JEWISH CULTURE AND HEBREW LANGUAGE IN LUCIANO BERIO'S MUSIC: A SURVEY*

Alessandro Cecchi

Among the many dialogues to be found in Luciano Berio's music and writings, the dialogue with Jewish culture holds a prominent position; as yet, however, this has neither been addressed in a systematic way nor investigated in its multiple ramifications. Among the various factors that have contributed to the current situation we might mention the elaborate complexity of Berio's compositions and thought; the stratification and proliferation of references to authors and texts on which many of his works rely; and the intricacy of his compositional process, as reflected in the related documentation, which renders its reconstruction and interpretation a complex task. In the following pages I aim to contribute to filling this gap by highlighting the presence of Hebrew language and Jewish culture – including indirect references to the latter – in a select group of works by Berio. I shall focus on the moments of greater textual, semantic and expressive density in order to trace the composer's dialogue with certain facets of Jewish culture on the basis of the available scholarly literature and the results of my archival research.[1]

1. *Two lesser-known aspects of* Visage

Implicit or explicit, direct or indirect references to the Hebrew language and to Jewish culture in Berio's oeuvre can be found over quite an extended time span. Although there is no doubt that the dialogue becomes more intense and systematic from the second half of the 1970s through the 1980s and especially in the late phase of Berio's creative development, a reference to Jewish culture and music, albeit indirect and mediated, is already present in the early 1960s. Berio himself links this reference to his work *Visage* (1961), which marked Berio's departure from the RAI Studio di Fonologia in Milan. The work is based on a combination of electronic sounds and elaborations of Cathy Berberian's recorded voice on tape. Berio highlights «a long reference to a prayer sung by a Jewish actress from Jerusalem» at the end of *Visage*. He must have listened to the prayer (presumably live) and then managed to procure a recording of it.[2] It was a «Jewish prayer that actually became a piece of music».[3] Berio describes the actress in the following terms: «she sang and sang, then pushed her voice towards the highest register of her vocal range while lengthening the vowels. It was a very moving moment when she started singing!».[4] The allusion to singing in the work was part and parcel of a coherent set of musical elements: «to suggest a little better, albeit in a very simple way, the musical situation to which I wanted to refer, I created a kind

[1] My research into the Luciano Berio collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel (August 2018) was funded by the project *"Shem nelle tende di Yaphet". Ebrei ed ebraismo nei luoghi, nelle lingue e nelle culture degli altri*, coordinated by Fabrizio Franceschini at the University of Pisa.

[2] «Si tratta di un lungo riferimento a una preghiera intonata da un'attrice ebrea di Gerusalemme». *Quelques visages de "Visage" (Luciano Berio parle de l'oeuvre à Flo Menezes)*, in F. MENEZES, *Un essai sur la composition verbale électronique "Visage" de Luciano Berio*, Mucchi, Modena 1993, pp. 131-139, then in L. BERIO, *Interviste e colloqui*, ed. V. OTTOMANO, Einaudi, Torino 2017, pp. 281-287: 286. Unless otherwise indicated translations are mine.

[3] «È ciò che accade alla fine di *Visage*: un riferimento a questa preghiera ebraica che diventava a dire il vero un pezzo di musica». *Ibid*.

[4] «Per me è stata un'esperienza molto bella e di valore: lei cantava, cantava, poi spingeva la voce verso il registro più acuto della sua tessitura prolungando allora le vocali. È stato un momento veramente commovente quando ha incominciato a cantare!». *Ibid*.

of accompaniment to the voice with electronic sounds that resemble percussion instruments»;[5] from this it is possible to deduce that percussion instruments of some kind were involved in the performance. The precise circumstances of the latter are hard to pinpoint, just as it is difficult to identify the actress-singer involved.[6] What is evident, however, is that Berio and Berberian shared an interest in Jewish culture, music and vocality at the same time, which is confirmed by the presence in both the collections at the Paul Sacher Foundation of a record which proves to be contemporary with the composition of *Visage*.[7]

The Luciano Berio collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation also preserves some concert flyers relating to stage performances of *Visage*.[8] Some of these involved the performer and choreographer Ann Halprin, who also collaborated on other Berio projects.[9] Paolo Castaldi's presentation text in the flyer of one of these performances mentions a dance "solo" intended not as «the illustration of a possible choice of meanings and suggestions» but rather as «the superimposition of an autonomous sequence of movements that only at certain points seems to suggest a visual approximation to the vocal gestures of *Visage*».[10] On other occasions Berio involved the mime artists Giovanna Pellizzi and Romano Amidei, either together or singly.[11] In one of these presentation texts Berio himself describes *Visage* as «the soundtrack for a "drama" that has never been written and can possibly take shape only in the listener's mind. Its destination is therefore not the concert hall but – rather – every possible means conceived for the reproduction of the spoken word. Since it is not tied to specific stage solutions, it can however be presented as a piece of theatre».[12] Thus in *Visage* the reference to a certain kind of Jewish vocality converges with the interest in forms of gesture that imply a stage performance, implicit or explicit. This convergence might be considered fortuitous, but it will return in other works by Berio.

2. *A Yemenite song in* Per la dolce memoria di quel giorno

Berio's interest in Jewish culture, initially rather episodic, grew out of his first trip to Israel (1974). The meeting with Baruch Yeffet is one of the musical outcomes of this experience. His Yemenite-Jewish singing impressed Berio to the point of consistently weaving it into the music of *Per la dolce memoria di quel giorno*, the ballet with choreography by Maurice Béjart staged for the first time at the Boboli Garden in Florence on 9 July 1974 within the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, and revived in 1977 at the Teatro

---

[5] «E giustamente, per suggerire un po' meglio, anche se in modo molto semplice, la situazione musicale alla quale volevo fare riferimento, ho ideato una specie di accompagnamento della voce con suoni elettronici che rassomigliano a delle percussioni». *Ibid.*

[6] The recording mentioned by Berio has not yet been identified.

[7] I refer here to copies of the 45 rpm record *I canti della sinagoga* (RCA Italiana, ME 50-237), arranged and conducted by Ennio Morricone and sung by Alberto Pavoncello. The record dates back to 1960, the year of the composition of *Visage*. The A side includes "Vesciamerù" by Salvatore Saya and "Escteka" by Heinrich Schalit, while the B side includes "Iom ascisci" by Saya and the traditional song "Lo amut".

[8] I thank Angela Ida De Benedictis for mentioning and showing these documents to me during my research visit to the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel (August 2018).

[9] Performances in Rome (Accademia Filarmonica Romana, 2, 3 and 4 May 1963) and Zagreb (11 May 1963).

[10] «Il "solo" di danza che Ann Halprin ha composto per *Visage* non vuole essere l'illustrazione di una possibile scelta di significati e suggestioni ma, piuttosto, la sovrapposizione di una sequenza autonoma di movimenti che solo in certi punti sembra suggerire un'approssimazione visuale ai gesti vocali di *Visage*». P. Castaldi, text in the programme for the performances at the Accademia Filarmonica Romana (2, 3 and 4 May 1963).

[11] Performances in Rome (16 April 1964) and Basel (Musik-Akademie, 23 January 1965).

[12] «*Visage* […] è soprattutto un pezzo radiofonico; una colonna sonora per un "dramma" che non è mai stato scritto e che può prendere eventualmente forma solo nella mente di chi ascolta. La sua destinazione non è quindi la sala da concerto, ma – piuttosto – ogni possibile mezzo concepito per la riproduzione della parola detta. Non essendo legato a specifiche soluzioni sceniche, può essere tuttavia presentato come pezzo di teatro». L. Berio, text on *Visage* under the heading "Musiche registrate" in the programme of the fifth Settimana Internazionale di Nuova Musica, Palermo 1-6 September 1965.

alla Scala in Milan. Commissioned by RAI, the ballet originated from the profound artistic understanding between Berio and Béjart on the 600th anniversary of Petrarch's death. The work and its title are inspired by Petrarch's *Trionfi*, and the ballet is similarly divided into six parts connected by five piano interludes. The content of the six episodes, however, is entirely different from that of the six *Trionfi* by Petrarch. In Berio's words:

> the music of *Per la dolce memoria di quel giorno* […] is not intended to illustrate the musical sense of the crowded world of the six *Trionfi* (something, in any case, impossible and useless) but only its outline. Thus the original, complex meaning of the *Trionfi* is translated into something else: it is sometimes expanded, or simplified, or put between brackets and transformed; sometimes the discourse takes on an epic character, dwelling on a fixed image. Each of the six episodes is deeply different even if fragments and transformations of a *cantus firmus* derived from an isorhythmic motet of Guillaume de Machaut (a contemporary of Petrarch) are constantly exchanged from one episode to the next.[13]

Yeffet sings in the second episode, «Trionfo della Pudicizia» («Triumph of Chastity»), whose protagonist in the original work is Laura, Petrarch's beloved. At first the dancers use their voices and bodies to exchange some musical gifts as a form of communication. Then, this same musical discourse appears "ritualized in a duet where a male voice caresses and envelops an impassive female voice, celebrating the meeting of two completely different and irreconcilable traditional vocal techniques and modes of expression: the Middle Eastern ones of the man and the Far Eastern ones of the woman."[14]

In the performances in Florence and Milan I alluded to above, Yeffet's voice in the episode appeared together with that of the Japanese soprano Hiroko Saito. This reveals that Berio's strong interest in Yemenite chant did not concern only its intrinsic value, but at the same time created the possibility of intertwining a musical and cultural dialogue with a radically different form of vocality.

3. *Coro*

From the mid-1970s, Berio's dialogue with Jewish culture intensified thanks to the mediation of Talia Pecker, the Israeli musicologist who was Berio's life partner from 1975 until his death in 2003. Berio dedicated to her one of his key compositions, *Coro* (1974-1976), for forty voices and as many instruments. This was the first time that Berio had incorporated a quote from the Hebrew Bible, namely a passage from the first chapter of the *Song of Songs* (verses 15-17), which is recited in Episode 29 of this complex work in 31 episodes that alternate texts of oral traditions with verses taken from poems by Pablo Neruda. In *Coro* the Hebrew language comes into play to expand the already numerous references to different languages and cultures, assuming a concrete and at the same time a symbolic value. From *Visage*, with the allusion to the performance of a Jewish prayer through the "distillation" of vocal gestures not related to any language,[15] to *Coro*, with the fragment from the *Song of Songs*, we can identify a continuity of reflection linked to what might be defined as a universalising trait.

In *Coro* «there are no quotations or transformations of actual folk songs […], rather, many heterogeneous folk techniques and modes are displayed and sometimes combined, without any reference to

---

[13] L. BERIO, *Per la dolce memoria di quel giorno (author's note)*, Centro Studi Luciano Berio website (CSLB), http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1443?402205795=1, last accessed 9 June 2020.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] According to Berio's own words, «*Visage* can also be regarded as a transformation of real examples of vocal behaviour that go from unarticulated sound to syllable, from laughing to weeping and singing, from aphasia to types of inflections derived from specific languages: English and Italian as spoken on the radio, Hebrew, Neapolitan dialect, etc. Thus, *Visage* does not offer a meaningful text or a meaningful language: it only develops the resemblance of them». L. BERIO, *Visage (author's note)*, CSLB, http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1505?2019623839=1, last accessed 9 June 2020.

specific songs».[16] Here the folk songs are conceived as multifarious manifestations of human experience, ideally extended to all possible geographical and cultural expressions; this is the reason why Berio writes that *Coro* «is like the plan for an imaginary city, which is realized on different levels and generates, assembles and unifies different things and persons, revealing their individual and collective characters, their distance, their relationships and conflicts within real and virtual borders».[17] What here emerges is an idea of harmony intended as a «sound base that generates ever-different events […], musical images engraved like graffiti on the harmonic wall of the city».[18] In the *Interview with Rossana Dalmonte* (1981) Berio returns to the metaphor of the city by defining *Coro* «my Jerusalem: a city whose marvelously beautiful white stones have been used across the centuries for different things, but are reunited in new buildings, with new functions, under different religions and different administrations».[19] Jerusalem stands as a symbol of Berio's way of working. His first visit to Jerusalem in 1974, right at the beginning of the gestation of *Coro*, exerted a lasting impression on the composer. The subsequent deepening of the dialogue with Jewish culture in his later works is directly or indirectly influenced by it.

4. *Ofaním*

The long and complex gestation of *Ofaním* began well before 1988, the year of its first performance in a form very different from that which Berio had originally conceived. The compositional process is characterized by the proliferation of versions and marked by decisive stages in the years 1992 (revision of the instrumental, vocal and choral score, and dedication to the memory of Rivi Pecker), 1997 (new structure of the score) and 2000 (definition of the live electronics with Francesco Giomi of the Centro Tempo Reale in Florence, which supersedes the idea of a flexible sound spatialisation, to be adapted to the specific performance).[20] This work and the process of its definition have a fundamental importance both in Berio's dialogue with Jewish culture on the one hand, and, on the other, in his experimentation with live electronics.

Entirely based on texts in Hebrew drawn from the Old Testament (Talia Berio played a role in the selection of the texts and in the linguistic mediation),[21] *Ofaním* is a composition for two children's choirs, two instrumental groups, a female voice and live electronics. Berio made use of passages taken from two different chapters from the *Book of Ezekiel* and as many chapters from the *Song of Songs*. As Talia Pecker Berio has testified, *Ofaním* stems «from a "vision" Berio had on his visit to the Tower of David in Jerusalem in 1984. Voices of children uttering and singing verses from the Bible would rotate in a space that is both a place and a non-place: open and closed, historical and invented, authentic and false».[22] This connects to the idea of sound informing this work, which «develops different ways of rota-

---

[16] L. Berio, *Coro (author's note)*, CSLB, http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1434?1011856635=1, last accessed 9 June 2020.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] L. Berio, *Interview with Rossana Dalmonte*, in Id., *Two Interviews*, ed. D. Osmond-Smith, Marion Boyars, New York and London 1985, p. 66.

[20] For an attempt to reconstruct *Ofaním*'s complex genesis from the perspective of technology, see A. Cremaschi, *L'influenza del live electronics sul pensiero compositivo: "Guai ai gelidi mostri" di Luigi Nono e "Ofaním" di Luciano Berio*, Master Thesis, University of Pavia, 2002, pp. 97-156.

[21] See T. Pecker Berio, *«A lei la parola taciuta». Testo e subtesto di «Cronaca del Luogo»*, in G. Ferrari (ed.), *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio*, I-II, L'Harmattan, Paris 2016, II, pp. 241-268: 243.

[22] «[…] da una "visione" che Berio ebbe alla sua visita alla Torre di David a Gerusalemme nel 1984. Voci di bambini che pronunciano e cantano versi della bibbia avrebbero ruotato in uno spazio che è al tempo stesso un luogo e un non-luogo: aperto e chiuso, storico e inventato, autentico e falso». *Ibid.*, p. 242. See also T. Pecker Berio, *"Ofaním" di Luciano Berio. Commemorazione di Primo Levi (Torino, 9 aprile 1997)*, «La Stampa», 9 April 1997.

tion and movement in the acoustic space using new computer technologies».[23] The subsequent definition of the live electronics by Berio led from the idea of rotation to a complex and dynamic conception of the movement of sound in the performance space.[24]

As explained by Berio, the texts from the *Book of Ezekiel* (chapter 1) and from the *Song of Songs* (chapters 4 and 5) sung by the children's choirs have been chosen by reason of their contrast or conflict: «The dramatic and visionary fragments of Ezekiel, almost a poet, and the most idiosyncratic and apocalyptic among the Prophets, collide with the earthly and sensual fragments of the *Song of Songs*».[25] Yet it is not just a matter of opposition. Talia Pecker Berio has recalled that quite a few texts of Jewish mysticism «precisely link the figurative representation of the divinity in Ezekiel with the celebration of the human body in *Shir ha-shirim* (the Hebrew title of the *Song of Songs*, which in Orthodox exegesis is also an allegory of divinity)».[26] Jewish mysticism aside, this is precisely what Berio's work also accomplishes: not only «as a whole *Ofaním* is […] more than a simple alternation of "celestial" and "terrestrial" episodes», but musically the composition «manages to blend the apparent opposites without erasing the literal sense», thus offering «a creative reading of the scriptures on which they rely».[27] The idea of a rotation in space comes from the text: «Ezekiel's visions rotate (*ofaním* in Hebrew means both wheels and modes) in a fiery, threatening but also phantasmagorical sky, full of figures in perpetual transformation, colours and electricity (which still today, in modern Hebrew, is defined with the same word *hashmal*, used by Ezekiel)».[28]

Another text from the *Book of Ezekiel* (chapter 19) is sung by the female voice heard only at the end of the work, when the children's choirs are silent. In relation to this part (XII in the final version of *Ofaním*), Berio explains how the references have been made symbolic of general circumstances and historical recurrences, in line with the universalising trait already mentioned above. The idea of «a mother described as a tree that no longer bears fruit, a mother torn from her land and driven out into the desert»,[29] which is present in a fragment of the text, «loses its original allegorical function (the mother-tree is a metaphor for Israel itself) and instead materializes in the memory of all the mothers historically closest to us: those of the America of the *Trail of Tears*, of Hitler's Europe and of all those Exoduses and Holocausts that have put deep roots in our conscience and at times seem to persecute us even in today's world».[30] From a different perspective, Talia Berio has noted that the changed context transforms the overall meaning of Ezekiel's prophecy: «the God who put it in the mouth of the prophet is absent; the

[23] «Musicalmente, *Ofaním* sviluppa modi diversi di rotazione e di movimento nello spazio acustico valendosi delle nuove tecnologie informatiche dell'istituto fiorentino Tempo Reale». L. BERIO, *«… Da musicista laico…»*, in P. TROIA (ed.), *La Musica e la Bibbia*, Garamond, Roma 1992, pp. 285-286; then published as *Ofaním [«… Da musicista laico…»]*, in ID., *Scritti sulla musica*, ed. A.I. De Benedictis, Einaudi, Torino 2013, pp. 280-281: 281.

[24] See CREMASCHI, *L'influenza del live electronics sul pensiero compositivo*, pp. 122-123.

[25] «I frammenti drammatici e visionari di Ezechiele, il più poeta, il più personale e il più apocalittico dei Profeti, entrano in collisione con i frammenti terreni e sensuali del *Cantico*». BERIO, *Ofaním [«… Da musicista laico…»]*, p. 281.

[26] «[…] collegano proprio la rappresentazione figurativa della divinità in Ezechiele con la celebrazione del corpo umano in *Shir ha-shirim* (il nome ebraico del *Cantico*, che nell'esegesi ortodossa è anch'esso un'allegoria della divinità)». PECKER BERIO, *"Ofaním" di Luciano Berio*.

[27] «[…] la totalità di *Ofaním* è […] qualcosa di più di un semplice alternarsi di episodi "celesti" e "terrestri" […] riesce a fondere gli apparenti opposti senza cancellarne il senso letterale […] una lettura creativa delle scritture che le soggiacciono». *Ibid*.

[28] «Le visioni di Ezechiele ruotano (*ofaním* in ebraico significa sia ruote che modi) in un cielo infuocato, minaccioso ma anche fantasmagorico: pieno di figure in perpetua trasformazione, di colori e di elettricità (che ancor oggi, in ebraico moderno, viene definita con lo stesso vocabolo, *hashmal*, usato da Ezechiele)». BERIO, *Ofaním*, p. 281.

[29] «Oggetto di descrizione […] non è più il cielo ma una madre descritta come un albero che non dà più frutti, una madre strappata dalla sua terra e cacciata nel deserto». *Ibid*.

[30] «Isolato dal suo contesto, questo frammento perde la sua originaria funzione allegorica (la madre-albero è metafora della stessa Israele) e si concretizza invece nel ricordo di tutte le madri storicamente più vicine a noi:

woman who sings is an earthly body, her body the sounding board of her own song, which is the cry of all the mothers of the devastated lands».[31]

It is interesting to note that some elements of *Visage*, which marked the end of the first phase of Berio's research with electronics, return in this work, which represents the composer's return to research into technology with up-to-date means. I refer here to the conclusion, inspired by forms of Jewish vocality and singing, which in *Visage* is mediated by Berberian's recorded voice. The final section of *Ofaním* is built on the vocal and gestural characteristics of Esti Kenan Ofri, the Italian-Israeli singer, actress and dancer. Berio wanted her as singer and interpreter in the world premiere at the inauguration ceremony of the Museum of Contemporary Art of the Centro Luigi Pecci in Prato (25 June 1988), in the first performance of the revised version at the dedication ceremony of the Supreme Court of Jerusalem (11 November 1992), and in all of the subsequent performances that took place during Berio's lifetime. The gestures of the interpreter were a decisive point for Berio and an integral part of the performance of Kenan Ofri, who had been granted great freedom of expression.

5. *A Psalm in* Calmo

As far as Berio's use of texts related to Jewish culture is concerned, in the early years of the gestation of *Ofaním* he included one such text in his revision of *Calmo* (1974-1989), the piece written in memory of his close friend Bruno Maderna. While still under the direct impact of Maderna's death in December 1973, Berio had prepared a first version of *Calmo* for voice and twelve instruments, lasting for about three minutes. This version was performed for the first time by Slavka Taskova Paoletti under Berio's direction at the Piccola Scala in Milan on the occasion of the Italian premiere of Maderna's chamber opera *Satyricon* (25 March 1974). In 1989 Berio expanded the piece to reach the definitive version for mezzo-soprano and twenty-two instruments, now around twenty minutes long, which includes a wider selection of texts. The same singer was called upon to perform the premiere of the new version of *Calmo* with the Intercontemporain Ensemble conducted by Pierre Boulez in Paris (16 October 1990). Only in the revised version does the composition begin with the following verses in Italian: «Svegliati mio cuore / svegliati anima mia / svegliati arpa e cetra / voglio svegliare l'aurora»[32] («*Awake, my heart* / Awake, my soul* / awake, *harp and lyre* / I will awake the dawn»),[33] which can be traced back to verse 9 of Psalm 57 in the Hebrew Bible.[34] It is significant that the composition was restructured with the addition of the biblical text in 1989, while Berio was working on *Ofaním* after its first performance. In *Calmo*, however, the composer's attention is not directed primarily to the origin of the texts themselves, but rather to his long and deep friendship with the dedicatee. As Berio's note to the revised version of *Calmo* underlines, some verses, such as those of the anonymous Greek author (the translation is by Salvatore Quasimodo) and the Persian poet Saadi, derive from compositions of Maderna. Berio thus extended the dedication,

---

quelle dell'America del *Trail of Tears*, dell'Europa di Hitler e di tutti quegli Esodi e quegli Olocausti che hanno messo profonde radici nella nostra coscienza e sembrano a tratti perseguitarci anche nel mondo di oggi». *Ibid*.

[31] «[…] il Dio che la mette in bocca al profeta è assente; la donna che canta è un corpo terrestre, cassa di risonanza del proprio canto che è il grido di tutte le madri delle terre devastate». PECKER BERIO, *"Ofaním" di Luciano Berio*.

[32] L. BERIO, *Calmo*, score, Universal Edition, Vienna 1989.

[33] I have adapted the English translation found in https://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt2657.htm, last accessed 9 June 2020, to the Italian text (changes are shown in italics).

[34] The first, third and fourth lines of the text appearing in the score derive from: *La Sacra Bibbia*, ed. Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, Edizioni Pastorali Italiane, Roma 1974. In this edition the Psalm appears as number 56 (verse 9). In the 2008 edition it is Psalm 57, according to the numbering of the Hebrew Bible. The second line of the text in the score, a different translation of the first line recovering the term "cuore" (heart, verse 8 of the Psalm) has been interpolated by Berio. In *Calmo*'s score these lines are wrongly ascribed to the *Song of Songs*.

already implicit in the quotation from Homer in the original version («… come un cantore che sa usare la cetra e tende calmo le corde …»),[35] to the choice of the new texts.

6. *Paul Celan's voice in* Hör, Shofar *and* Outis

A case that highlights the complexity and stratification of Berio's dialogue with Jewish culture is the composition incorporating Paul Celan's poem *Die Posaunenstelle*,[36] which between 1995 and 1996 assumed three different forms, with different titles and performance contexts. The first, entitled *Hör* (1995), was composed for a commission from the Internationale Bachakademie for the Europäisches Musikfest Stuttgart. The title, the first word of the last couplet of Celan's poem, was replaced by the indication *Prolog* on the occasion of the performance of the *Requiem der Versöhnung* (*Requiem of Reconciliation*), a Mass in memory of the victims of World War II, a collective work with the contribution of many major contemporary composers. The performance of *Hör* in this form was permitted by Berio for only this one occasion, with the stipulation that the piece remain "outside" the mass itself so as to avoid any admixture with a specific liturgy. Indeed, Berio wanted the piece to preserve the universal character that had inspired him. In this form the work was performed in Stuttgart on 16 August 1995 in the Beethovensaal of the Liederhalle by the Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart, the Krakauer Kammerchor and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Helmuth Rilling, the creator of the project. The recording by the Süddeutscher Rundfunk of the performance was released on CD.[37] In the same year Berio published the piece as an autonomous work entitled *Shofar*, thus offering an explicit reference to the traditional instrument of the Jewish liturgy. The piece was finally incorporated into Cycle III of *Outis* (1996), a "musical action" in two parts and consisting in five cycles based on a text prepared by Berio himself with Dario Del Corno, which was staged for the first time at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan on 5 October 1996 under the direction of Graham Vick. This same staging, albeit with some changes and after a thorough revision of the live electronics by Berio, was presented again at the Teatro alla Scala in September 1999. In November of the same year, a different staging of *Outis* directed by Yannis Kokkos took place at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris.

The definitive text of *Outis* is made up of quotations from poetic and literary works in different languages. Initially Berio had selected texts in many more European languages, which he then reduced to Italian, German, English, Latin and Griko (the Greek dialect spoken in Salento, Italy), with rare terms in ancient Greek. The quotations, many of which were reworked by Berio and Del Corno, appear in the original or in Italian translation; sometimes the same verse or part of it appears both in the original language and in the Italian translation.[38]

The text of *Outis* includes fragments from several different poems by Celan, yet in the dramaturgy of the musical action *Die Posaunenstelle* marks a specific turning point, a fact underlined by the explicit reference, on stage, to a situation of persecution and deportation at the end of Cycle III. To fully understand the passage it is relevant to refer to the role that Berio attributed in *Outis* to the narrative functions freely derived from Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, which are used in the structure of the musical action. In the text presenting the work in the concert booklet, entitled not by chance *Morfologia di un viaggio* ("Morphology of a Journey"), Berio makes the reference explicit by listing the functions appearing in the five cycles of *Outis*: «There is an initial situation (a) that proposes

---

[35] *Odyssey* XXI 406-407. «… as a cantor well-skilled in the lyre calmly stretches the strings …».

[36] Published in P. Celan, *Zeitgehöft. Späte Gedichte aus dem Nachlaß*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1976.

[37] *Requiem der Versöhnung*, Hänssler Classic, CD 98.931 (2 CD), Germany 1995.

[38] For further information about the text of *Outis* see A. Oviedo, *"Outis": Introduction critique et documentaire*, in Ferrari (ed.), *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio*, II, pp. 161-180; J. Cross, *How Do You Make an Opera Without a Narrative? Journeying with Ulysses and Outis*, *ibid.*, pp. 201-221; D. Colas, *Á propos des structures temporelles dans "Outis"*, *ibid.*, pp. 223-239; A. Cecchi, *Riflessi di Ulisse al crepuscolo del secondo millennio: Luciano Berio*, Outis *e l'epica moderna*, in F. De Cristofaro (ed.), *L'epica dopo il moderno (1945-2015)*, Pacini, Pisa 2017, pp. 195-220.

the killing of Outis. There is a danger (b) – or a conflict or persecution – that are explicitly represented or evoked. There is the overcoming or removing of the conflict (c). There is a virtual return (d) and there is the journey (e)».[39] In Berio's scheme of functions, Cycle III differs in two main respects from the others: it is the only one that lacks two functions (d, e), and the only one in which the sequence of functions is partially reversed (a, b, c, b). This means that in Cycle III, placed not by chance near the caesura between the first and second parts of the work, the same cyclical principle found at the base of *Outis* is in a certain sense placed in jeopardy. As Berio himself puts it, here «persecution has the upper hand, paralyses the scene, and the sequence of situations stops».[40]

The exception represented by Cycle III is connected to the *shoah* on two levels: the evocation of the circumstances of deportation on stage, and the text by Celan sung by the choir of deportees. Such circumstances are anticipated by a series of quotations from a number of Celan's poems, all dense with references to the extermination of the Jews, which accompany the entry of the choir on stage and their approach to the proscenium.[41] It is indicative that the title "SHOFAR" appears in the score, coinciding with the entries of the trombones, starting from their first, unexpected outburst. Among the preparatory materials for *Outis* preserved in the Berio collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel there are notes and musical sketches related to the sound of the *shofar*: a very long, held note, the attack of which is characterized by an ascending semitone glissando and whose continuation requires a sound oscillation in both dynamic and rhythmic terms when the choir sings the word «Hör».[42]

The universalising trait plays an important role in this case too. Not only does the sound of the *shofar*, as re-invented by Berio, go beyond the sound of the natural horn used in the Jewish liturgy, but this reference is mediated in turn by Celan, whose poems offer a penetrating interrogation of the *shoah* and its consequences. In *Outis*, the *shoah* is not only an unrepeatable historical event linked to the circumstances of the Nazi regime's anti-Semitic persecution which resulted in the "final solution", but also the symbol of a repeatable, indeed tragically repeated condition of humankind, often called upon to confront the reality of genocide throughout history. This reading by Berio is underlined by the link between the deportation in Cycle III and the reference in Cycle IV to a genocide that was only too recent at the time of the first performance at the Teatro alla Scala: the Srebrenica massacre (July 1995), in which more than eight thousand Bosnian Muslims were killed. The unpublished text by Carlo Bernardini *Maledizione del generale Mladić*, preserved in the Berio collection at the Paul Sacher Foundation and used by the composer in Cycle IV of *Outis*, explicitly mentions the Serbian-Bosnian troop general responsible for the massacre, Ratko Mladić. Parts of Bernardini's text are read by recorded voices of men, women and children spread across the stage by loudspeakers; they represent the voices of the victims who accuse the general of the violence inflicted upon them.[43]

---

[39] «C'è una situazione iniziale (a) che propone l'uccisione di Outis. C'è un pericolo (b) – oppure un conflitto o una persecuzione – che vengono esplicitamente rappresentati oppure evocati. C'è il superamento o la rimozione del conflitto (c). C'è un virtuale ritorno (d) e c'è il viaggio (e)». See L. BERIO, *Morfologia di un viaggio*, in Id., *Outis*, programma di sala, Edizioni del Teatro della Scala, Milano 1996, pp. 37-38, now in ID., *Scritti sulla musica*, pp. 301-303: 302.

[40] «Nei Cicli IV e V il paradigma narrativo è lievemente modificato la persecuzione ha il sopravvento, ma è solo nel III Ciclo […] che esso viene sconvolto: la persecuzione ha il sopravvento, paralizza la scena, e la sequenza delle situazioni si arresta». *Ibid.*

[41] Celan's lines sung in *Outis*'s Cycle III before the entrance of the choir with *Die Posaunenstelle* are organized into five groups corresponding to the character who sings: 1) Outis (quotations from two poems): *…Rauscht der Brunnen* and *Eine Gauner- und Ganovenweise gesungen zu Paris emprès Pontoise von Paul Celan aus Czernowitz bei Sadagora*; 2) Vocalisti (quotations from two poems): *Psalm* and *Lichtenbergs Zwölf mit dem Tischtuch*; 3) Outis: *Zähle die Mandeln* (partly in Italian translation); 4) Steve (quotations from three poems): *…Rauscht der Brunnen*, *Engführung* and *Psalm*; 5) Outis: *Chymisch*.

[42] L. BERIO, *Outis*, azione musicale in due parti, testo di Dario Del Corno e Luciano Berio, score, Ricordi, Milano 1996, p. 184.

[43] See CECCHI, *Riflessi di Ulisse al crepuscolo del secondo millennio*, pp. 212-213.

In *Outis* the live electronics play an important role, although they involve neither the choir nor the voices of the singers. Not even the sound of the *shofar* (the trombones at the end of Cycle III) is affected by this technology. However, *Outis* represents Berio's return to experimentation with new technologies for the first time since *Ofaním*, and it is also the first time he uses them in a major work for the stage. The live electronics of *Outis* would not reach their final form until 1999, the year of the revival of the work in Milan and Paris.

7. *From* Sequenza X *to* Kol od

A different form of reference to Jewish music and culture, concealed in the innermost folds of Berio's creativity, concerns a case of instrumental music. *Sequenza X* for trumpet and piano resonances (1984) contains an allusion that was destined to remain hidden. It is a small group of notes: an ascending diatonic scale, the first note of which, d, is also the note on which the piece begins and ends. The premises and implications of *Sequenza X* are completely independent of this allusion. The trumpet *Sequenza* differs from Berio's *Sequenzas* for other instruments for two apparently antithetical reasons: on the one hand, as the composer himself underlines, *Sequenza X* avoids «the overcoming of instrumental (or vocal) idiomatic performing aspects» – in fact «there are no timbral transformations nor cosmetics: the trumpet is used in a "natural" and direct way», and in its «nakedness».[44] On the other hand, this is the only *Sequenza* that contemplates such a complex interaction with the sound of another instrument, thus involving a different kind of musical research.[45] To make perceptible to the audience of a concert hall the resonances of the piano strings that are selectively activated by a pianist called to press the keys without playing them, Berio prescribes in the score: «The piano should be slightly amplified. The microphone should be placed *under* the piano and the loudspeaker must *not* be visible».[46] The interaction with the piano implies also an aspect which Thomas Gartmann has defined as «gestural-theatrical»[47] and which is specified in the score: «The trumpet player will stand near the piano (a perfectly tuned grand piano with the lid fully open), playing toward the inside of the piano only when indicated (↓)».[48] This element is strictly functional to the sound result, and yet offers in itself a kind of stage arrangement, albeit minimal, which is always implicit in instrumental music.

To return to the allusion mentioned above, this was revealed by Berio years later on the occasion of the composition of *Kol od (Chemins VI)* for trumpet and chamber orchestra (1996), which is based on *Sequenza X*. In his note to this work Berio writes: «Hidden in some moments of *Sequenza X* for solo trumpet is the beginning of the Israeli national anthem».[49] The allusion thus points to the first notes of *Hatikvah*, which in turn takes up a melody widespread throughout the Mediterranean area, whose origins reach certainly well beyond the *Mantovana*, also known as the *Ballo di Mantova*, a sixteenth-century *canzone* circulated in Europe by mercenary troops from the Balkan regions and made famous in the second half of the nineteenth century by its use in the symphonic poem *Má Vlast* by Bedřich Smetana.

[44] L. Berio, *Sequenza X (author's note)*, CSLB, http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1518?1529286814=1, last accessed 9 June 2020.

[45] *Sequenza VII* for oboe (1969) is the only other work of the series which includes the presence of the sound of a second instrument: a continuous note described by the composer as «an ever-present "tonic": a B natural that can be played *pianissimo* by any other instrument, behind the stage or in the audience». L. Berio, *Sequenza VII (author's note)*, CSLB, http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1476?1634385075=1, last accessed 9 June 2020.

[46] L. Berio, *Sequenza X*, score, Universal Edition, Vienna 1984.

[47] «gestuale-teatrale»: T. Gartmann, *Sequenza X per tromba e risonanze di pianoforte*, in E. Restagno (ed.), *Berio*, EdT, Torino 1995, pp. 177-178: 178. .

[48] Berio, *Sequenza X*, score.

[49] «Nascosto in alcuni momenti della *Sequenza X* per tromba sola c'è l'inizio dell'inno nazionale israeliano». L. Berio, *Kol od (nota dell'autore)*, CSLB, http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1384?391921625=1, last accessed 9 June 2020.

In retrospect, the allusion revealed by Berio gives *Sequenza X* an unexpected semantic dimension which increases its exceptional status compared to the other compositions of the same series. The allusion is subtle, but it is interesting that in the year of *Outis* its meaning even explains the title attributed to the new composition: «kol ´od» ("as long as"), in fact, is the Latin transliteration of the first two words of the Israeli anthem. However, it also implies the different meaning of the sound *kol* in Hebrew (generally transcribed as *qol*), "voice", so that *Kol od* also stands for «´od qol», "yet another voice".[50]

The second part of the title – *(Chemins VI)* – highlights that *Kol od* belongs to the series of *Chemins*, in which Berio placed some of his *Sequenzas* in dialogue with different kinds of instrumental ensembles. While in *Sequenza X* the trumpet solicits the resonances of the piano «coordinated by a pianist who presses the keys without playing them», in *Kol od* it is the chamber orchestra which replaces the piano that «develops and interprets those same harmonic events in an autonomous and rather complex way».[51] Thus, the new composition offers a «de-contextualisation of the solo part» together with a «re-reading of the resonances»[52] of the original version, in order to «split and transform the meaning of *Sequenza X*, by bringing out and adding voices to some of its hidden possibilities».[53]

A further step in the history of *Sequenza X* highlights the relevance of this work to Berio's research into sound. In 1998, while at work on *Cronaca del Luogo* (1999), Berio made an attempt to set up a new version of the *Sequenza* for trumpet and live electronics, to be titled *Sequenza Xb*. After a series of work sessions at Tempo Reale, the research centre he had founded in 1987 in Florence, however, Berio was dissatisfied with the result and abandoned the project.[54]

The convergence, in and around *Sequenza X*, between the hidden allusion to *Hatikvah*, made explicit by Berio in the note to *Kol od*, and the unrealised project of *Sequenza Xb* for trumpet and live electronics suggests to me the hypothesis of a connection between a type of sound research oriented to the concept of live electronics – which, in my opinion, can be stretched to include the slight amplification required for *Sequenza X* – and Berio's musical dialogue with Jewish culture. These developments occur during the most intense and creative phase of the composer's research in both directions, and it is not difficult to find elements of continuity with works in which the spatialisation of sound through live electronics is undoubtedly linked to a patent, even structural reference to Jewish culture and to the Hebrew language, as in *Ofaním*. In view of other elements found in the works of Berio considered so far, the hypothesis that takes shape is one of an almost systematic convergence of aspects that tend to appear, in different combinations and proportions, in the presence of any form of dialogue between Berio's music and Jewish culture: first, the idea of an unobtrusive expansion of sound and sound space – not necessarily through live electronics proper – in order to obtain a shadow sound, often with the help of hidden amplification; second, the expansion of the functional gestures of the interpreters, aimed at specific sound results, into incipient theatrical gestures. To these is added a third, more pervasive aspect that I

---

[50] Talia Pecker Berio, personal communication, August 2018.

[51] «L'esecuzione in concerto della *Sequenza X* viene accompagnata dalle risonanze di un pianoforte sulla scena, coordinate da un pianista che preme, senza suonarli, i tasti di diversi accordi. […] L'orchestra di *Kol od* […] sviluppa e interpreta in maniera autonoma e piuttosto complessa quelle stesse vicende armoniche». Berio, *Kol od (nota dell'autore)*.

[52] «*Kol od* non è dunque una trascrizione della *Sequenza X* […] ma, piuttosto, una decontestualizzazione della parte solistica e una rilettura delle risonanze che l'accompagnano». *Ibid*.

[53] «L'intervento orchestrale tende dunque a sdoppiare e trasformare il senso della *Sequenza X*, liberando e aggiungendo voci ad alcune delle sue virtualità nascoste». *Ibid*.

[54] As evidence of the seriousness of Berio's intentions, the first performance of *Sequenza Xb* (with the composition date 1984/1998) was announced in the printed programme of a concert within the 35th Festival di Nuova Consonanza to be held at the Acquario Romano on 2 December 1998. On that occasion, in place of the aborted new version, *Sequenza X* was performed in its original form by Gabriele Cassone, the trumpet player who from then on became Berio's first choice for this piece and who had been involved in the study sessions for the new version with live electronics. I thank Francesco Giomi for the information (personal communications, December 2018 and March 2019) and Giulia Sarno for providing me with a scan of the programme conserved in the Archive of the Centro Tempo Reale in Florence.

have defined as the universalising trait: Berio's interest in Jewish culture is neither limited to a national issue (the Israeli anthem as such), nor to the extremely painful events generally considered as one of the defining events of Jewish history (the *shoah*); rather, Berio reads the linguistic, national, musical, ethnic and historical specificity of Jewish culture always in a broader perspective – all linguistic inflections (*Visage*), all languages (*Coro*), all expressions of folk music (*Coro*), all the history of *Hatikvah*'s melody (*Kol od*), all the genocides – ancient and recent – of the history of humankind (*Outis*).

8. *The weave, and the thread that unravels:* Cronaca del Luogo *and* Altra voce

Jewish history and culture – though not necessarily Hebrew as a language – pervade the text of *Cronaca del Luogo* (1999). In this case it is Talia Pecker Berio, the author of the text, who weaves a dense network of references to different threads of Jewish tradition, while at the same time engaging into a dialogue with Paul Celan, a constant presence in the late phase of Berio's creativity. The indications received from the composer gave the author full freedom in the preparation of the text and dramaturgy: «I was asked for a story linked to the category of the "sacred", a space animated with purely musical means of which the text – highly gestural – would have been at the same time trigger and mirror».[55] During the work, the reference to Judaism became structural both in different aspects of the dramaturgy (devoid of linearity, as in the case of Berio's other musical actions) and in general in the text, which is amplified by margin glosses, intended for reading only, full of quotes and comments that make explicit and highlight the multiplicity of references in the text itself.

A direct link connects this work to *Ofaním*. Among the sketches and drafts for *Cronaca del Luogo* preserved at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, there is clear evidence of a drawing from an autograph page of *Ofaním*: an aggregate of pitches is placed by Berio within a coloured circle and destined for R – the provisional title of *Cronaca del Luogo*. R is the name of the female protagonist. Her characterisation recalls – partly by analogy, partly by opposition – the mother of the text from the *Book of Ezekiel* sung by the female voice in the last section of *Ofaním*. As Talia Pecker Berio puts it, in this character «several women converge, united by an aura of mystery and unruliness».[56] The letter *R* refers in part to the initial of Rahab, the prostitute living in Jericho whose life Joshua spares, «a woman with ambiguous roots», who at the same time is «from Jericho but betrays her people; she lives in the wall and keeps its secrets […]. She does not belong to the Jewish people but embraces their faith».[57] According to the author of the text, from a dramaturgical perspective, in *Cronaca del Luogo* it is «in the mind of R that the action is conceived and generated; it is she who leads us to places of memory».[58] R is joined by a second central character, Orvid, a young man (sung by a female voice) whose name «alludes to Orpheus and King David», and who turns out to be the «poetic alter ego of R».[59]

After its long gestation, *Cronaca del Luogo* took the form of a *Prologo* followed by five different situations, in this order: I. *L'Assedio* (The Siege); II. *Il Campo* (The Field); III. *La Torre* (The Tower); IV. *La Casa* (The House); V. *La Piazza* (The Square). These are abstract places, although they can also be connected to symbolic places in the Bible. The multiplicity of voices that refer to Jewish culture in gene-

---

[55] «[…] mi si chiedeva un soggetto affine alla categoria del "sacro", uno spazio animato con mezzi puramente musicali di cui il testo – altamente gestuale – sarebbe stato al tempo stesso motore e specchio» PECKER BERIO, *«A lei la parola taciuta»*, p. 243.

[56] «In R convivono dunque più donne che sono accomunate da un'aura di mistero e di sregolatezza» *Ibid.*, p. 247.

[57] «Rachab è una donna dalle radici ambigue. È di Gerico ma tradisce il suo popolo; vive nel muro e custodisce i suoi segreti […]. Non appartiene al popolo ebraico ma ne abbraccia la fede» *Ibid.*, p. 246.

[58] «[…] nella mente di R che l'azione è concepita e si genera; è lei a condurci nei luoghi della memoria» T. PECKER BERIO, *Premessa*, in L. BERIO, *Cronaca del Luogo. Testo di Talia Pecker Berio*, Casa Ricordi, Milano 1999 (collana libretti 138468), pp. 7-10: 8.

[59] «Il suo nome allude a Orfeo e al Re David. […] Orvid si rivela essere l'alter ego poetico di R»: PECKER BERIO, *«A lei la parola taciuta»*, p. 252.

ral is suggested by the number of references mentioned in the text and commented on by its author.[60] In the *Prologo* the reference is to *Pessach Haggadah*, but also to *Deuteronomy* and to the Gospel of Saint Matthew (the genealogy from David to Jesus); in *L'Assedio* to the *Book of Joshua*, to *Genesis* and to the comments on these in Jewish midrashic literature, in addition to *Deuteronomy*; in *Il Campo* the main reference is to the end of Saul's reign (*Book of Samuel* and *Book of Kings*), but the *Zohar* and *Mishnah* are also present. In *La Torre* the character Nino appears, «a "mad" derivative of King Nimrod, descendant of Noah, valiant hunter and great conqueror who, according to a rich post-biblical tradition, was responsible for the construction of the Tower of Babel».[61] Here the references become very dense and concern various episodes of *Genesis*, the *Book of Judges*, the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, while most of the text's allusions are to Jewish midrashic writings, to which a number of references to Hellenistic Judaism are added.

The cultural references change in the last two episodes: in *La Casa* there are no direct citations, but among its sources there is a text written by Israeli poet Dahlia Ravikovitch during the 1982 Lebanon War.[62] In *La Piazza*, which evokes the dismantling of a ghetto and the deportation of its inhabitants, references appear to the literature of the *shoah*, particularly to tales by Ida Fink and poems by Itzhak Katzenelson[63] (references to the *Book of Isaiah* and to the *Book of Kings* are also present). In addition to Paul Celan, the poetic voice of Marina Tsvetaeva appears in almost every episode of *Cronaca del Luogo*. The text also refers to Empedocles (Episode I), Ovid (Episode III), Dante's *Inferno* and *Paradiso* (*Prologo* and Episodes I and II), William Faulkner (*Light in August* in the *Prologo*), Jorge Luis Borges (*La Biblioteca de Babel* in Episode III) and T.S. Eliot (*The Waste Land* in Episodes III and IV).

The Jewish tradition is evoked by the very title *Cronaca del Luogo* (Chronicle of the Place). Talia Pecker Berio points out that in the first term resound both the titles of the two *Books of Chronicles* (*Divrei ha-yamim*, that is, the facts or things or the words of the days) and the Hebrew title of *Deuteronomy* (*Devarim*, that is, things that happened, things said and heard, therefore remembered). On the other hand, in the Jewish tradition the Place (*ha-Maqom*) is one of the many ways of referring to God.[64] In the light of all this, the author explains that «The dialogue with God and the search for a universal and unnameable truth in Judaism translates into a daily life made of concrete acts and constant learning, and the holy scriptures are the inexhaustible source from which these acts draw and acquire meaning».[65] Therefore, *Cronaca del Luogo* is not a simple «chronicle of events and places in Jewish history, but rather a visitation of places and mental situations that are inspired by biblical and non-biblical Jewish scenes».[66]

The musical idea of the composition stems from the spatial arrangement of sound and is linked to a specific architectural space: the Felsenreitschule in Salzburg (the composition was in fact commissioned by the Salzburger Festspiele, the festival organized every summer in the Austrian city). As Berio himself explains, this peculiar architectonic space had always exercised on him a certain appeal, also for its history. Essentially, it is a space «consisting of a wall full of "rooms" and a square».[67] Its history is summarized by Berio as follows: «The wall was dug out of the rock in 1693 to allow Salzburgers to watch horse riding exhibitions in the space below. In the 1920s stage director Max Reinhardt transformed that space

---

[60] See *ibid.*, pp. 253-257.

[61] «[…] un derivato "impazzito" del re Nimrod, discendente di Noah, cacciatore valoroso e grande conquistatore che, secondo una ricca tradizione post-biblica, fu responsabile della costruzione della torre di Babele». *Ibid.*, p. 253.

[62] See *ibid.*, p. 256.

[63] See *ibid.*, pp. 256-257.

[64] See PECKER BERIO, *Premessa*, pp. 7-8.

[65] «Il dialogo con Dio, la ricerca di una verità universale e innominabile, si traducono nell'ebraismo in una quotidianità fatta di atti concreti e di un costante apprendimento, e le sacre scritture costituiscono l'inesauribile fonte dalla quale questi atti attingono e acquistano senso» *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[66] «[…] cronaca di eventi e di luoghi della storia ebraica, ma piuttosto una visitazione di luoghi e situazioni mentali che prendono spunto da scene ebraiche, bibliche e no» *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[67] «La Felsenreitschule è uno spazio che mi ha sempre affascinato. È costituito da un muro pieno di "stanze" e da una piazza». L. BERIO, *Cronaca del Luogo*, in ID., *Scritti sulla musica*, pp. 304-307: 305.

into a theatre and in 1948 Karajan opened it to opera».[68] In analogy with this space, musically Berio has set up «a real harmonic wall […] on which different figures are inscribed (a bit like graffiti, perhaps) from which musical processes of a different, conflictual and often contradictory character are extracted, inferred and developed».[69] Here the metaphor of graffiti on the wall of a city used by Berio years before for *Coro* returns. But now the construction of the wall makes use of live electronics. The contribution of computer technologies was necessitated primarily by the conditions set by Berio for the performance in the space of the Felsenreitschule: «an invisible choir and orchestra placed vertically on the wall, and an orchestra conductor, also invisible», with «fifty instrumentalists […] often with solo roles» and a choir which «often shatters into solo textures and articulations».[70] The live electronics of this work are therefore structural and represent the most advanced frontier of Berio's research, especially the construction of the split character of Nino, whose voice had to be processed differently depending on his position on the stage (the singer wore a jacket equipped with sensors), with various problems remaining unsolved at the time of the first performance in Salzburg (24 July 1999).[71]

The composition of *Altra voce* (1999), for alto flute, mezzo-soprano and live electronics, belongs to the same creative context and is a derivation of one of the many threads of *Cronaca del Luogo*, in particular from the «virtual love duet» from Episode II, *Il Campo*, in which «Two voices and a few instruments "love" and follow each other in a constantly renewed relationship».[72] This is the moment when Orvid appears next to R «in a duet (indeed a trio with the alto flautist on stage) which hints at an amorous intercourse that comes to nothing».[73] *Altra voce* – the title could be considered as a translation of one of the possible senses of *Kol od* («ʾod qol», "yet another voice") – derives from a fragment of *Cronaca del Luogo* involving a voice and an instrument: the composer claims he has «developed its autonomy and harmonic preconditions, also, but not only, by means of computational technologies».[74] Also in this case the derivation from a project related to Jewish culture converges with an intense use of live electronics, here completely evident and indeed structural, which was perfected in the early months of 2001.[75]

[68] «Il muro fu scavato nella roccia nel 1693 per permettere ai salisburghesi di assistere, dall'alto, alle esibizioni di cavalli e cavalieri nello spazio sottostante. Negli anni Venti il regista Max Reinhardt trasformò quello spazio in un teatro di prosa e nel 1948 Karajan lo aprì all'opera» *Ibid*.

[69] «Posso solo dire che ho costruito un vero e proprio muro armonico […] sul quale vengono inscritte (un po' come graffiti, forse) figure diverse e dal quale vengono estratti, dedotti e sviluppati processi musicali di carattere diverso, conflittuale e spesso contraddittorio» *Ibid*., p. 306.

[70] «Ci sono dunque un coro e un'orchestra invisibili, collocati verticalmente del muro, e un direttore d'orchestra anch'esso invisibile. Ma forse non è esatto parlare di orchestra. Si tratta piuttosto di un gruppo di cinquanta strumentisti che avranno spesso ruoli solistici […]. La stessa cosa accade per il coro che spesso si frantuma in tessuti e articolazioni solistiche» *Ibid*., p. 305.

[71] See F. Giomi, *«Di voce e di vento»: il live electronics nel teatro musicale di Luciano Berio*, in Ferrari (ed.), *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio*, II, pp. 269-304.

[72] «In un episodio […] della mia azione musicale *Cronaca del Luogo*, c'è un duetto d'amore virtuale. Due voice e alcuni strumenti si "amano" e si seguono l'un l'altro in un rapporto costantemente rinnovato». L. Berio, *Altra voce (nota dell'autore)*, CSLB, http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1318?990689160=1, last accessed 9 June 2020.

[73] «Egli [Orvid] appare per la prima volta nel secondo episodio […] affiancando R in un duetto (difatti un trio con il suonatore di un flauto in sol sulla scena) che accenna ad un amplesso amoroso che non si materializza». Pecker Berio, *«A lei la parola taciuta»*, p. 252.

[74] «Ebbene, in *Altra voce* ho isolato dall'insieme una voce (mezzo-soprano) e uno strumento (flauto alto) e ne ho sviluppato l'autonomia e le premesse armoniche, anche – ma non solo – attraverso l'impiego di tecnologie informatizzate». Berio, *Altra voce (nota dell'autore)*.

[75] See Giomi, *«Di voce e di vento»*, p. 273. See also F. Giomi, K. Schwoon, *Il continuo mutevole: "Altra voce" di Luciano Berio*, «Rivista di Analisi e Teoria Musicale» XI/2 (2005), pp. 69-88.

9. *Transcendence as research in* Stanze

The last years of Berio's life are marked by the composition of *Stanze* (2003) for baritone, three male voice choirs and orchestra, his last work. At this stage Berio is close to an aspect of Jewish culture that was previously in the background: the reflection on transcendence. The choice of the texts for the five parts of *Stanze* is indicative in this regard. The author of the first text, *Tenebrae*,[76] is again Celan, who in some respects takes over the central position occupied earlier in the composer's oeuvre by James Joyce (indeed, both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, Berio's favourite novels, include explicit references to Judaism). For the second text, Berio chose Giorgio Caproni's *Congedo del viaggiatore cerimonioso*.[77] As the third text, for the central "stanza", the composer received from Edoardo Sanguineti a poem written for the occasion and dedicated to Berio («e rispondendo ho parlato da un turbine…»).[78] The following, fourth text is the English version of a fragment from a poem by the pianist Alfred Brendel («The news that…»).[79] For the last text Berio returns to German, opting for Anne Birkenhauer's translation, with the title *Die Schlacht*, of Dan Pagis's poem *Ha-krav*.[80] Berio chose the German translation «so as to establish a symmetrical relationship with Celan's poem».[81] In his short note relating to the work, Berio explains that «we are dealing with actual rooms (*stanze*) that have doors and windows, like the habitable spaces of a building. Each room is inhabited by a different poem […] that evokes the ironic, anguished or detached image of an unmentionable "other" and "other place"».[82]

A few months before his death, in an interview with Antonio Gnoli, Berio reiterates that the concept of faith as such is «totally foreign» to him, and yet the composer explains that in his last work «the idea of God is present in different circumstances»,[83] connected to the five poems in which God is respectively «ironic» (Brendel), «elusive and labyrinthine» (Sanguineti), transformed into a «blasphemous entity» (Caproni), «guilty» (Pagis), or self-imposing as a «peremptory capital letter» (Celan).[84] At the same time Berio's closeness to some aspects of the Jewish religion emerges. As a non-believer, Berio says, he questions himself about God, understood as a search for transcendence destined to lead to the mystical silence of the unspeakable evoked by the famous conclusive thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*;[85] a silence to which according to Berio music also leads. In the same interview

[76] Published in P. CELAN, *Sprachgitter*, S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1959.

[77] Written in 1960 and published in G. CAPRONI, *Congedo del viaggiatore cerimonioso e altre prosopopee*, Garzanti, Milano 1965.

[78] Published as *Job, una stanza* dedicated to Berio, in E. SANGUINETI, *Varie ed eventuali. Poesie, 1995-2010*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2010, p. 23.

[79] A. BRENDEL, *One Finger Too Many*, translated by Alfred Brendel and Richard Stokes, Faber & Faber, London 1998.

[80] The original text has been published in D. PAGIS, *Kol ha-shirím*, Hakibbutz Hameuchad and the Bialik Institute, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem 1991.

[81] M. UVIETTA, *Stanze. Work Introduction*, Universal Edition website, https://www.universaledition.com/luciano-berio-54/works/stanze-6725, last accessed 9 June 2020.

[82] L. BERIO, *Stanze (author's note)*, CSLB, http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/2736?583400693=1, last accessed 9 June 2020.

[83] «[…] Il concetto di fede mi è totalmente estraneo. […] Ho appena finito di scrivere un'opera che ho chiamato *Stanze*, nella quale l'idea di Dio è presente in diverse situazioni». L. BERIO, *La mia vita tra vecchi insulti e musica nuova*, interview with Antonio Gnoli («la Repubblica» 20 December 2002, pp. 46-47), in BERIO, *Interviste e colloqui*, p. 431.

[84] «[…] lui [Alfred Brendel] ha scritto un notevole libro di poesie e una di queste è dedicate a un dio ironico. In Caproni dio è quasi un'entità blasfema, in Sanguineti è sfuggente e labirintico, in Celan è una sorta di perentoria lettera maiuscola, in Dan Pagis è colpevole». *Ibid*.

[85] «[…] mi pongo il problema dell'idea di Dio. […] Accennavo a Wittgenstein, lei ricorda la celebre frase: "Ciò di cui non si può parlare si deve tacere"? Ebbene in quella richiesta di silenzio c'è a un tempo Dio e la musica». *Ibid*., p. 430.

Berio mentions his deep attachment to Baruch Spinoza, the «atheist theologian», and adds that, being sometimes intrigued by «other religions»,[86] he is particularly fascinated by the Jewish one, in which «the concept of God is above all a truth to be conquered», as in the «great music, in which the formal process is more important than the form».[87] This affirmation of closeness to transcendence through music, based on the idea that both «God and music imply a thought»,[88] constitutes the dialogue of Berio's last period with Jewish culture.

10. *Concluding remarks*

This survey reveals that Berio's interest in Jewish culture concerned several aspects: music, with particular attention to vocality, which in turn is linked to gestural elements; the Hebrew language of texts from the Hebrew bible; and religion, intended as a continuous search for transcendence. Added to this is the increasingly strong attention of the late Berio to the poetic voice of Paul Celan and other modern authors connected to Jewish culture by their origin or by their choice of topics. As demonstrated in this article, this dialogue becomes gradually more profound: from vague allusions in the early 1960s, through concrete references in the second half of the 1970s (the years in which his partnership with Talia Pecker Berio began), to the more acute interest of the 1980s, which culminated in the compositional process of *Ofaním* that started at the end of the decade; the process then continues into the most intense and creative period of Berio's dialogue with Jewish culture from the mid-1990s, the years of *Shofar*, *Outis* and *Kol od*. Immediately thereafter, Berio returns to *Ofaním* until its complete definition, hypothesizes a version of *Sequenza X* for trumpet and live electronics, works on the project of *Cronaca del Luogo*, from which *Altra voce* derives, defines the live electronics of *Outis*, and continues to rethink this aspect in *Ofaním* and *Altra voce*. From *Ofaním* onwards an interesting weave emerges that connects the presence of various references to Jewish culture to the idea of expanding the acoustic space through the compositional means made possible by live electronics. A straightforward thread connects *Ofaním* to *Cronaca del Luogo*, for which Talia Berio becomes the author of both text and dramaturgy. Around this centre the other fibres of this complex weave unfold.

Such aspects, to be found in a significant group of Berio's compositional projects variously related to Jewish culture, respond at the same time to his own autonomous research directions: his research into sound and his experimentation with live electronics, his attention to gestures and their theatrical meaning, his fondness for certain kinds of vocality, his interest in language in general and in languages specifically, his exploration of folk music and songs pertaining to different cultures, his elective affinity with poets whose radical language reflects on central issues of human history and experience. The universalising trait that unites all these aspects responds to Berio's vision of the world around him as well as to his conception of research in general. On one hand a special treatment reserved by Berio specifically for the universe of Jewish culture emerges, while on the other he channels aspects of this complex universe into the bed of research undertaken by him independently of this cultural dialogue, which fits seamlessly into that entirety of experience that Berio consciously cultivated as a man and musician of his time.

Alessandro Cecchi
Università di Pisa
e-mail: alessandro.cecchi@unipi.it

[86] «Quello che ci ha lasciato un teologo ateo come Baruch Spinoza mi ha marcato profondamente. Come mi incuriosiscono le altre religioni». *Ibid.*

[87] «[…] direi quella ebraica. Dove il concetto di Dio è innanzitutto una verità da conquistare. […] Come nella grande musica, dove conta più il processo formale che la forma». *Ibid.*, p. 431.

[88] «Dio e la musica implicano un pensiero». *Ibid.*, p. 430.

Alessandro Cecchi

SUMMARY

The dialogue with Jewish culture holds a prominent position in Luciano Berio's music and writings, and yet it has neither been addressed in a systematic way nor investigated in its multiple ramifications. This article offers a thorough investigation of many aspects of this dialogue and shows how Berio's interaction with certain aspects of the Jewish tradition is closely connected with some of his main poetic and compositional concerns: his research into sound, including the experimentation with live electronics; his attention to gesture and its theatrical meaning; his fondness for certain kinds of vocality and his exploration of folk music; his elective affinity with poets whose radical language reflects on central issues of human history and experience. The universalising trait that unites all these aspects responds to Berio's vision of the world around him and offers insights on the special treatment reserved by Berio for the universe of Jewish culture.

KEYWORDS: Luciano Berio; Hebrew language; Jewish culture.