

Berio also elaborated on elements he extracted from these songs, and has the viola play it as if “commenting” the actual story. These comments are mostly atonal, rhythmically irregular, and at times abrupt and violent. They create a duality with the simplicity of the songs that can also be seen as ancient versus modern. He comments about his search to unify these two musical worlds:

I’m not a ethnomusicologist, just a pragmatic egoist: so I tend to be interested only in those folk techniques and means of expression that I can in one way or other assimilate without a stylistic break, and that allow me to make a few steps forward in the search for a unity underlying musical worlds that are apparently alien to one another.⁸⁹

He did not allow a stylistic break to happen in this story told by the viola. The only song that was actually manipulated to an extreme was *Chiantu*, in Section K. It was so much inserted into Berio’s own material that previous researchers were not able to identify it. Thanks to clues in Bennici’s interview, this song is coming to light. This intense and extreme cry of a woman is so powerful that we can suppose her testimony might have had an influence in Berio’s choosing the name *Naturale*: “How can you not raise your voice? It is the actual urge from nature that moves it.”⁹⁰

This is the only place in this entire study that the word nature (or natural) has appeared. The “urge from nature” mentioned above may represent the vital energy

⁸⁹ David Osmond-Smith, 106.

⁹⁰ The full quote can be found in this dissertation p. 62.

behind the expression of folk music, and this is what attracts and inspires Berio to use this music.

In bringing into being this powerful composition of folk music within the greater complexities of an art music setting, he was certainly successful in creating a deeply moving and personal piece, which will mean something slightly different to everyone who has the good fortune to study and play this work.

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview with Aldo Bennici at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, Tuscany, Italy, July 2012 (translated from Italian into English by the author).

Leonardo Piermartiri: I have found very little about the story behind the creation of *Naturale*. I would like you to talk about how your friendship with Luciano Berio resulted in the composition of new works. After that, we could talk more in detail about *Naturale*.

Aldo Bennici: Berio wrote many works for me. Back when he wrote *Naturale* (this story is very personal but I'll tell it anyway) I was separating from my first wife and there was a heavy financial burden on me. Berio wanted to help me and he acted as a true close friend. He thought of writing this choreography for me, and in about six months of performing this piece, I was able to pay all that I owed. It is a story very unimportant but one of great reciprocal friendship and great love. Berio wrote it so that I would be well. Is that okay? So, this is a first point.

Then, this piece is a derivation of *Voci*, the material is not exactly the same, but for the most part it is, I do not remember precisely because I haven't played it for years. There are about 17 songs; I do not remember for sure, it does not matter. You should envision these songs not as a performer, but as the anti-performer. You must think like a storyteller, do you know what a storyteller is? They have a large picture

and with a stick they point and sing the story. (Bennici points to an imaginary picture and sings: "...then the lady saw...")

LP: Like Peppino Celano?⁹¹

AB: Yes, like Peppino Celano. I have all the originals (recordings) of Peppino Celano. And so, the viola is also a storyteller, not a soloist. It is a completely wrong approach, you should not think: "I play, I play well, hear me." Instead it should be: "I do not play, I am!" That's because they are characters. Then, if you would like, I'll show you. Let's see, for example, the first song (AB sings the beginning of *Sciacchitana*). It has quarter-tones. But, they are not quarter-tones that are often made in the music of Xenakis, for example, which uses the quarter-tone. Here, quarter-tones are linked to a relation of the pulse. (AB sings the beginning one more time). The pace and rhythm are of one who sings. The *Sciacchitana* is a woman of Sciacca.⁹² (AB draws a map) This is Sicily, this one is the African side, and here's Sciacca. So, because it is in the African side, it means that there is a different projecting of the voice. So, when you take the viola, you should not try (AB sings) to play like all the violists do, but to take in account that this is a woman of the commons and her sound comes from above (from her nose). You must never think of playing it, but speaking it, the same way I'm doing it now. You should feel the touch of the bow (AB sings and moves the tip of his fingers softly on his arm), this speech may sound a little nonsense but it is a serious one. You must not think of the bow rubbing the strings, but the bow that touches something. (AB sings) She's talking, not playing, she talks and she must say something. These women were very humble

⁹¹ Singer and storyteller who recorded the seven *abbagnatas* in the CD for *Naturale*.

⁹² Coastal city in Southwestern Sicily.

women, as it used to be in Sicily on the old times; they went to the sea to wash the clothes. So, this is the discourse of *Sciacchitana*. You need to feel it in your touch; it is a tactile matter, since of course the viola has a physical nature.

LP: How do you differentiate Berio's effect of sudden changes of vibrato and quarter-tones in this Section A?

AB: He asks for unnatural crescendos and diminuendos. The natural musical lines would be emphasized differently. In other words, if you can realize that you are not playing the viola, you have found the key to it. Forget the viola. Beware that it is a physical rapport and also a love rapport. You must talk as you talk to a person. If you do the Brahms sonata (AB sings Op.120 Eb 1st Mov.), you speak to the universe, gorgeously, all that you might. But, if you want to speak to your wife, you have to find a different tone of voice, and this is always the case on the *Sciacchitana*. From these notes that are marked vibrato, you get a straight tone and vibrate it, vibrate a lot. It is the same thing as a little emotional shock. This other one at the middle of Section A asks for *poco vibrato e stretto*. I can tell you this: precision is not fundamental.

LP: So, even if Berio in this music has made several specific points, does it matter if it is played a little differently?

AB: No, what it matters is the tension. You must keep the tension because otherwise they become insignificant things. The tension is what that drives your musical line (AB sings). Especially for these glissandi, do not play them straight because they need to linger and be very intimate.

LP: You sing it wonderfully!

AB: Okay, so this is how you do this one. Here at the second part of *Sciacchitana*, we have the left-hand pizzicato played together with the bow. This effect is an imitation of the voice and not a left-hand technique per se. It is as someone speaks ahh ahh blocking the air in the way out of the glottis, a glottal stop (*colpo di gola*). Do you know when someone is very shy, right? He can't talk; there is something in his voice that resembles an acciaccatura. One day, when you broaden your studies, you will see that not only the Sicilian song—but I can tell you of many songs, from the Albanian to the Serbian—that will often use this little trait in the sound. In this other place, instead we have the quarter-tones fluctuation that Berio asks. Hold your finger in place and oscillate it, slowly, do not slide your finger. There are two sensations, one that does exactly the quarter-tone and you get an abrupt change of pitch. The second is the one that happens like a wave and the pitch changes smoothly.

LP: Just as the voice does.

AB: Like the sea that has waves and they come and go softly. It is a connection of language. I'll explain these parts later. It has been 15 years since I played this piece. You heard the recordings of Celano, right?

LP: Yes, yes.

AB: Celano, attention to this: Celano was an *abbagnatore*. *Abbagnate* means selling things on the street. For example, the one at Section C sounds like this (AB sings the melody line of *Abbagnata I*). The real one is much slower and sinuous (AB sings *Ohh che bel fico*). It means: what a beautiful fig. Then, it becomes something else. Always think that you're that one character. At this moment, you just changed to another occupation. It can be a woman or a man. So, the *abbagnata* is someone selling

something. (AB sings *Abbagnata I* and claps his hands strongly on the two quarter notes). You can do in your own way, but the discourse must be like this (AB sings *Abbagnata I* starting slow and then accelerating). And, you have to learn how to make the energy come from here and not from the arms.

LP: From the guts.

AB: These quarter notes that he indicates to hit all the strings are not just two percussion notes on the viola, but they are always ... as images of love. Like an explosion, it is a great feeling when you're in love. It is like your heart would beat like that. Because here's a dance ... the *abbagnata* is the origin, but this is no longer an *abbagnata*. The original *abbagnata* is the one that I have sung before. (Sings) We have transformed it into a dance (Sings). You must present it in a very erotic fashion. You have to convince another person with this dance and at this point this dance becomes a dance of courtship. Think of an actor who looks at the woman and has to convince her. You understand, ehh, you change the demeanor.

LP: Are the two quarter-notes really that strong as you clapped?

AB: Try not to hit it too strong, so that your viola does not go out of tune. Here, we have the *Ninna Nanna* at Section E. I don't want to say something wrong because I do not remember all the details. This is an ambiguous text of the poor families. It says to St. Francis of Paula to take him (the baby) at his table. That has many meanings, one can say: take it because I do not know what to feed it. The song repeats three times. You'll play it this way: at the first statement do not vibrate, do not be expressive but act as a mom does when making the baby fall asleep (AB sings lullaby). Do it like—how would you say in Italian—“*perche?*” (Why?). The point is that you need to build

up on it. First you pray, then the second time, you feel that you need more and it becomes much heavier. Note that there is a triplet here. Always Speaking! Then, she gets nervous a lot with this Lady (Madonna) that gives you nothing to feed the family. It is like you are begging against the situation that you cannot feed your child. That was the second statement. Then, the third one it is like saying: Enough! (AB sings very heavy and marcato).

Let's see the next song? *Ladata* means laude (AB sings). You should not play the notes A- G#-A with the same intention, lean more on the G#. It should be lingering, all of this is very slow and above all don't neglect the little notes. Okay, now we have arrived at Voce IV. (AB sings the viola part with little glissandi and sudden crescendos on all notes, taking his time on every one of them). You should play this in a courting manner, like you are talking to someone. Here, you have to keep the drone on the note A very strong, and everything moves above it. There are always these first two notes that you drag their beginning (sings glissando tiiii taahhii). Then, at Section H, it is simpler, you have to move it.

LP: Like a dance.

AB: Yes, a bit like the first dance (*Abbagnata I*), you must move it, always with very heavy accents.

LP: Here, at Section I, we start to see more of Berio own motives, correct?

AB: Yes, we see a bit of everything. Those are different worlds. In part, they are also songs because there are fragments of it.

LP: Is that how he came to unify folk music with his own music?

AB: Consider that when you will play *Voci* with an orchestra, it is a different language even if the material is the same. That piece is a great orchestration manual. In other words, it is a very complex orchestration using magically very few elements that expand becoming a score with two orchestras. These two ensembles are eight meters apart and at the same time create these dissonances that play a game of call. If you analyze well, you'll see that the material is very limited but intertwined, a real model of how you build a score.

The glissando at Section I needs to be unpleasant, they need to be fast and with accent (the ones that arrive at the note D).

LP: Here, at the end of VOCE V, a new motive appears.

AB: This is different than a song, this motive has a tragic meaning, and there is no indication of it in the score. In Sicily, like in ancient Greece, up until the beginning of the twentieth century, they used to have the *prefiche*.⁹³ The *prefiche* were women who cried for a fee at funerals. For example, this is a song they would often sing: *fiiiiigliu* (son), *figliu meu* (my son) *garofano mio*⁹⁴ (my flower). (AB sang several times two notes, matching the two syllables of *figliu*, with a falling interval of 4th and also 3rd, the first note was fading away and there was almost no energy in the breath when the second note was sung). After this the *prefiche* began to cry, then all the commotion would start. That's how you do this motive. It represents death. You will find this figure later on in the score; he uses it in another way, as a lament.

LP: Yes, and then also here (end of page 9 UE 32 565).

⁹³ *Prefiche* is also explained by Salomone-Marino in *Customs and Habits of the Sicilian Peasants*, 1981, p. 208.

⁹⁴ Found in *Corpus di Musiche Popolari Siciliane n. 569*.

AB: Yes, indeed, they are called *repitu*⁹⁵, they are mournful expressions. There's always this kind of declamation, as in ancient Greece, these women stay around the coffin and say: "You were so beautiful!" Realize that when you die you are always remembered as a better person than what you are. They could also say: "You that smelled like carnations, you had a mouth like this or like that." Then, it could get excited and become more intimate "you were so good that..." there were no limits. And in all, there is always what mothers say: "*ciatu meu*"⁹⁶ my breath, "*core meu*" my heart (AB sings the descending interval of a 3rd, two 16th notes followed by a quarter note found on the viola part right before Section K and also at the end of page 9). In this rhythm there are two notes and the pain of humanity. "You were handsome, tall, blonde haired," "you were clean," which in Sicilian means pure. And so on. And here, we arrive at Section K. Again, for the quarter-tones, don't move your hands but play around the pitch with your fingers.

LP: This whole sequence at Section K is de cadenza that starts *Voci*, right?

AB: Berio wrote three cadenzas for *Voci*. I know it because all three times that I had to go there to play I did not know which one was the definitive one. It is difficult to memorize a piece like that from 7 pm to 9 pm!

LP: What about the other ones?

AB: I have the originals at home.

LP: Was that the occasion of the premiere?

⁹⁵ There are ten examples of *Repitu* in *Corpus di Musiche Popolari Siciliane*.

⁹⁶ Found in *Corpus di Musiche Popolari Siciliane n. 569*.

AB: Yes, I played the premiere in Basel. When you play this, don't approach it like you are playing Brahms, with long legato lines. You have to try to create your own voice (your own speech). You have to talk, and not play it.

We then go on. Here, for example (end of page 9, sequence of dotted eight and two thirty-second notes), it is as we talked before. Never play them separate and placed. Remember we are talking about a (deceased) son, play it without hope and strength. Here (pizzicato sequence before L), it is a simple thing, as well. It is another version of a simple song, also an *abbagnata*, of one that sells. Here, instead (Section M), is a different one, I'll explain it to you. (AB stands up and sings M) This song is a call and response. So, you will play it like this: (sings strongly at M) this is you, man. This will be her, who will answer the same thing (sings the second statement starting with the note A in feminine voice and gestures more like a courtship). You have to play the first statement like this (male, with accents). The bow here at the accents should not be long, you really have to feel that your muscles work to make the (accented) sound: yamm yamm. That way you will be able to portray her as the opposite. It is a play between man and woman. You will play her the same way but much lighter and delicate.

Mediterranean people are very theatrical; I think you got that point. Here, at Section N, we have *Tubbiana*; it is a dance for the wheat harvest, and *tubbia* means to harvest, and this one is also played on the frog. Always think that you are not alone, but that you are always two people (sings the little motive forte and then piano), even if you have the same color try changing the meaning of it. It is like you would say "Why?" in different tones of voice. (AB sings Brahms Eb sonata).

Can I give you some advice since you're young? When you're at home, without awkwardness, because we usually are shy, do this: get a newspaper and read something with different emphasis. And you'll begin to pay attention; ask yourself which one is your beautiful voice? If you talk to your wife, you do not realize it, but you look for another tone of voice. The same is with music, you need to talk to someone and try another voice. Read the sentence (at the newspaper) and think about what word you'll give emphasis to. This is what interpretation is about. Then, try your voice, the most beautiful, I can't help you, it needs to be yours. It is difficult, but you will begin to notice the huge difference between a point and a semicolon, between two points, between an accent that can be closed or may be open. You don't need to be an actor, but if you play at Section M, the male statement, very strong and accented, then right after you need to be the female and answer it more delicately, it has a different speech than the male. This is what you need to find on this piece.

LP: Otherwise...

AB: Otherwise, it is a series of simple songs that do not mean anything.

LP: You can find some recordings of *Naturale* on YouTube ...

AB: Everybody is on YouTube. I do not have YouTube, so I do not listen to anything (laughs).

LP: Have you ever recorded *Naturale*?

AB: I did record *Naturale*. There must be a recording somewhere, but my story is a little odd. I threw them all away. My personal story is very different. I have played it 200 times but I don't have recordings or programs or pictures, I have nothing. Freud could have given you an answer, I can give you one also but my life is not so

important. Important is what we do. What we do, either small or big, is history. Because we all take part in history but we don't notice it. We take part in history with our little contributions. I do not care if he composed it for me or not. He wrote a duet named "Aldo,"—do you know it? He transcribed the Brahms sonata to be played with orchestra for me. He was a great friend of mine. Anyway, it doesn't matter who Bennici is, what is important is the existence of one more piece for the viola. If you tell me that many people play this on YouTube, my job is finished. I contributed with my tiny grain of sand to the creation of new pieces for viola. And this, I believe, is our duty. Otherwise, if we don't think this way, we end up obscuring the beauty of what we do. Let's move on!

LP: Please do not forget to talk about the beginning.

AB: We will talk about the beginning afterwards.

LP: Here, at Section O, is the *Canto dei Pescatori di Corallo*. How do you play this left-hand pizzicato? Sometimes there is a slur, sometimes not.

AB: Just keep the bow on the string and pizzicato as you play. The important thing is that this should sound like shells.

See, here, we have again the mourning motive (before Section Q). Please remember to play it with suffering. The finger should not only move a quarter-tone, but it should have a meaning behind it. It should move like this (moving the finger slowly and sadly) like a sigh. You should feel it in your flesh, like it is your own pain.

LP: Like the air in the voice that fades away, right?

AB: If you are able to feel it not like a violist you will be in the right path. Forget about playing the viola, it is the only way to be able to play this. When you forget it,

then you'll sound great.

LP: Here at VOCE VII Celano sings a story that one is shot and dies.

AB: This is a Luciano Berio story, the real story is this: Celano speaks and says "How beautiful the *ocufocu*." *Ocufocu* are the fireworks. And, on this big frying pan, he has chickpeas, do you know what chickpeas are? In Sicily, they throw those in a pan and call it roasted curdled chickpeas. When you put them on the pan it explodes and make the sound pahhh. The same way chestnuts also explode. So, I could not convince Berio that the machine guns had nothing to do with the blows. But, consider that Berio always had in mind the student protests of 1968, those that had police intervention. Despite the fact that I told him it had nothing to do with the mafia. But, he wanted to insert that anyway so he put in those rounds of gunfire. It's quite a story; from machine-gun shots to chickpeas in a large frying pan is a long way. Besides, chickpeas on a pan do not kill anyone. So, where is the last one?

LP: The *Ninna Nanna di Carini*

AB: The *Ninna Nanna di Carini*, ah, it is all in harmonics.

LP: There are also church bells.

AB: Initially, there was only the viola, at the first edition. Then, as he went on he added other things. Play this section as soft as possible. Think that you are far away, as if you were whistling because you are leaving, closing the scene (very end of the piece). At this point, you've already gone through all the love and all the desperation among other things. In 25 minutes you have made love, you have found the woman of your life, you've found Jesus, and you found whatever you want to think of. Then, you find yourself ending up with a lullaby, which can have different meanings. In this

case, it may seem like a closure, but the lullaby always has a perspective of future. Think of it not as finishing the piece, but that the lullaby starts something else. Try to find your personal reading of it. For example, this is one of the tenderest things there may be (AB sings the *Ninna Nanna*). Always play the glissandi as you are dragging the notes. I do not know if you have children, if you have, you will know that there is a different way one caresses them. Not like this (strokes his fingers heavily on his arm) but it is like this (now he strokes his fingers on his arm very gently). In this feeling there is all: there is the hug, the wanting to feel each other. That's what this is. Excuse me, I seem to be rhetorical about this, but this is the beauty of this composition that is not a piece for viola. It is a piece for ... it is a minute (little, short) life, a fraction of life where there is dancing, there is love, there is death, and there is rebirth. All condensed in about 20 minutes.

These outbursts that Berio writes (tremolos Section P, i.e.), he used them previously in his *Sequenza VI*. These are moments in which, from a situation of confusion, come out in the end, purity, simplicity, life. It starts with violence and you find yourself in a situation you cannot find the way. Then, you realize that the way is the simplest one, where there are simple people, and there are not such important stories. After all, the important stories are not so important.

LP: Yes, I understand.

AB: (AB sings *Sciachittana*). That's what I was telling you—there is not a bar line.

Because you need to figure out which kind of tone and voice you will interpret.

Where will you put the emphasis? You can spend hours until you find your voice.

If you want to come back and play it for me, I will listen to it willingly. I will do it willingly because I had two wives and two great loves, which were (Bruno) Maderna and Berio. My two wives were great loves. But Maderna and Berio were ... they opened up other worlds to me. So if you want to come up with the viola, maybe give me a call and schedule a time because here is always chaotic (because of the Summer Festival). Nowadays, many people are writing about Berio, so there is also a girl from Paris who is doing a thesis on Berio. He loved these Sicilian songs, so much that the duet called Aldo is a Sicilian song. It goes like this (AB sings the song). They are four verses of extreme simplicity but Berio was madly in love with this song. He used to sing it all the time, in different versions. It was like a leading motto of our lives, Berio and mine. Berio was an intellectual but I'm not an intellectual, I am knowledgeable, but that is not the point. We have lived through a lot together. To other people Berio seemed to be a very tough man. Instead, I remember him as very caring, very protective, and in fact he wrote me something so I could pay off a house! One could only dream of that. So one day, I even managed to make him sing that song on television.⁹⁷ It was the motto of our friendship and it was present until the end of it. He died in Rome ten years ago and I was in the room when he died. I and the children and his wife sang this song to Berio. Anyway, I told a long story, and now you should come with the viola. I don't teach the viola, it is not my goal. But, I would like to teach you about love.

⁹⁷ The name of the song is "*E si fussi pisci*". The particular TV appearance Bennici mentions is the opening of "Episode VI: *Non tanto per cantare*" of an Italian TV series of the RAI channel called *C'è musica e musica* (1972). Berio was the host of this series. It is possible to watch this at the following YouTube link hosted by TheWelleszOpus, a project dedicated to the dissemination on Italian music of the twentieth century.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXhpfPjFDZo&list=PL78F9mz2KLNxewute6GrAPMhniGDYCCUe>

LP: Thank you!

Aldo Bennici steps out of the room for a few minutes.

LP: One last question. I would like to know how the experience was playing it with the ballet.

AB: We have played in many versions. With the dancers, it is more uncomfortable. I did it also alone.

LP: Do you approach it differently when you play with the dancers versus playing it solo?

AB: They are the ones that need to adapt.

Appendix B

Interview with Kim Kashkashian, email, November 04, 2012.

1) Can you give me a general impression of your experience working closely with Luciano Berio? Was he detailed or big picture oriented?

He did generally give the impression of a generous interpretation, but on occasion was quite specific about the kinds of sonorities he wished to hear.

2) How much freedom of interpretation did he give you according to what was specified in the score?

Voci and Naturale have built in freedoms, and Sequenza he also treated with the element of improvisation; for example, the tremolo can be transformed into arpeggiando.

3) In this matter, was his approach different for *Naturale* than for other works (*Voci*, *Sequenza*, *Chemins*)? More strict, less strict?

4) In your interview with Tina Kohn you mentioned that Bennici suggested playing with more gesture, and thinking more about theater when performing *Naturale*. Again, would that be a difference between *Voci* and *Naturale*?

Because, Naturale was conceived as a piece of dance theater with the viola role being prominent if not dominant.

5) *Voci* and *Naturale* share most of the same material. Some passages are exactly the same but in different context (orchestration), for example the opening cadenza in *Voci*. As an interpreter did you approach them differently?

Yes. The space, acoustic environment are so different that the material takes on another meaning...

6) It is noticeable that in your recording of *Naturale* the percussion part is much more interesting and elaborate than what is in the score. How did he feel about that? I personally find it would take away from the energy and intensity of the piece to play it without elaboration; did he discuss why he wrote such a spare part for the percussion?

Yes, as mentioned, the concept was theater, so a concert version requires elaboration as you bring the other sonic elements to the fore.

7) We notice also that on your recording there is at least one place where the voice

comes in a little earlier than indicated (VOCE II). Was that intentional or did it just happen that way? Did Berio have any thoughts about specific (or loose) timings of each entrance of the voice?

He believed in serendipity...

8) We found some inconsistencies in the printed viola part that lead one to think they might be misprints or typos. You corrected these: was that your choice or his suggestion?

Both! But he was not overly concerned with detail: much more with gesture, sonority and musical grammar.

9) We can track most of the motives used in *Naturale*. Do you have any insights into where the motive at letter 'I' comes from?

Do you mean the A la Marsalisa?

10) Did he show any special fondness for this particular piece, especially in terms of it being a powerful expression of his desire to connect folk music and 'art music'?

It was wonderful to work with him- he was entirely in the moment, and dedicated to the materialization of his imagination. I have no way of knowing this but I imagine that he was always in love with the music of the moment...so I do not think these pieces were an exception. As with Bartok, Hindemith, Brahms, the field of tension between folk and art, or country and city music, is at the root of the melodic and rhythmic grammar defining the unique voice.

Appendix C

Percussion set up

- Large tam-tam 60 inches
- Smaller wind gong, non pitched, 15 inches, small sizzler with small balls attached to it
- Marimba 4 1/3 octave
- Two conga drums
- Djembe: African hand drum (it has a deeper tone than the conga)
- 4 tuned Thai nipple gongs, pitches: G3, A3, D4, E4
- String of small bells (ankle bells)
- Large gong mallet, soft to medium hard marimba mallets, triangle beaters, and hands

Decisions were made following the concept of search for a rustic timber, not too academic. The reason for not using rotoroms as specified in the score is that it does not sound rustic (peasant-like) enough. The choice for using two congas and one djembe instead, seems to replicate better someone playing in the streets because of there are built with natural skin

Modifications in the Performance by Section

Intro.

Look for a cacophony sound, of the streets. Start with a large tam-tam hit, at the same time shaking the ankle bells and rolling on the wing gong with the sizzle, all of that until VOCE I. Stopping the bells at the end of viola “ostinato”.

Before A

Two triangle beaters on the edge of wind gong, without sizzlers. Playing in that way all through A Section.

Section B

Play with mallets on drums. Switch to hands before VOCE II, open tones, half notes on djembe (not muting).

Before D

Scrap in a circle on the large tam-tam, add the bells to create more ambiance.

Section E

Marimba played as in the score. For the tam-tam hits used large tam-tam with tam-tam mallet.

VOCE IV

Strike the Tam-tam and shake bells the same way as the beginning. Rototoms part played in congas with hands.

Section H

The triple meter dance (6/8) is played with triangle beaters on wind gong, accents as written.

Section J

Marimba played as in the score. Small notes played at pitch on the nipple gong, as written with grace notes.

Section K

Conga drums played with hands; do not use the grace notes until the *sfz*. Play grace notes with the djembe (slap-tone technique), and line up the last grace note with the viola chord.

On the djembe, interact with the viola rhythmically during the long pizzicato passage, playing with hands, and catching the *sfz* together.

SECTION L and M

Play in strict rhythm and with the same tempo as the viola. Change together the pattern in tempo.

The viola cuts the percussion off on the four string tremolo fortissimo before Section N as if arguing.

At the *col legno* the percussion interrupts the viola, playing with the drums pretty much as written.

SECTION N

Use small bells (ankle) shaking it randomly for color purposes.

SECTION O

Mark the beginning of phrases, and use the bells in tempo to accent phrases.

In the repeats, start shaking them softly as a background.

SECTION Q

Play the djembe with marimba mallet as written.

AFTER R tempo 60

Use the softest marimba mallets available.

At the last system, roll the tremolo sustaining with the viola (longer than what is actually written), breathe together with the violist before every half-phrase.

At the last note of the piece hit the Tam-tam near the end of the viola's last note. Wait for the Tam-tam note decay (it varies according to each room), then play marimba into nothing (*morendo*).

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