A-Ronne – a case study of Luciano Berio's work with text

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Background

A large part of the work of Luciano Berio (1925-2003) is vocal. A key to understanding his long and extensive work with text are his early involvement with vocal music and his keen interest in language; a part of his overarching readings and intellect. His early education was well rounded and his musical upbringing was comprehensive and thorough. His father and grandfather were professional musicians and at his home in Oneglia, Italy he was surrounded by singing, and his early influences of vocal music were traditional, non-modern.[1] Many of Berio's early compositions were settings of text to music, most of which were of either religious context (for example *L'annunciazione* for soprano and chamber orchestra, text by Rilke, 1946 and *O bone Jesu* for chorus 1946), or traditional sources or folk songs (as *Due cori popolari* for chorus, 1946 and *Tre lirichi greche* for voice and piano 1946).[2]

Within the tendency of art music in the 20th century to break from tradition, Berio's work had a central role and substantial impact on composers' work with text. As with Schenberg's *Pierrot Lunnaire* (1912), Boulez's *le marteau sans maître* (1953-5), Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1955-6) Kagel's *Anagrama* (1957-8) and Cage's *Aria* (1958), so was Berio molding his own language, turning to stylistic polylingualism, and, as in modern poetry, literature and theater, creating self-referential vocabularies. His work was described as "the most conspicuous landmarks of vocal writing" that have "inspired a generation of composers (including Cage and Boulez)."[3]

Cage's representative notion that noise is or can be music is instrumental to understanding Berio's attitude to language. The emphasis is put on the listener to decide whether the noise is music or not, and so is the case then with language and music: the meaning depends more on the listener. This is not to say that Berio simply applies a comfortable postmodern attitude, but rather that the use of text in a work does not automatically endow the work a meaning. Among the multiple linguistic layers with which Berio constructs his compositions lies from time to time the notion of noise—the meaningless or a random addition to the central and significant components. And the 'noise' of language can now serve as music and, as Berio puts it „music is everything that one listens to with the intention of listening to music":[4] meaning, to grant the unclear and the obscure the doubt of having an intentional and purposeful role in the composition.

Among the major influences on Berio's work with text were composers Bruno Maderna (1920-73), Henri Pousseur (1929-2009), Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007), Pierre Boulez (b. 1925) in the Darmstadt Summer Schools and to a lesser degree Luigi Dellapicola (1904-1975) with whom, however, Berio studied. As director of the Studio di Fonologia in Milan, Berio collaborated with Maderna in the composition of *Ritratto di Città* (1954) a composition using voice, electronic and concrete sounds. During that period he created *Mutazioni* (1955), *Perspectives* (1957), *Thema* (*Omaggio a Joyce*) (1958), and *Momenti* (1960).

Certain distinctive elements of his later vocal style were found in his early work, but it was *Thema* (*Omaggio a Joyce*) (1958) that marked Berio's new and important explorations in the treatment of the text.[5] In an article entitled "Poesia e musica – un esperienza" which describes his composition Berio discusses his new approach to text in *Thema*. Berio envisages a total integration of the text and music, shifting imperceptibly between the different media, where the two share equal status:

> We shall perhaps one day be able to realize a 'total' performance in which all the components (not only the strictly musical effects) can develop towards a complete and perfect integration, so that it will be possible to achieve a new kind of relationship between word and sound, poetry and music. The real aim of such an exercise would not be the contrasting or mixing up of two separate

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[1] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 1-2, 4-5)
[2] (Suvini-Hand 2006, 277), (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 123-6)
[3] (Brindle 1987, 165)
[4] (Daalmonte and András Varga 1985, 19)
[5] (Stacey 1989, 155)

expressive systems but rather the creation of complete continuity, so that the shift from one to the other would be imperceptible, without drawing attention to the difference between a logical-semantic mode of apprehension (as adopted for a spoken message) and a musical mode, transcending and opposed to it in both sound and content. As a result there would be an escape from the generally recognized problem for aesthetic theory of the primacy of musical structure over poetic structure.[6]

Approach—language and gesture

Berio described his approach to the raw text as "a way of making love with a text"[7], using the music as an instrument to analyze the text, to put it in a different light and discover implicit or new meanings in it. Music is Berio's instrument to discover hidden parts of the text, employing even phonetic aspects of the text in the musical process. Working with such elementary components, Berio aspired to avoid separation of the surface level from the deep level; musical 'phonetics' from musical 'grammar' (while he did not assume to fully decipher or provide a comprehensive definition of musical 'grammar'[8]). Especially when applying linguistics to music, Berio attributes importance to delayed perception of the musical work; the need to go back to the work, inquire its contents and listen again. It is all the more relevant in light of the ambiguity of 'musical grammar' and its connection to transformational grammar—a connection often suggested by Berio's critics.[9]

To understand the special attention with which Berio tends to language, it is essential to understand his long preoccupation with the notion of gesture. In his essay *Du geste et de Piazza Carita*[10] he refers to gesture as the act of doing something, of generating some communication, or a residue, a synthesis, a selection of typical processes that is deduced from a meaningful context and historicity. The gesture first contains a 'story' of the one who manifests it and only then it manifests the charge and the story it is known for. For example, a word is a gesture if it is used in certain context and contains the story of the one who says it; only then the 'dictionary' meaning of it is taken to account. According to Berio, to make a gesture means to assume its meanings and take a critical stance towards the history it contains.

The relationships between specific forms that develop these gestures are language, technique and poetics. The gesture can be considered as *a priori* language which we are then tempted to use as a collection and processes of signs. The signs are in the syntax (formal relationship between signs), in the semantic (relationship between sign and meaning) and in the application (relationship of efficacy between the signs and the one who uses them). But a sign is quite different from gesture: the first signifies and the latter expresses. A gesture can, however, also be a sign that makes expression. On the other hand, if the gesture is not specified by a context, it vanishes in pure linguistic gesticulation.

When Berio tends to language as a fascinating and prodigious quarry of signs and gestures (or signs turned into gestures), the gesture is what 'becomes' from the language in a cultural context. But more important to Berio as an artist creating drama and 'theatre', is the use of gesture for what it may eventually become, resisting thus the natural tendency of languages to codify and crystallize into symbols. Only by reinvention of the language, says Berio, can we expect the fabric of our actions to succeed to become something expressive and also an ethical example, which must be defined with respect to the plurality of its dialectical components. This 'ethical example' may refer, I believe, to a specific work or even to an oeuvre or a specific style practiced by several or many composers.

The relationship between gesture and material is a historical operation that continually changes its results: the gestural use of an element of language by an influential politician, for example, might change its results; Berio's evaluation of a language element as a gesture, or his incorporation of that signifying element into a gesture, may change the charge and the effect of that element in a certain work or, if influential enough, in works of other composers.

For the implicit tendencies of the materials to engender meaning, they must be opposed just at the level of the practice of the gesture; to be a creator, the gesture must destroy something; it must be dialectic and should not be deprived of its "theater":

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[6] (Berio, Poesia e musica - un'esperienza, trans: John Saunders in Prospice 10 (1979) 1958, 10)

[7] (Muller and Berio 1997, 17)

[8] Ibid.

[9] (Muller and Berio 1997, 17) Berio refers in this interview to analogies between serialism of the 1950s and Noam Chomsky's Syntactic Structures, published at the same time. Chomsky's theory identifies a deep structure (core semantic relations) of a sentence that is mapped on to a surface structure via transformations.

[10] (Berio, Du geste et de Piazza Carita 1963)

'We can reach the point where we use gesture for *what it may eventually become*, [Italics in source] thus resisting the 'natural' tendencies of languages to codify, to crystallize into symbols, to transform itself into a 'catalog of gestures', fragments of a still life… To be creative, gesture must be capable of destroying something, it must be dialectic and must not deprive itself of its 'theater', even at the cost of dirtying itself—as E. Sanguineti would say—in the mud, the *palus pultredinis* [Lat.: Marsh of Decay] of experience. Which is to say that it must always contain something of what it proposes to move beyond.[11]

As it usually is with Berio's spontaneous exuberance and flair of gesture, the gestural elements exist in tension with a wide and systematic perspective, serving the structure of the works. Berio finds phonetic and semantic elements in the texts, and uses them as structural components. Semiotics provided an inspirational framework for much of Berio's fascination with instrumental and vocal gestures. He had been enthusiastically interested in the work of linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure, an enthusiasm he passed on to his friend and creative-collaborator Umberto Eco.[12] Saussure's view, that Language is not just peripheral to our grasp of the world, but central to it, resonates in Berio's concept of the vocal gesture and its role in the structure of the musical work: not just "a label or communicational adjuncts superimposed upon an already given order of things… [but] collective products of social interaction, essential instruments through which human beings constitute and articulate their world."[13]

Vocalist Cathy Berberian (1928-1983) was extremely instrumental in the realization of Berio's ideals in that regard. Berio's vocal works, particularly those written for Cathy Berberian, reached highest public attention in the sixties, receiving much critical attention and attracting many imitators. His distinctive vocal style in its all-embracing delight in the voice and its resources had a durable impact.[14]

Phonetics and semantics

As demonstrated in the following examples of his work, Berio often related to the most elementary components of speech as material of potential structural implications in his compositions. Berio's work with phonetics in the early 1960s benefitted from the pioneering work of Daniel Jones and the International Phonetic Association (IPA), who designed a fairly compact and elegant system of analysis. The phonetic alphabet—referred today simply as IPA—is made of a set of 'cardinal vowels' arranged as a matrix by two fundamental oppositions: resonance at the front of the mouth versus resonance at the back, and closed mouth versus open. 'Secondary cardinal vowels' are set in a second matrix where the same tongue positions are modified by less commonly associated lip positions. Consonants[15], on the other hand, could not be reduced to a two-dimensional matrix because they depend upon at least three basic features: front articulation versus back, stopping of air-flow (plosives) versus relatively unrestricted air-flow (nasals and laterals), and voiced versus unvoiced. They were therefore set out according to the front-back opposition.[16]

IPA offers a reasonably accurate means of notating speech sound and also a series of discrete elements organized within a structured system, potentially open to ordering in purely formal terms by, for example, a composer. But Berio had put it to full when he began working on *Sequenza III* in 1965, exploiting the structural implications of the IPA alphabet and applying the IPA articulatory polarities to construct the work's framework. Berio treats the text of *Sequenza III* as a source tor phonetic material, and coherent phrases immerge only occasionally.

O King marks a high point in Berio's use of phonetic relationships as a structural parameter. There are three levels on which Berio challenges semantic continuity in his response to texts:
1. The interface between words as bearers of meaning and words as sound materials (as in *Circles*)
2. The simultaneous use of different texts (*Laborintus II*)
3. The deliberate use of texts whose meaning is fragmentary or incomplete (*A-Ronne*)

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[11] (Berio, Du geste et de Piazza Carita 1963, 223)
[12] Umberto Eco (b. 1932); semiotician, essayist, philosopher, literary critic and novelist
[13] (Harris 1988, ix)
[14] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 60)
[15] The term 'consonant' is used throughout the essay in its phonetic meaning, not in its meaning in music theory.
[16] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 65)

In *E vo* (1972) the Sicilian lullaby used as a text is first presented in linear form and then, as it begins to repeat, troped by phonetic interludes. This process, particularly when placed within the dramatic context of *Opera* (1969-70), serves to underscore tension between the text and a darker, more complex content. Berio acknowledges the psychological interpretation associated with semi-coherent speech, and uses dissolution into phonetic materials as a sign of extreme mental tension, as in the role of *Passante III* (Third Passer-by) from the second act of *La vera storia* (1977-81) or the Protagonista who appears at the end *Un re in ascolto* (1979-84).[17]

In *Circles* text is dissolved into its phonetic components only very briefly, its sonorous qualities are central to the work's structure. The voice responds to the percussion instruments in similar range, moving from exactly pitched song through approximate pitch to speech, while the harp allies itself now with the voice, now with the pitched percussion. The harp responds to the phonetic substance of the poem with what Berio describes as a series of 'pitched plosives': the unison attacks that echo the /st and /g/ of the words 'stinging' and 'gold'. This mimetic interaction between voice and instruments comes closer to the foreground in the setting of the second poem. Fragmented imagery such as 'riverly is a flower' is matched by a more syllabic vocal setting that incorporates other vocal timbres. Trills and flurries from harp and pitched wood in the background echo the many fricatives in the text, notably the initial /r/s of the words 'riverly' and 'rosily'.

'Commentary' on texts

Beginning with *Passaggio* Berio had used either fragmented pre-established texts or he has worked with a living writer, with whom he negotiated the shape that the words will take. The first and the most seminal of these collaborations was with the poet and scholar Edoardo Sanguineti. Like Sanguineti, so did Berio assimilate and bring new life to a radical tradition that had found little chance to take root in Italy during previous decades.[18]

In *Passaggio*, a single female singer is placed on stage, and different groups of vocalists are scattered in the venue, using a variety of languages. David Osmond-Smith describes it: "The singer enacted the bare outline of a dramatic progression, while the choruses voiced a wide and often contradictory gamut of responses. With these resources in hand, Berio was able to contract the implicit semantic counterpoints of Sanguineti's earlier writing into genuine synchronicity. Different (though dramatically complementary) texts were often sung or shouted simultaneously: it was up to the listener to find a path through the jungle."[19] Berio (in collaboration with Sanguineti) is then not just presenting a complete and self-sufficient, immutable textual work. Rather, he comments on it as to open and spread its layers to be tended by further compositional processes and perhaps to remain open. This approach places in question the finality of a composition and emphasizes the degree to which a finished piece may be so only by virtue of decisions on the composer's part.[20]

Text Set to Music – overview 1954-1976

Berio used in *A-Ronne* approaches to text and techniques of incorporating text with sound that were presaged in the works reviewed here. In many of these works Berio manipulated the order of the text in different ways, mostly in collaboration with the authors. He exploited the vocal possibilities and the juxtaposition of different vocal techniques. With his tendency to the paralinguistic and a richness of gesture, most of the works are bordering theater, sometimes aided by deliberate control in the score of spatiality. He explored and experimented with sonorous qualities of elementary components of linguistic, often making structural decisions on the basis of phonetic implications and attributing semantic meanings to phonetics. In manipulating the location of semantic logic in the hierarchy of attention Berio examined the borderline between sound as the conveyor of linguistic sense and sound as the bearer of musical meaning.

Nones (1954)

Berio completed *Nones* after attending the Darmstadt courses for the first time, paralleling serial practices found in the music of other Darmstadt composers at the time.[21] The work was originally planned as a secular oratorio

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[17] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 67)
[18] Ibid., 70
[19] Ibid., 71
[20] (Osmond-Smith, Berio and the Art of Commentary 1975)
[21] (Neidhöfer 2009)

based upon W. H. Auden's poem of the same name and finally became an orchestral work. But the music interacts with Auden's poem in a graphic way and makes an early example of Berio's practice of commentary—on text and on existing music—a practice central to later works such as *Sinfonia* and *Chemins*. The poem in *Nones* is a secular meditation on the crucifixion as a collective willingness to kill, and on how we rationalize and account for the resultant corpse. To echo the act of violence that underpins the poem, Berio uses nervous, semidemiquaver side-drum attacks that map an irregular progress through the work.[22]

Thema (1958)

Thema (Omaggio a Joyce), a work for two track tape and the voice of Cathy Berberian, was a result of Berio's fruitful friendship with Eco and their collaborative work at RAI (Radio Audizioni Italiane). Named thus for Berio's intention to use the overture's theme for the ensuing *fuga per canonem*, *Thema* is based on an intensive study of one specific passage of *Ulysses*, the overture from the Siren's chapter.[23] Berio derived a purely musical structure from the text, using mixed recordings of Berberian's French and Italian translations of other same section. His aim was to lead the listener step by step over the border between sense and sound[24]. He did so by creating counterpoints out of the recorded translations and electronically transforming the mixture. In its exploration of the musical values of speech and its elementary component parts, this electronic vocal work may be perceived as a complementary or reflective process to that of Joyce's: Joyce extracted from his narrative, the Sirens, a montage of semantic elements; Berio extracted from that mosaic purely musical elements, creating an articulative polyphony of words and phrases.[25]

Exploring the borderline between sound as the bearer of linguistic sense and sound as the bearer of musical meaning is a central element in Berio's explorations in the relations between text and music. In *Thema* he did it in part by taking Joyce's polyphonic imagery literally, and translating text into texture. Berio grouped words from Berberian's recording according to their phonetic content, and superposed them one upon the other. The isolated words were grouped according to their vowel content, and then arranged as a 'series' determined by the position in the mouth used to articulate each vowel. Berio then juxtaposed and superposed phonetic elements so as to produce new 'words'. These improbable words are made of consonant-groupings that are inconvenient to pronounce, e.g. a succession of voiced and unvoiced plosives.[26] Such analytic operation, as well as using comprehensibility as a structural component, provided the key to much of his future vocal work.

Circles (1960)

In *Circles* three poems by E. E. Cummings, each more discontinuous than the previous, are arranged in the following order: *'stinging'-'riverly is a flower'-'n(o)w'-'riverly is a flower'-'stinging'*. Berio about the interaction between text and music:

> I was interested in elaborating the three poems in a circular way so that a unified form resulted, where the different levels of meaning, the vocal action and the instrumental action would strictly condition each other, even on the plane of phonetic qualities.[27]

The third poem *'n(o)w'* goes backwards over itself while the two other poems appear twice in different moments of the musical development. The voice in *Circles* responds to two percussionists, imitating their range, moving from pitched song through approximate pitch to speech. The harp allies itself at times with the voice and at times with the pitched percussion. The percussion is deliberately divided to families of wood, skin, and metal and covering the full range between exact pitch through relative pitch to individual unpitched sounds.

The images of the first poem, 'stinging'[28], are sun, spires, bells, arranged in semantic continuity and mirrored by the melismatic flow of a duo for voice and harp. The harp responds to the phonetic substance of the poem with what Berio describes as a series of 'pitched plosives': the unison attacks that echo the /st and /g/ of 'stinging' and 'gold'.[29]

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[22] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 17)
[23] Ibid., 61
[24] Ibid.
[25] (Flynn 1975)
[26] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 62)
[27] (Berio, Circles (author's note) 1961)

Stinging
E. E. Cummings

stinging
gold swarms
upon the spires
silver

     chants the litanies the
great bells are ringing with rose
the lewd fat bells
          and a tall

wind
is dragging
the
sea

with

dream

-S

    The second text is set in a more syllabic vocal setting. Harp trills and flurries and pitched wood echo the fricatives in the text, notably the initial /r/s of 'riverly' and 'rosily'. Bongos introduce a gesture that is echoed by the voice on the word 'befall', and then develop it.[30]

    Such details as these could be multiplied ad infinitum in the third section. Cummings's text, 'n(o)w'[31], a daring acrobatic of Cummings capturing the flash, clap and rumble of a thunderstorm[32], deploys highly eccentric punctuation and capital letters. This technique suggests an imminent disbanding of its phonetic parts and these jitters indeed evoke a thunderstorm and its sunny aftermath. Berio responds by releasing the full range of Berberian's resources, and these are echoed and answered by the percussionists

n(o)w
E. E. Cummings

n(o)w

the
how
dis(appeared cleverly)world

iS Slapped:with;liGhtninG
!

at

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[28] (Cummings, Tulips & chimneys 1937)
[29] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 68)
[30] Ibid.
[31] (Cummings, VV 1970 [c1931])
[32] (Reef 2006, 83)

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At the end of the third setting the singer extracts phonetic material from the poem that she has just sung, and presents it in an imprecise retrograde, echoed by the percussionists. This dissolution announces the beginning of a large-scale retrograde process, as 'riverly is a flower' is reset in section IV and 'stinging' in section V.

The truly innovative qualities *Circles* lie in the way the physical analogy between the phonetic and instrumental material leads to a deeper exploration of the linguistic aspects of the text. The text then serves as a base line from which everything can be derived and to which everything can be traced back.[33] The physical analogy In Circles constitutes the basis for points of correspondence between vocal and instrumental sounds and creates continuity between textual and instrumental dimensions. This is Berio's device to achieve the smooth transition between the media that Berio outlined in "Poesia e musica". Furthermore, the logical semantic mode submerges as the style shifts between conventional singing, Bouche fermée and the production of phonetics.[34]

Visage (1961)

Visage is based on a series of monologues improvised by Berberian's, each based on a repertoire of vocal gesture and phonetic material suggested by a given linguistic model, but in fact using no words from that language.[35] The monologues convey paralinguistic content by gesture and intonation, and only one real word was included: 'parole', the Italian for 'words'. Out of these materials Berio built a montage rich in suggestions of psychological drama and

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[33] (Demierre n.d.)
[34] (Stacey 1989, 157)
[35] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 63)

added electronic sounds that extended reflections of Berberian's voice into a further dimension. Despite its abstraction, *Visage* has a strong sense of theatre in terms of narrative, character and implied action.[36]

Passaggio – messa in scena (1961-2)

A work of musical theatre for soprano, two choirs and instruments, that experiments in the relationship between audience and stage. A female protagonist crosses slowly the stage and stops from time to time to sing text from two sources provided by Berio and Edoardo Sanguineti: Franz Kafka's *Letters to Milena* and Rosa Luxembourg's prison diaries. *Messa in scena* means in French "mise en scène" (staging), and in Italian a "Mass on Stage". The work is about the passage of a character through a sequence of tragic situations in which her oppressed and beaten by the bestiality of others, who are sure of their myths and their idols.

In order to establish the dialogue, one choir (choir B) is distributed amongst the audience (choir A performs in the orchestra pit), and constantly intervene in the protagonist's stage performance, addressing her and commenting on her actions. Berio and Sanguineti foresaw that the audience may react, but not as an essential ingredient of the action. The audience might react to the chorus with irritated antagonism but in fact unknowingly being asked to play an active part in the work. The audience is appealed by the reactions, insults and the appeals of Chorus B and made to understand that these express a clearly defined human standpoint. It is a standpoint made up of "conformism, defense of taboos, egoism, mental laziness, dogmatic adherence to fixed principles. It is the standpoint that characterizes audiences calmly inhabiting traditional opera houses, arranged in its classes and ready to accept the fixed order of relations between man and man that the very structure of the theatre suggests."[37]

In the score of *Stazione II* from *Passaggio* Berio is applying a procedure used already in *Sequenza I*, where he added or subtracted individual pitches to the sequence from time to time, or else permutated the order of pitches.[38] Here each section of the vocal line is repeated, and note-tails in opposite directions indicate which pitches are to be sung the first time and which the second. As in the Proust setting in *Epifanie* (1959-61), the vocal line is conceived as an independent, autonomous structure for which a quiet semi-independent background layer of instrumental sound is provided. Creating such expansive yet varied vocal line has become a permanent resource in Berio's work: other notable examples are *Calmo* (1974) and *Il Ricordo*, with which Berio includes both part I and part II of *La vera storia* (1977-81).[39]

Berio was trying to establish a physical dialogue between audience and stage and caused a scandal when it premièred at the Piccola Scala in 1963. "I knew the audience would lose their heads so I briefed the choir accordingly. I told the choir that they should join in as soon as the audience starts shouting, echo the last word and improvise on it. And that's exactly what happened. Some people shouted "Buffoni". The choir echoed the word immediately, sped it up, whispered it, lengthened the "o" and turned the improvisation into part of the performance. The audience became completely hysterical because they had lost their chance to protest."[40]

Sequenza III for female voice (1965-6)

One of a series of virtuoso solo works and among Berio's most innovative and influential achievements of late 20th century music composition, *Sequenza III* , "a paradigm of the extended vocal repertoire",[41] indulges in new and unusual sounds and colors. Disputably a theatrical piece, it is concerned with the startling dramatic manipulation of various kinds of textures, articulations, and virtuosity.[42] The work draws consequences from the juxtaposition of dissimilar objects or gestures. Lyric singing, speech and everyday vocal acts such as laughter or coughing are densely juxtaposed. In this manner, 'musical' and 'everyday vocal acts' mutually alienate one another.[43] *Sequenza III* is Berio's richest compendium of vocal devices and procedures, and the score a virtual cyclopedia of his vocal notation, explained in painstaking detail and makes valuable guide to all Berio vocal scores.[44]

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[36] (Halfyard 2007, 99)
[37] (Berio, Passaggio | Messa in scena - Work Introduction n.d.)
[38] (Osmond-Smith, "Berio, Luciano" n.d.)
[39] Ibid.
[40] (Berio, Passaggio | Messa in scena - Work Introduction n.d.)
[41] (Halfyard 2007, 99)
[42] (Flynn 1975, 417)
[43] (Osmond-Smith, Introduction 2007, 2-4)
[44] (Flynn 1975, 418)

The text is a modular poem by Markus Kutter's:

Give me a   few words   for a woman
to sing   a truth   allowing us
to build a house   without worrying before night comes

The scarcity of text renders the voice dual status: it becomes both a pure musical instrument, and an apparatus that theatrically reveals emotions.[45] Elements are repeated many times, always in a different order, creating a kaleidoscopic view that renders the text an expressive notion without having heard the text in its actual form. Berio explains his treatment of the text thus:

> The voice carries always an excess of connotations, whatever it is doing. From the grossest of noises to the most delicate of singing, the voice always means something, always refers beyond itself and creates a huge range of associations. In *Sequenza III* I tried to assimilate many aspects of everyday vocal life, including trivial ones, without losing intermediate levels or indeed normal singing. In order to control such a wide range of vocal behaviour, I felt I had to break up the text in an apparently devastating way, so as to be able to recuperate fragments from it on different expressive planes, and to reshape them into units that were not discursive but musical. The text had to be homogeneous, in order to lend itself to a project that consisted essentially of exorcising the excessive connotations and composing them into musical units. This is the "modular" text written by Markus Kutter for *Sequenza III*.[46]

Berio frequently groups consonants in oppositional pairs governed by one or more of the three features that administer the IPA alphabet. Vowels offer more interesting possibilities: Berio selects chains of vowels that set up a circular motion around the front/back-mouth matrix. Displays of oral acrobatics continue throughout the piece. They are complemented by a rapid alternation between types of voice production, and between ways of delivering the text (forty four different directions to the singer are used, most of them invoking a psychological state).[47] The initial version of *Sequenza III* listed a daunting number of types of laughter; laughter often punctuates the different layers of vocal production.

Being in fact rather simple in number of tones and intervals, and requiring almost no virtuosic leaping about, the alternating textures in *Sequenza* lend themselves to dramatic and metaphorical interpretations. A song is gradually forming from the singer's initial muttering, babbling, and laughter; but its integrity is always threatened by the frequent collapse into unpitched material (the singer's alter ego).[48] The text too submerges again and again in the diverse collage of unrelated words, syllables, and phones while occasional verbal sense emerges. The singer pleads for "a few words to sing before night comes". The phrase 'without worrying' is never used in full or in phoneme. It is a significant clue to the nature of the text treatment and its narrative function. Its significance lies in the notion that this is what the performer fails not to do for the most part.[49] Its absence makes the phrase "before night comes" more portending in regard to the time given to the woman to 'build a house'—does this house represent the composition?

Identifiable words and complete phrases from the text emerge principally in the sung passages at the points given in (Figure 1). After the phrase "allowing before night comes" nothing remains but the slow, wistful, distant and fading out phrase "to sing".

Approximate score timing	Sung phrase
0:60	a woman
1:50	give me a few words for a woman
3:50	to sing
4:20	a truth
6:10	to build
6:20	a few words before

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[45] (Neidhöfer 2009, 92)

[46] (Berio, Sequenza III (author's note) n.d.)

[47] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 65)

[48] (Flynn 1975, 420)

[49] (Halfyard 2007, 105)

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6:35	to sing before night
8:15	allowing before night comes
8:35	to sing

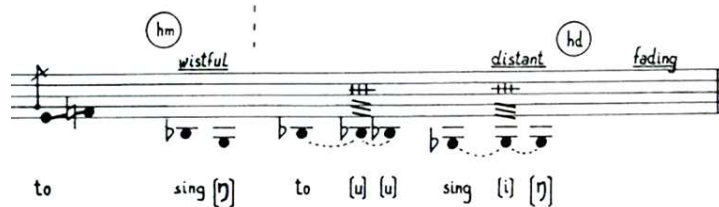Figure 1. Appearnce of complete phrases in *Sequenza III* [50]

Figure 2. *Sequenza III*, end

Recital I (For Cathy) **(1972)**

The work combines Berio's interests in text setting with his fascination for collage and quotation.[51] The schizophrenic monologue comprises fragments of solo vocal repertoire from contrasted sources. British music critic Paul Griffiths considered *Recital I* to be one of Berio's compositions that are commentaries on the form in which they are written:

> Coro ('Chorus') has its place in a sequence of recent Berio works whose titles themselves declare his intention to examine archetypal modes of musical expression. First there was his symphony *Sinfonia* (1968-9), followed by his reports on the who1e genre of music-theatre in Opera (1960-70), on the life and work of a solo singer in *Recital* (1972)…[52]

O King **(1967)**

The text is simply: 'O Martin Luther King', and it is gradually assembled from its phonetic components as the piece proceeds.[53] First, the vowels from this text are presented in different clockwise and anticlockwise orders. Then, consonants are added, proceeding from the vowel-like voiced consonants to the more disruptive, unvoiced ones.[54] Other parameters undergo processes, eventually culminating in a climax, after which the work closes with a single full statement of the text. Linear phonetic process and other processes of pitch and rhythm interact and create the structure of *O King*. As the piece proceeds, the harmonic 'cloud' of the instrumental ensemble becomes progressively denser, mirroring the build-up of phonetic materials, as rhythm mirrors the change from phonemes to language.[55] This is how poetry might be interpreted as transgression: it is the vital noise of Luciano Berio, a roar, a scream, a panting, the eruption of the body in the repressive, codifying space of language.[56]

Epifanie **(1959-61, revised: 1965)**

The work consists of a cycle of seven instrumental pieces, interpolated by a cycle of five literary passages. The texts are a montage of quotations proposed by Umberto Eco, taken from Proust (*À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*), Joyce (*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*), de Antonio Machado (*Nuevas Canciones*), Claude

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[50] (Halfyard 2007, 106)
[51] (Stacey 1989, 158)
[52] Ibid.
[53] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 66)
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 67
[56] (Baudrillard and Hildreth 1981, 80)

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Simon (*La route des Flandres*) and Brecht (*An die Nachgeborenen*). A short poem of Sanguineti from *Triperuno* appears at the beginning of the seventh orchestral piece.

The two cycles, orchestral and vocal, move from tonality through free atonality to serialism, and can be combined together in various ways. The orchestral pieces can be run by just following different orders. The vocal cycle is acting as "an epiphany, that is, as a kind of sudden apparition, in the more complex orchestral structure"[57] and can be arranged in ten different orders. Berio insists that "The result should always suggest a process or development...based not only on the music but also on the content of the poems used".[58] Berio inserts points of choice or for the performer, but the sections are fully composed. This resolution of apparent contradiction between control and openness is rather in the manner of Boulez and the Darmstadt group.[59]

Berio declares his preference for a distribution of orchestral pieces that highlights the differences, and a distribution of vocal tracks that would suggest instead a gradual transition: from a situation geared towards the poetic transfiguration of reality (Proust, Joyce, Machado) to a recording of memories pressing (Sanguineti) and disenchanted acknowledgement of things (Simon: for this text the voice speaks and becomes gradually nullified by the orchestra). Last, the verses of Brecht, who have nothing of an Epiphany: "They are the cry of regret and anguish with which Brecht warns us that often it is necessary to renounce the seduction of words when they sound like an invitation to forget our links to a world constructed by our own acts."[60]

Laborintus II (1965)

This is a 'canzonetta'[61] whose madrigalian textures offered a brief homage to Monteverdi. *Esposizione* and *Passaggio*, two earlier works to Sanguineti's texts, served to clarify Berio's vision of what could be achieved in a multi-voiced medium.[62] *Laborintus II* was commissioned for the700[th] anniversary of Dante's birth and employed three contrasting vocal layers: a solo speaker, three female singers, and eight speakers, all of them amplified. In putting together the text from Dante's writings—the *Vita Nuova* the first nine Cantos of the Inferno, and. towards the end, a passage on music from the Convivio—Sanguineti extracted a series of isolated images. These he interspersed with rambling lists of information about Hebrew ancient history taken from the Latin of Isidore of Seville[63], lists of incongruously juxtaposed facts and figures from contemporary life, brief quotations from Eliot, Pound and himself. Accordingly, and as Sanguineti said "with mud on the shoulders"[64] after plunging "into the labyrinth of irrationalism and formalism, indeed into a *Palus Putredinis* of anarchism and alienation"[65], Berio concocted *Laborintus II* with a speaker, three part choirs made of three female voices, eight actors-singers, seventeen instruments and tape. They echo each other, pursuing a harmonic discourse of great clarity and economy; simple, trenchant gestures give the listener points of reference amidst the verbal labyrinth.[66]

Sinfonia (1968)

There is a tension between two compositional techniques in the second movement of Sinfonia that was previously brought into focus in *Thema, Omaggio a Joyce* (1958). Berio uses two ways of operating upon a preexistent text that were to be central in much of Berio's vocal music in the 1970s. The first of these operations was extracting sequences from the original order of the text. It was modeled after Joyce, who, in *Ulysses* extracted fragments from the ensuing narration (of Mr. Bloom's late lunch in the Ormond bar to a background of singing around the pub piano) and building from them a stream of isolated images. These then interacted to create not only implicit meanings quite divorced from their original context but also a 'word-music' of their own. The second

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[57] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 147)

[58] Ibid., 146

[59] (Murphy 1999)

[60] Quoted in (Donat 1972, 58)

[61] Short vocal pieces in a light, often dance-like, style in late 16th century to the 18th ("canzonetta." The Oxford Companion to Music n.d.)

[62] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 71)

[63] Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) served as Archbishop of Seville and is considered the last scholar of the ancient world

[64] (Sanguineti, Poesia informale? 1961)

[65] Ibid.

[66] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 73)

operation is allowing that word-music its autonomy by further breaking down the text-fragments into phonetic components, using sequences derived from simple manipulations of the matrix of articulatory positions provided by the phonetic alphabet, and using the articulatory relationships between them as the basis for a musical structure. He used symbols from the phonetic alphabet in his vocal scores as a means of continuing the investigation - briefly in *Circles*, and thoroughly in *Sequenza III* for voice. The tension between these two kept his vocal music balanced on the borderline between sound and sense. That tension was to find one of its most elegant resolutions in *O King* (1967), incorporated as the second movement of Sinfonia.[67]

A central technique to the first movement of Sinfonia was verbal fragmentation that provides the essential background to the piece. Phonetic materials, although not rigorously handled, make an important contribution to the surface texture of Sinfonia's opening movement. The musical setting in the first and fifth movements of *Sinfonia* is Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropological study of South American Indian mythology, *Le cru et le cuit*[68]. In this highly controversial work of structural anthropology Lévi-Strauss used the structures of Western classical music as metaphors for transformational relations between the myths of different South American tribal groups. He offers a series of myth narrations interspersed with analytical commentary that extracts salient images in order to show their transformational relations to other myths from different sources. Berio's work in looking for isolated images is thus already half-done by Levi-Strauss's mode of analysis. He took a group of interrelated myths and the main extracted fragments from Lévi-Strauss's commentary upon them. Projecting these into a typically complex vocal texture, he obliterated all perceptible links with the original framework, but liberated the poetic potential that lay dormant in Lévi-Strauss's tables and diagrams.

The third movement of *Sinfonia* is a commentary upon the scherzo from Mahler's Second Symphony. This process of commentary can be paralleled to the bold reduction of the large-scale structure of Strauss's text. But here Berio employed Beckett's *The Unnameable*—a text resisting structural analysts. Berio extracted such images as would serve to reflect musical events within the movement, or comment upon the ambiguities of concert-hall life,[69] utilizing the ineluctable distance between text and music to conduct a mutual critique, a mutual tension rather than a capacity for fusion. Berio ends this movement with a quotation from his own essay *Meditation 0n a Twelve-tone Horse* (1968), querying whether "music might not indeed be able to change life".[70]

Coro (1976)

The work sets mosaic of folk-texts of varied sources, interleaved with fragments from Pablo Neruda's trilogy *Residencia en la Tierra* (1933-47). Many of the songs are sung not in their original languages and only those with which Berio had an immediate relationship (in the case of the Hebrew through his third wife, Talia Pecker Berio) are set in their original form.[71]

Luciano Berio, *A-Ronne* (1974)

Introduction

A-Ronne (1974-75) is Berio fifth work set to text by Edoardo Sanguineti (1930-2010). Earlier collaborative works were *Epifanie* (1959-61), *Passaggio* (1961-2), the epic *Laborintos II,* (1965) and *Recital I* (1972). *A-Ronne* was their only joint venture which was "not the outcome of a long process of maturing and of constant dialogue and consultation."[72] *A-Ronne* was initially commissioned for five singers and radiophonic effects by the Dutch radio station Hilversum in 1974. Berio revised the work in 1975, and altered it for eight amplified singers; the Swingle Singers premiered it later that year. The work is a vocalization of a text, tending to its most rudimentary linguistic elements and transforming it into something perhaps equally elementary. Berio described the work as "a documentary on a poem by Edoardo Sanguineti, just as we speak of a documentary on a painting or on a foreign country."[73] Berio thus explores the poem with a scientific mindset, exploiting its sound potential as well as its layers

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[67] (Osmond-Smith, Playing on words 1985, 8-10)
[68] (Lévi-Strauss 1964)
[69] (Osmond-Smith, Berio 1991, 73)
[70] Ibid., 73-4
[71] Ibid., 81
[72] (Daalmonte and András Varga 1985, 142)
[73] (Berio, Program Notes for A-Ronne; Cries of London [Swingle II] 1976)

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of literary meaning.[74] Berio uses the term "theatre of the ear" when he refers to the way in which he dramatized vocal and textual elements and used them to generate situations of distinctive character. [75] It makes a unified whole not unlike the way different elements of the theater do: actors, staging lighting etc. The 'theatre' is related to "situations of recognizable, familiar and obvious feelings; a social gathering, a speech in a square, a speech therapy session, the confessional, the barracks, the bedroom and such like."[76] The 1975 version included specific directions for varying degrees of amplification and reverberation for each vocal part, allowing greater control of balance and spatiality; another considerable contribution to the dramatic effect.

The text for *A-Ronne* is comprised of three stanzas dealing respectively with beginning, middle and end. Sanguineti's text, especially written for Berio to set into a work, lacks substantial syntax. Semantics are then insular to the single word rather than affected by syntactic factors, and the reader is forced to search for meanings in other textual elements and relations: Sanguineti's idiosyncratic use of punctuation, frequent use of quotation, juxtaposition of contradictory ideas, deliberately simplistic organizational procedures, multilingualism, attention to the aural qualities of words and alliterative and onomatopoeic processes[77].

Berio accosts the challenge as an old problem "which is as vast and ancient as language itself"[78] and a fundamental problem and theme of all vocal music: the vocal articulation as *meaning*. The procedures which often organize the work's course are musical; use of inflections and intonations, development of alliterations and transitions between sound and noise, occasional use of elementary melodies, polyphonies and heterophonies[79]. Berio's documentary on Sanguineti's poem is primordial as it uses gestures common to all aural experiences "from daily speech to theatre, where changes in expression imply and document changes in meaning."[80] The articulation is the central component of gesture in *A-Ronne*; charged and carrying a 'story' (see Approach—language and gesture, p. 2), resisting to codify into symbols and in that making the work both rich with meaning and open. The resulting "theatre of the ears"—an inscription often used by Berio to label *A-Ronne*—may also suggest a vague connection with the late 16th century madrigals, which actual, musical resonance is prevalent in the work.

The original version of the text

The multilingual poem by Eduardo Sanguineti hovers around ideas of beginning, middle and end. Sanguineti used fleeting references to multiple literary sources. In the poem these references are given corporeal form when identified with mouth, phallus and anus. Berio combs the poem time after time, presenting multiple semantic inflections implied by the open and ambiguous nature of the text, and, as David Osmond Smith describes the work "using these shifts in semantic implication as the material from which to build [a] large-scale structure."[81]

The poem is divided in three short strophes. The text is a rigorous and obsessive display of quotations in different languages: the beginning of the New Testament of John (in Latin, Greek and German: Luther's translation and changes made by Goethe in his *Faust*), a verse by T. S. Eliot, a verse by Dante and the first words of the Communist Manifesto. In a letter to Berio, Sanguineti specifies these sources as well as an essay by Barthes on Bataille, otherwise difficult to trace.[82] Other references and sources are mere guesses of mine. The title refers to the three abbreviations *Ette, Conne, Ronne*, with which in old Italian dictionaries the alphabet concluded after Z: hence the saying, no longer in use, "dalla A al Ronne" instead of "dalla A alla Z". [83]

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[74] (Horvath 2009, 74)
[75] (Berio, a - ronne | for 8 singers - Work Introduction n.d.)
[76] Ibid.
[77] (Horvath 2009, 76)
[78] (Berio, Centro Studi, A-ronne (author's note) n.d.)
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] (Osmond-Smith, Berio and the Art of Commentary 1975)
[82] (Sanguineti 1974)
[83] (Berio, Centro Studi, A-ronne (author's note) n.d.)

A-Ronne[4]

per Luciano Berio

1.

a: ah: ha: hamm: anfang:
                         in principio: nel mio
principio:
          am anfang: in my beginning:
                                    ach: in principio erat
das wort: en arché en:
                   verbum: am anfang war: in principio
erat: der sinn: caro: nel mio principio: o lògos: è la mia
carne:
       am anfang war: in principio: die kraft:
                                        die tat:
                                 nel mio principio:

2.

nel mezzo: in medio:
                    nel mio mezzo: où commence?: nel mio corpo:
où commence le corps humain?
                            nel mezzo: nel mezzo del cammino: nel mezzo
della mia carne:
               car la bouche est le commencement:
                                             nel mio principio
è la mia bocca: parce qu'il y a opposition: paradigme:
                                        la bouche:
l'anus:
       in my beginning: aleph: is my end:
                                    ein gespenst geht um:

3.

l'uomo ha un centro: qui est le sexe:
                                  en méso en: le phallus:
nel mio centro è il mio corpo:
                            nel mio principio è la mia parola: nel mio
centro è la mia bocca: nella mia fine: am ende:
                                          in my end: run: is my
beginning:
          l'âme du mort sort par le pied:
                                      par l'anus: nella mia fine
war das wort:
            in my end is my music:
                                ette, conne, ronne:

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[84] (Sanguineti, Stracciafoglio : poesie 1977-1979 1980)

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Upon sending the text, Sanguineti wrote to Berio and indicated the sources for some of the phrases and words. He emphasized the freedom to manipulate text (apologizing for its scarcity) and noting that the three sections "should indeed be systematically violated"[85]. He suggests that the text should be uttered in every possible variety of intonation and treated with utmost abstraction. This freedom is supported by Sanguineti's idiosyncratic use of colons and refraining from using capital letters.

I.	
a: ah: ha: hamm: anfang:	The phonemes are derived from "Anfang" (Ger.: "beginning") alludes to John 1:1: „Im Anfang war das Wort, und das Wort war bei Gott, und Gott war das Wort." ("In the beginning was the word and the word was with god"). "hamm" may allude to Hamm in Samuel Beckett's absurd-theater play *Endgame*. But Beckett himself alluded many times to biblical sources and the source may be Ham, son of Noah.[86]
in: in principio: nel mio principio:	Part of "*Nel mio principio è la mia fine*" It. translation of "In my beginning is my end" from T.S. Eliot's *East Coker* from *Four Quartets*, (first published in 1943)[87]. The poem, as the other poems in the cycle, deals with man's relation with time.
ach: in principio erat	Ger.: "Oh:" Latin: "in the beginning was." A part of "In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum." Again, John 1:1.
das wort: en arkè en:	Ger.: "the word"; Greek,"in the beginning in", same source: John 1;1[88]
verbum: am anfang war: in principio	Ger.: „word: in beginning was" It. „in beginning"
erat: der sinn: caro: *nel mio principio: o lògos:* *è la mia carne:*	Latin: "was: "Der Sinn" [des Lebens] –Ger.: "the meaning" [of life] Probably refers to Goethe's adaptation of John 1:1 in Faust; It. "dear; in my beginning; is my flesh:" also allude to further verses in the Book of John
am anfang war: in principio: die kraft:	from Faust: „Im Anfang war die Kraft!" – „In the beginning was the power!" and „Im Anfang war die Tat!"[89] – „In the beginning was the deed!"

die tat:
      nel mio principio:
	The deed
	      in my beginning

II.	
nel mezzo: in medio:	From: "Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita" It. "in the middle," opening of Dante's *La Divina commedia*, Inferno: Canto I
nel mio mezzo: où commence?: *nel mio corpo:* *où commence le corps humain?*	From Georges Bataille's: "par où commence le corps humain?" – Fr. "where begins the human body", in an essay by Roland Barthes on Georges Bataille[90]
nel mezzo: nel mezzo del *cammino: nel mezzo* *della mia carne:*	"in the middle, in the middle of the road: in the middle of my flesh:"
car la bouche est le commencement: *nel mio principio*	"because the mouth is the beginning:"
è la mia bocca: parce qu'il y a *opposition: paradigme:*	It. "it is my mouth:" Fr.: "Because there is opposition: paradigm:"
la bouche: *l'anus:*	Fr.: "the mouth: the anus:"

[85] (Sanguineti, Edoardo Sanguineti 1974)

[86] (Morrison c1983)

[87] (Eliot 1971)

[88] εν αρχη ην ο λογος και ο λογος ην προς τον θεον

[89] (Goethe c.1828)

[90] (Berio, Centro Studi, A-ronne (author's note) n.d.)

in my beginning: aleph: is my end:	Aleph is the first Hebrew letter
ein gespenst geht um:	From: "Ein Gespenst geht um in Europa – das Gespenst des Kommunismus", opening of Marx and Engel's "The Communist Manifesto"[91]; Ger.: "A specter is haunting Europe – the specter of Communism"
III.	
l'uomo ha un centro: qui est le sexe:	It. "man has a center:" Fr.: "which is the sex"
en méso en: le phallus:	*méso* Fr. a gastrointestinal element, also a prefix indicating middle
nel mio centro è il mio corpo:	It. "in my center is my body:"
nel mio principio è la mia parola: nel mio	It. "in my beginning is my word: in my"
centro è la mia bocca: nella mia fine: am ende:	It. "center is my mouth, in my end:" Ger.: "at the end"
in my end: run: is my beginning:	"run" might be an allusion to James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*: "riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay…"[92]
l'âme du mort sort par le pied:	Fr. "the soul of the dead leaves through the foot"
par l'anus: nella mia fine	
war das wort:	
in my end is my music:	Allusion to a private letter between Sanguineti and Berio
ette, conne, ronne:	Three abbreviations (Ette, Conne, Ronne, in their Florentine designation)

Sanguineti already utilized the concept of beginning, middle, and end in the text he provided Berio for *Laborintus II*. His writing has a cyclic nature: the first fragment from T.S. Eliot is introduced in the first stanza ("in my beginning" and "nel mio principio"), and the quotation is completed in the second and third stanzas. The words "opposition: paradigme" appear the middle of the second stanza, at about the golden ratio of the poem. Unlike Berio's setting, in the poem these two words appear only once; their meaning is however central both to the poem and to the musical setting. The word *Paradigm* means a typical example, pattern or a model and also a basic term in linguistics for the set of relationships a linguistic unit has with other units in a specific context (e.g. conjugations of verbs or the declensions of nouns). The linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, in whose work Berio was interested, used the term *paradigm* to describe relationships between words that are contrasted to syntagmatic relationships. That may be the purpose of the word *opposition*, along with its being a centerpiece summation of the opposites presented in the poem: *my beginning / my end*; *la bouche / l'anus*; *Aleph / ette-conne-ronne*.

Sanguineti's own analysis of this poem marks the passage of time with the divisions of beginning, middle, and end. Through the treatment of the text the poem pulls the reader into a psychological metamorphosis by the juxtaposition of abstract concepts such as beginning and end and corporal concepts.[93]

Sound Elements

A thorough and comprehensive analysis of the sound elements in *A-Ronne* is beyond the scope of this paper. A few marking points and examples will however open a window to this fundamental aspect of the work.

In his poetry Sanguineti often makes use of alliteration and assonance and the first line is a good example:

a: ah: ha: hamm: anfang:

Examining the sound elements of the line suggests a physiological representation of the entire journey from beginning to end in one compact phrase: uttering the syllables requires an interesting transition between various areas of the speech apparatus (Figure 3).

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[91] (Marx and Engels 1848)
[92] (Joyce 1939, 3)
[93] (Sanguineti, Edoardo Sanguineti 1974)

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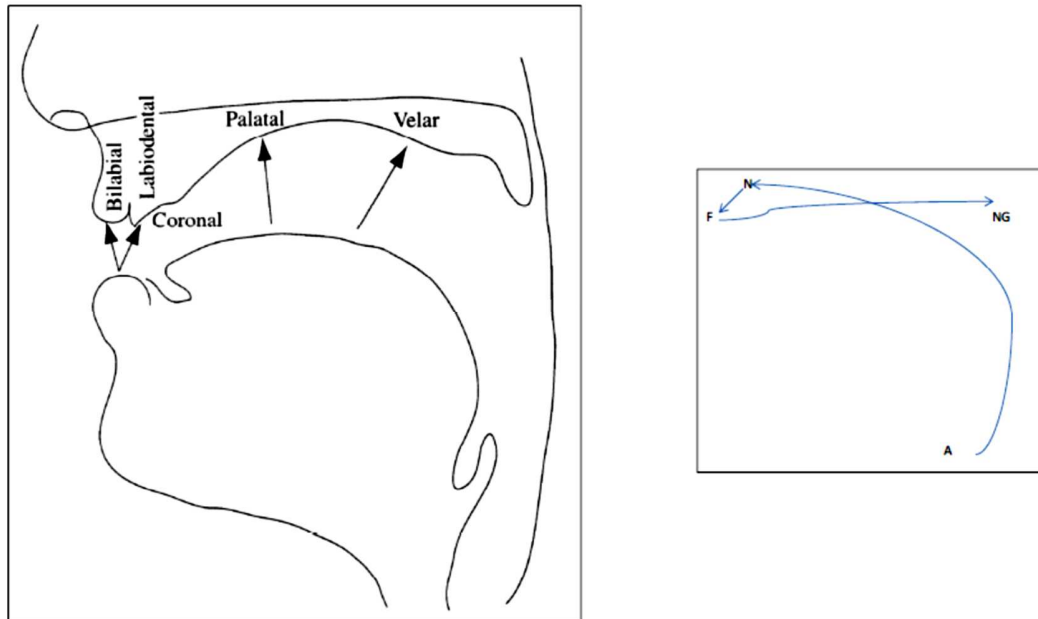
Figure 3. A sagittal section of the vocal tract and Phonetic locations of the word 'anfang' (Lagefoged 2006)

The following chart describes the articulatory gestures and suggests an interpretation of the physiological journey of the word *anfang* as a demarcation of the first stage of the poem, the beginning, the mouth.

Phoneme/Syllable	physiological production	Possible poetic interpretation
a	voiced, attack by the glottis – (glottal stop), glottal voiced (glottal ejective)	Wide opening of the beginning—the mouth—and sudden inner opening further into the body
ah	Glottal shoot out of the voiced sound followed by air flow	Signs of inner organs (the lungs) not obstructed by the speech apparatus
ha	Inversion of the above	Regression from lungs back to vocal cords
hamm	Addition of bilabial, nasal sonorant	The mouth is now closing and the utterance is enclosed within; the 'corporal venue' is now defined
an-	Earlier phenomenon ('a') is now hemmed by coronal, alveolar sound (the tip of the tongue touching the ridge behind the teeth)	The mouth cavity is reduced from lips further to ridge; action proceeds inside
-fa-	voiceless labiodental	Bouncing back to the lips, but voiceless. Compare to the voiceless 'ha'
-g[94]	velar plosive	The deepest utterance of the mouth, marking the boundaries of the corporal stage of 'beginning'
-ng	voiced velar sonorant	Deep restriction of the mouth followed by opening into the inside, into the body
a**nf**a**ng**		The word (Ger: "beginning") marks the borders of the mouth

Figure 4. Articulatory gestures of the word 'anfang'

Berio lingers on the beginning of the phrase, experimenting with the open 'a', but immediately contrasts it with the half-open 'in' (Figure 5). His treatment of the text is more verbal than phonetic: full phrases appear early as page

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[94] The German pronunciation of final '–ng' almost omits the 'g', but the Swingle Singers, with whom Berio worked on the piece, do utter the 'g'.

1 ("am anfang: in my beginning:", "ach: in principio erat") and the listener is then hurled into chaotic zone of confused varied information.

Figure 5. A-Ronne, Tenor-1, p. 1

A salient degree of uniformity is found in p. 4, when voices tenor-2, soprano-1, soprano-2 and alto-1 utter a laugh (and open 'ha') and mark an end of a section. This section, although varied and chaotic, is distinguished with accented use of the word 'in' and single vowels. The vowels require open mouth and the word 'in' signals the direction (semantically, not phonetically) as if Berio is ushering us into the poem, into the work, into the body. The interior into which we are ushered is made of the entire verbal material of the first verse; the phrases separated by single vowels (Figure 7). The result is of disordered small talk at a social gathering dotted with sporadic pitches, a "Babel" texture. This texture is already found in previous pages, but the contrast between pitch and 'small talk' is more marked due to the repetitive and subdued quality of the texture. The Babel texture is a central feature in the entire work. Its first appearance is balanced by contrast by Berio's immediate use of complete and clear verbal phrases and single vowels in page 1.

The differentiation between single vowels and phrases and their duality is augmented in page 6. After tenor-1 sets about with longer and louder syllables and words, all other vocalists erupt in the first uniform utterance, shouting all together at the same time phrases and words of the first stanza. The reverberation of the amplified voices is set to zero while tenor-1 is reverberating as if already deeper in a cave (the body?).

If Sanguineti's delicate phonetic transitions are at all tended, it is only by way of paraphrase, later, in page 8 (Figure 6). The ensemble progresses in almost perfect unison from 'ach' to 'hamm-a', 'ah' and finally a whispered 'a'(sounding as a long 'h'). The phonetic journey in the vocal tract goes open from the open 'a' into the voiceless uvular fricative 'ch' (in the German pronunciation), air flow into the bilabial and the ultimate opening of the throat with the long whispered 'h'. This process is however answered with a single belch of bass-2, both producing a consonance of extreme physiological depth and perhaps also humorously and semantically comments on the fascistic episode.

Figure 6. A-Ronne, P. 8 (Tenor 2 is doubled almost identically by the rest of the ensemble)

Figure 7. A-Ronne, p. 5

Analysis

Rather than searching or even assuming objectivity in the work—a coherent set of norms according to which expectations and logic are extrapolated—I intend to demonstrate a wealth of associations and attempt to find a sense of inner-subjectivity. The reason for such an open choice is the wealth of layers on which Berio constructs the work and the flexible sense of structure the work can be understood to have. The wealth of information may resemble an overwhelming library "that is unable to offer coherence, but can receive it from the right visitors."[95] Berio lures us to go back to the work, inquire its contents and listen again by baits of stylistic accessibility and humor, but perhaps

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[95] (Berio, Remembering the future 2006, 9)

most of all by the numerous instances of babel-areas. However complex and confusing these textures are, they always offer us a salient layer to cling to, or a tickling homogeneity to indulge in, and the prospect of discovering something new within their dense richness. Since the work specifically deals with the notion of temporal structure, the comparison to life is unavoidable: beginning, middle and end are there whether we understand or not the logic that governs them; as long as the structure and its details are complex and interesting enough, we might be inclined to either explore it or indulge in it.

Rather than setting Sanguineti's poem to music, Berio analyzed the text and generated it into vocal situations and different expressive characters. The poem is repeated about twenty times and rendered a musical sense through the relation that is established between the written text and a "grammar" of vocal behavior. It is the articulation that continuously modifies the text's meaning and its referential aspects. The written text and the vocal behavior interact in various ways, and always producing new meanings. In fact, this is what happens in all vocal music and in daily speech, where the relation between the two—the grammatical one and the acoustic one—is responsible for infinite possibilities of human speech and singing.[96]

The work does not lend itself to simple sectional division. There are no clear borders between sections corresponding to those of the poem but rather a general sense of sections, a sense created by distinct or climactic points of several parallel processes and techniques:

1. Gradual introduction of the text of each verse
2. Prevalence and projection of certain textual elements
3. Vocal styles
4. 'Social' situations and rate of uniformity
5. Pitch material

The following sections tend to each one of these layers and will be followed by generalizations in regards to the comprehensive notion of structure of the piece.

Berio's evaluation of the composition is not entirely clear and he suggests three main descriptions of *A-Ronne*:

1. An "elementary vocalization of a text and its transformation into something equally elementary."[97]
2. The work is comprised of the setting of a text and its subsequent transformation into a musical piece. Instead of writing a work that would create a musical setting to accompany the text and enhance its aesthetic value in the manner of a song, the music is a commentary and elaboration of the text. Berio attempts to explore the poem's meaning just "as one would speak of a documentary on a painting or on an exotic country". It is Berio's documentary of Sanguineti's poem.
3. *A-Ronne* is not a theatrical work in the traditional sense: it contains no physical movement or substantial narrative. Berio then refers to it more exclusively as a "representative madrigal, the 'theatre of the ear'". Berio says that even though the surface processes of the piece are complex, the underlying goal is simple: the wide spectrum of vocal effects and styles used in the work are meant to evoke the familiar and ultimately result in a musical and engaging experience for the listener: "… and something of a naïf[sic] painting where the broad canvas of situations…can always be linked to the elementary, to recognizable feelings and states of mind."

Text – distribution

Although Berio faithfully follows Sanguineti's instruction to 'violate' the order of the original text, he nevertheless introduces the verses gradually. The work begins with text from the first verse. The chaos in pages 1-6 creates an impression of searching for language—any kind of language—and meaning, for the inception of 'das Wort'. The violent recitation of a large continuous part of the first stanza by tenor-1 is perhaps the emergence of the Word and the work's full plunge into the poem. The second verse first appears in page 11 (about 4:45). Traces of the third verse can be found in score as early as page 17, but only at page 22 (11:37) is it sufficiently intelligible. As the piece spans about 30 minutes, it is obvious that the verses are not equally dispersed. Indeed, another important

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[96] (Berio, Centro Studi, A-ronne (author's note) n.d.)
[97] (Berio, a - ronne | for 8 singers - Work Introduction n.d.)

textual process begins at p. 18; first signs of disintegration of words into single syllables and phonemes. It appears after long episodes dedicated almost exclusively to the text 'ein gespenst' ('a specter'), and this ongoing and growing tendency of disintegration leads to Berio's most bold and exciting musical-linguistic experiments in *A-ronne*. In fact, from the point the third verse is introduced the two previous verses reappear again and again, scanned forwards and backwards as a counterpoint to the ongoing disintegration process. While the end of the setting is dedicated to the third verse, there are phrases in the third verse that appear in the original poem also in previous verses: 'nel mio principio', è la mia bocca', and the words 'l'anus' and 'das wort'.

Prevalent textual elements

Prevalence and projection of certain textual elements depend on the rate of their intelligibility. The level of intelligibility is of special importance to the work, as it presents, defines and manipulates the spectrum of value of the vocal utterance: from language objects (words, phrases) to mere sounds, as far as imitating animal sounds. This layer of the work engages the listener with the rich strata of vocal material and actually demonstrates the connection between text and music. The piece in fact reaches a climatic point with the penultimate phrase of the poem "in my end is my music:"

The work deals with the scope of textual possibilities and opens with an introduction of the general attitude: prominence of phonemes and textual blunder over clear textual utterances. The poem itself lacks sentences of coherent large scale and to that Berio adds techniques of blurring and concealing: pages 1-5 are made mostly of cluttered utterances of many sorts with the single word 'in' sticking out and short complete sentences are overlapping one another. The first significant clear textual exclamation appears in p. 6 but it is merely gestural; a 'dictator'[98] is shouting short nonsense-utterances and the rest of the ensemble shouts back hails in unison, but comprised of different words. The outcome of this episode is sheer noise, as if conventional text has finally succumbed to paralingual elements (Figure 8). Meanwhile, bass-2 is struggling to pronounce anything that would make any textual sense and only hardly succeeds in spitting out 'logos'—perhaps a cry for a principle, reasoning and rationale. He then manages to utter 'die Kraft' and 'die Tat' which makes a logical answer to his struggle: the rationale is in the power and in the deed—in combining the two into gesture—rather than in the semantics and in textual syntax.

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[98] All such titles are adopted from dramatic directions in the score

Figure 8. A-Ronne, P. 9 [99]

The next clear text is the sentence 'ein Gespenst geht um'. It is introduced in page 13 and then spans for an exceptionally long episode from page 14 to page 18. In fact, with one exception, it is the only complete sentence that is set to full, rich and stylistically consistent music, mostly syllabic; a pseudo madrigal. The one exception is a soprano-1 and alto-1 brief canon in pages 44-46, soon submerging back into single syllables. Leaving aside Berio's political inclinations, I interpret the 'haunting specter' as the long-cultivated and formalized European culture, its language and its music; a culture that claims its civilized achievements also through sublimation of the instinct and the impulse. Whether it is religion, Marxism or the intellectualism (all represented in the work, mostly satirically), it is the codification that underpins their logic and rhetoric. This cultural specter penetrates the gestural world of *A-Ronne* in page 13 (Figure 9) and beautifully manifests its exclusive relation to 'ordered' and traditional pitched music, in contrast with all other vocal utterances.

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[99] (Berio, A-Ronne 1975)

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Figure 9. A-Ronne, p. 13

Unlike most of the textual material, the sentence 'ein Gespenst geht um' completely disappears and uttered only once more only in page 52. A textual clutter results from the tenor-1 and bass-1 exclaiming long, fast and stuttering unsynchronized sermons. The culmination of their speeches is that sentence in loud unison, a call of despair and protest: we are haunted by the specter; our only alternative to making any sense is obtuse unity.

The second significantly clear and outstanding text is the long process of cooperation between Tenor-1 and bass-1. It begins at page 23 with a sergeant and a subordinate, and at page 26 they become equal in volume and stature, and their happy interaction (hence: 'happy dialog') goes on until page 49. However clear the text in that span is, it reaches two points of climax, at pages 30 and 39, with the sentences being dissected to their most basic phonetic elements, one vocalist uttering only consonants and the other only vowels (Figure 10). They repeat the last segment five times, until the phrase 'In my end is my music' is clearly reconstituted. And indeed, the ensuing parts are mostly 'music' in the traditional sense: pitched, harmonized material.

Figure 10. A-Ronne, P. 39

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Vocal styles

Too a certain extent the episodes are characterized by the vocal styles applied: paralinguistic elements techniques such as bouche fermée singing, whispering, whistling and other percussive sounds created with the mouth. Singing is either pitched or narrating a general contour; there are discrete melodic fragments and lines and harmonized sections at different rates of counterpoint. Spoken material is highly diverse: yelling, shouting, solemn, desperate, sensual, 'self-righteous', 'outgoing and happy', etc.—a comprehensive dramatic palette of verbal expression. I find that the vocal styles are applied mainly to convey the general process that the composition conveys: the passage from text to music.

The introduction shifts quickly from vowels into consonants into semantics (Figure 5, page 18). The mixed styles and techniques reach a homogenous verbal material at page 6 with the yelling dictator and crowd and proceeds to mere noise at page 9. Noise is in fact the essence of consonants, and the dichotomy of consonants and vowels is a central issue throughout the piece. Bass-2 struggles desperately with the consonants (Figure 11), at page 10 the entire ensemble is 'stuck' on consonants (Figure 12) and finally they all find a compromise between a consonant and sound with a long rolled "rrrr" (Figure 13).

Figure 11. A-Ronne, bass-2 p. 9

Figure 12. A-Ronne, p. 10   Figure 13. A-Ronne, p. 11

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A mixture of styles follows, transforming gradually into a section of pitched music of 'ein Gespenst um' and an ongoing murmur of priests. Traditionally, setting of words to music is in fact the harnessing of vowels to serve pitch. The vowels await advance towards their emancipation through a vowel-aria in page 20 and an unpitched one in the happy dialog at page 27 and on. By that time the vowels are juxtaposed with consonants as equal contenders and remarry at pages 30 and 39 via the fast exchange of tenor-1 and bass-1 (Figure 10). From now on music is the prevalent element, interrupted sporadically by retreats to different vocal styles. An interesting one is the text whispering in page 51; whispering voids vowels of pitch. Vowels reach ultimate prevalence and constitute the climax of the work at the end of the piece with grand homorhythmic chords.

Rate of uniformity and the theater of the ear

Lacking theatrical elements as the visual aspects and narrative, the theater of the ear is accomplished by dramatizing vocal and textual elements into situations of recognizable, familiar and obvious feelings. Elements of theater: timbre, spatial audio characteristics (panning, reverberation, amplification) ambience, 'social' groupings and groupings of behavior. Berio says:

> Shall I tell you what my theatrical idea is? Well, it's to take two simple and banal forms of behavior, say, "walking in the rain" and "typing" and to put them on stage in such a way that they transform one another and produce by morphogenesis a third form of behavior: we don't really know what this is because we've never seen it before, and it's not the elementary combination of the two familiar forms of behavior.[100]

The social situations are characterized mainly through gestures and the composition of their participants—number of vocalists, gender and vocal range. Their 'social' characteristics are closely related to the rate of uniformity of each social situation (perhaps the most salient elements in *A-ronne*): uniformity of text, rhythm, articulation and dynamics. There are different rates of uniformity, ranging from tutti similarity (even one point of total identity), sections of continuous and repeated yet heterogenic material, and uniformity of only several of the vocalists, contrasting a solo or duets of other parts. A theatrical drama is taking place with a lively mosaic of social interactions (Figure 14). They are of many sorts, most of them indeed formed by irregular combinations of different vocal utterances from the wide vocal palette: sentences (of some sense or mostly nonsensical), single words, syllables, phonemes, daily vocal nonverbal gestures, accurately pitched or mere contours, various types of polyphonies—all arranged in an ever changing way, the moods and the individual dramatic expression of each voice are specifically and meticulously directed.

The different types of 'social' occurrences presented in the following chart include these rough definitions:

- Monolog
- Dialog
- Ordered group – high unity of contents or texture among the group
- Partially ordered group
- Disordered heterogeneous group – this babel of voices in which text fragments are rapidly recited by many vocalists simultaneously. These textures (already experimented in *Laborintus II* and in *Sinfonia*) usually span long enough time to actually gain a homogenous sense
- Variegated counterpoint – a very general definition. Its importance is the supremacy of pitched, often rather traditional style counterpoint.
- Vocal gestures – the work contains many sighs, finger pops, whistling, gasps etc. Only singular such events are present in this table
- Animals – bird, owl, bark

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[100] (Daalmonte and András Varga 1985, 102)

Figure 14. 'social' interactions in A-Ronne – Social 'events' are displayed in the order of their appearance. The word AND appear between events that occur at the same time. When events ocur exclussively, the timing of their exclussive occurrence is indicated in the rightmost column; exceptionally long timings are in bold font.

P.						Exclussively:
1	dialog, inquisitive	disordered heterogeneous group				
2						0'22"
3						
4			Group; partially ordered: sustained notes			
5	Group, ordered: laughing	dialog, short, angry	disordered heterogeneous group			
6	disordered heterogeneous group	AND	Monolog			
7	Group, ordered: shouting, tightly together	AND				
8				Voc gesture: belch		
9	disordered heterogeneous group					
10						
11	Group, ordered: rrrr, tightly together		disordered heterogeneous group			
12						1'0"
13						
14	Group, ordered: singing	AND	Dialog – priests			
15		AND	Dialog – intimate			
16						
17			Monolog, babbling			
18						
19						
20	Variegated counterpoint					1' "
21		AND	Monolog – desperate			
22						
23		AND	Dialog - sergeant and subordinate	AND	Monolog - prompter to T1	
24						
25						
26	Animals	Group, ordered: "denden"	Dialog - sergeant and subordinate are now happily equal			
27						0'57"
28				Group, ordered: "denden"		(very sparse group singing)
29						
30						
31	Group, ordered: "denden"	disordered heterogeneous group				
32	Dialog - intimate	AND	Animals			
33				Monolog - "denden"	Group, ordered: "denden"	
34	Dialog - sergeant and subordinate are now happily equal	AND	Group, ordered: sustained pitches			
35						
36				Group, ordered: "denden"		
37						
38						
39	disordered heterogeneous group	Dialog - sergeant and subordinate are now happily equal - **climax cooperation**				Dialog: 0'27"
40	Group, ordered: "denden"	Monolog - vocal excercise				
41						
42	Variegated counterpoint				Variegated counterpoint with a bass ostinato episode: 6'55"	**1'41"**
43						
44						
45						
46						
47						
48						
49						

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#	Col 1	Col 2	Col 3	Col 4	Col 5	Col 6	Time
50		Group, ordered: unison – **climax**					0'11"
51	Bass ostinato	AND	disordered heterogeneous group				
52			Dialog - opposition of stuttering and fast	dialog, short, angry			
53	Variegated counterpoint	AND	Monolog - didacttic agitated				
54							
55							
56							
57							
58				Voc gesture: clearing throat			
59		Group, ordered: octaves					Duet in p. 59: 0'59"
60	Group, ordered: "denden"						0'10"
61	Group; partially ordered: sustained notes	Group, ordered: unison					
62	Variegated counterpoint						0'24"
63	disordered heterogeneous group	Group, ordered: chord	Variegated counterpoint	disordered heterogeneous group	Group, ordered: chord		
64	Variegated counterpoint	disordered heterogeneous group	Group, ordered: chord				
65		Group; partially ordered: sustained notes	Variegated counterpoint				
66				Group, ordered: chord	disordered heterogeneous group	Group; partially ordered: sustained notes	
67				disordered heterogeneous group	Group; partially ordered: sustained notes		
68	Group, ordered: chord – **climax**						0'37"
69				Group; partially ordered: sustained notes	Fade		

Even without the verbal content the social drama is structured by several salient events:

1. Long monologs appear a short while after the beginning and then a bit longer while before the end, dissecting the work to three sections (however not corresponding to divisions by other factors). The monologs are especially salient and prominent, as they are both accompanied by the entire ensemble; the first accompaniment extremely uniform and the second versatile, but comprised of consistent and coherent musical style.
2. The first climax, the culmination of cooperation between tenor-1 and bass-1 is located at the golden mean of the work (both in pages of the score and the *Swingle Swingers* recorded rendition)[101]
3. Within the interesting counterpoint of events there are a few instances of exclusive occurrences; exclusivity that emphasizes their content. The notable ones are the disordered heterogeneous group at pp. 12-13, the happy dialog in pp. 27-30, the variegated counterpoint at pp. 42-49 and the three points of climax. The ostinato bass exists also within the variegated counterpoint events; therefore, when it appears by itself at pp. 51-52 between two adjacent contrapuntal events, it may be perceived as an episode within it, creating the largest span of a single texture (although interrupted by other textures in the middle).
4. Highly versatile areas of many changing and interacting types of 'social' occurrences are pp. 23-28 and pp. 63-67.

Pitch material

Pitch material is of marginal importance in *A-Ronne*. Its main role perhaps is being vocally, gesturally and culturally different from other vocal styles. However, Berio applies certain intervals abundantly—mainly within the range of a major third—but it seems that more than anything else, their abundance owes to the convenience of their

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[101] (Singers 1990)

singing. The 'ein Gespenst' section is comprised of banal, unsophisticated four-part clichés in the tonality of A minor, and at p. 37 chords with a somewhat jazzy flavor are introduced, as part of the general rejuvenation that accompanies the happy dialog. Pages 40-41 present a search for a center note, but the harmonic clutter does not suggest it should be a tonal center. The voices gradually focus on note D4—a convenient unison for the ranges of the ensemble—and with a melodic scale-progress of the bass (Figure 15), D in fact becomes an undeniable tonal center for the following section.

Figure 15. A-Ronne, p. 51, bass-2

Pages 53-58 are homage to the Swingle Singers: the section echoes with their characteristic techniques and sound (best known from their 1963 album *Jazz Sébastien Bach*) fused elements of Baroque instrumental music with jazz rhythms and scat-like syllables.[102] The section truly overflow with their routine and gimmick and all the while tenor-2 recites the overused text over and over in a didactic and agitated manner, rendering it apparent importance. The section reaches a point of total absurdity when the voices slowly disappear, leaving the excited orator with two sopranos stuck on a repeated measure like a scratched vinyl record. Bass-1 clears his throat as if signaling them politely to stop their ridiculous chattering. The music however goes on with very vague tonality, a new center is established on E and later another perfect unison occurs at page 61, on C4. Range gradually expands and the work ends with a grand finale on C; first without the third and then later with a minor third, but only shortly before everything quickly dissolves.

The importance is not so much in the details, but, again, in the gestures: the vocal melodic quality, the general harmonic sound of the different styles (madrigal, jazz), the notion of movement from one center to another and the spectacular closing and opening of the ensemble's range. All these support the evolution of the linguistic components (mainly the vowels) and the cultural charges of the different sections.

Summary of analysis

Berio created relationships between word and sound, poetry and music in a totality of performance in which all the components in *A-Ronne* develop towards integration. The shift from one element to the other is at times abrupt and at time imperceptible, drawing different rates of attention to the difference between a logical-semantic mode of apprehension and a musical mode. The graph in Figure 16 shows the gradual introduction of the three verses of the original poem, each presenting further progress through a body. The wavering line represents the number of overlapping or short and adjacent 'social' occurrences (a graphical representation of the chart in Figure 14 in p. 26) Two monologs demarcate an introductory section and an ending section and a substantial large section in the middle, where the main compositional process take place: consonants' noise is followed by the 'religious' and 'ideological' music and then by an aria of vowels. The first and the last subjects of these three episodes are then projected by way of a lively dialog and reach a climax, when vowels and consonants not only create textual sense, but the text expresses a motto: "In my end is my music". The pitched music reaches a first climax in the shape of absolute unity—a perfect unison—and later a final climax with rhythmic unity but diverse voices.
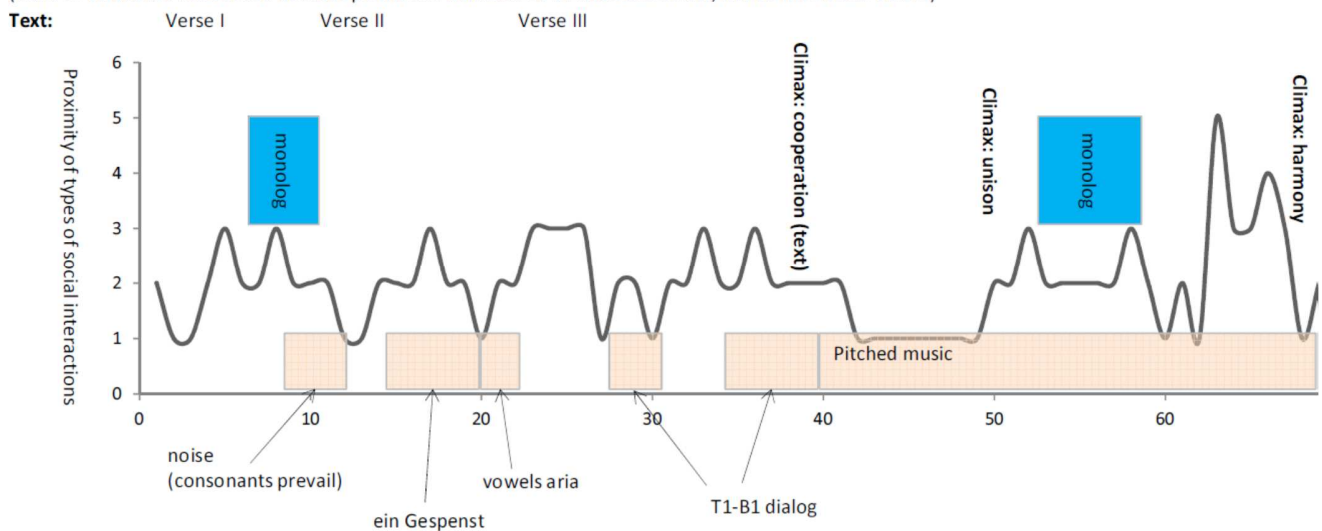
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[102] (Smolko 2013)

Figure 16. A-Ronne, general structure

As Berio wished in his article "Poesia e musica", the result is indeed a structure that is commonly governed and regulated by text and music, without any of them having the supremacy. The main process of the work, in which elementary material—phonetic and semantic—found its ultimate incarnation in music, is a property of both the text and the 'musical' work (is it at all a musical work?). Even the ending seal of mere brute force of the choral ending is balanced with the tail of the three obsolete and obscure abbreviations: *Ette, Conne, Ronne*.

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