

CONTEMPORARY AND TRADITIONAL PATTERNS IN BRUNO MADERNA'S VOCAL WORKS

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SUMMARY. Bruno Maderna was one of the most appreciated composers and conductors of his time. Maderna's opera covers a wide range of sonorities and combinations of vocal and instrumental groups: piano and voice, chamber orchestra and voice, double orchestra with soloists and chorus, orchestra and piano, orchestra and solo wind instruments, orchestra groups and percussion, violin concerts, orchestra and electronic music, pure orchestral pieces, music for radio, film and ballet. Maderna's musical language and structure follow the path of his colleagues and involve a complex harmony. However, his vocal idiom has consistency in the melody, clarity in the harmony and uses defined phrases. The vocal score, especially in the lied, presents a relatively simple form, but structured upon the modern musical thought. The lyrical phrase along with the contemporary pattern and the traditional forms are general characteristics of Maderna's opera.

Keywords: 20th century music, Darmstadt, singing technique, musical form, Italian songs. Electronic Music, work in progress, *opera aperta*, improvisation

Bruno Maderna's status within the 20th century music

Bruno Maderna's creative, conducting and teaching activity (Venice, April 21st, 1920 - Darmstadt, November 13th, 1973) had contributed to the dissemination of the new music across the European continent and had also been echoed in North America. Maderna was a complex personality of the contemporary music panorama through the importance of his works and his conducting and teaching career. He activated as a professor, composer and conductor at the Darmstadt School, conducting numerous premieres and engaging himself in the promotion of the new music. It has been a constant presence of the school since 1949 until his disappearance in 1973.

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Maderna was one of the first Italian composers who embraced the serial idea and the post-Weberian rationality, especially in principles of construction and aspects of symmetry.

He was considered a pioneer in the electronic music field and of the new concepts of work in progress and *opera aperta*. The composer enfolded the merits of his predecessors, but he also harmonized with the trends of the modern age, thus creating an authentic style in which the new currents blend symbiotically with the coordinates of tradition.

He directed both his own compositions (many of his premieres being directed by the composer himself) and contemporary operas (he was a conductor specialized in contemporary productions²), but also compositions by Monteverdi and Mozart.

Life and career. Composer, conductor and professor

Although Maderna had a struggling childhood because he changed tutors and residence, he always found himself involved in musical environments.

Ever since he was very young Maderna had been participated in musical entertainment activities with his father's band. The notoriety he gained conducting since his childhood in the renowned theatres of northern Italy (in 1927 Maderna was conducting the Theatre alla Scala from Milan, later he had a conducting activity in the theatres of Trieste, Venice and Verona) entrusted him with the support of the fascist regime, calling him its own exceptional child³.

After travelling for studies in Milan, Verona and Rome, at the age of 20 Maderna gets the diploma in composition at the Santa Cecilia Academy in Rome. One year later he meets Gian Francesco Malipiero, a defining meeting for his future path. In the Venetian Conservatory and at the Biblioteca Marciana from Venice Maderna studies and transcribes with Malipiero Ancient music and Renaissance polyphony, echoes of which will be found in Maderna's compositions. Therefore, Maderna assembled his musical compositions involving the traditional idiom within the avant-garde thought.

² I had the honour to carry a discussion with Professor Cornel Țăranu about Maderna because they met in Darmstadt. According to Professor Țăranu, Maderna was considered to be Boulez and Stockhausen's favourite conductor. Professor Țăranu attended the Darmstadt classes back in 1968, 1969 and 1972. In 1969, for three weeks, he studied under Maderna's conducting guidance the operas *Pierrot lunaire* (Schönberg) and *Le marteau sans maître* (*The Hammer without a Master*, Boulez), with the participation of a professional ensemble.

³ Rossana Dalmonte, article *Maderna [Grossato], Bruno [Brunetto]*, in: *Grove Music Online*, editor Stanley Sadie, p. 273.

Maderna is anchored in his studies with his professor and friend Malipiero, often speaking of the passion for ancient music inspired by his Master. Malipiero loved modern music to the same extent as he was concerned with traditional music. Although he did not want to create strictly in the new style manners, he had an open musical thought and encouraged his disciples like Nono and Maderna to experience the new concepts and directions.

After the end of the Second World War (Maderna was enlisted and even detained by the Italian legion affiliated to the Nazis on 2nd February 1945), his activity became extremely dynamic, first by participating for the first time as a conductor and composer in the International Festival of Contemporary Music of Venice⁴, a manifestation that offered a totally new musical material.

The 9th edition in the 1946 festival introduces Maderna, who conducts the titles *Serenata (Serenade)* for 11 instruments, his own creation, Riccardo Malipiero's *Piccolo concerto (Small concert)* for piano and chamber orchestra, Valentino Bucchi's *La dolce pena (The sweet sorrow)*, for voice and 9 instruments, Guido Turchi's *Trio* for flute, clarinet, viola and Camillo Togni's *Variazioni (Variations)* for piano and orchestra.

His presence in the circles of contemporary composers is a constant one, and since 1949 he attends the Darmstadt courses, where he activates as a professor, conductor and composer, being one of the prominent figures from Ferienkurse and one of the basic members of the school.

The involvement of the technology in the process of sound creation has always been a spectacular solution. In 1955, Maderna along with Luciano Berio founded the Studio di Fonologia from Milan. On the international map, there already existed such laboratories for sound transformation: the first one was Studio für Elektronische Musik Köln (1951) of the German radio, after that Groupe de Recherche de Musique Concrète (1951), Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center (New York, 1951) and the laboratory founded by Herman Scherchen at Gravesano (1954).

The Studio of Phonology was founded at the basis of the creation of a group of valuable composers of the time, concerned with the technical processing of sound, with the editing of the *Incontri Musicali (Musical Meetings)* magazine, which Maderna was responsible for in the period 1956-1960, and with the coordination of artistic and scientific manifestations that aimed to make the new musical scores known to the public.

⁴ The International Festival of Contemporary Music of Venice takes place since 1930 (first edition 7th-14th of September), annually or every two years. The very first edition presented operas by Malipiero, Casella, Pizzetti, Respighi, Kodaly, Bartók, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Milhaud, Hindemith, Debussy, Honegger, but also Vivaldi, Corelli and Haydn. The programme is diverse and aims to inform the public about the new international music. During the festival there will be first auditions of some works that will become emblematic for the 20th century. The festival is still carrying out a music dissemination activity even nowadays.

The studio has become one of the main centres of research, experimentation and music production in the international panorama, through the contribution of the two composers. Berio and Maderna were among the first composers to experience synthetic sonorities processed by technical means and to have developed a creative and research activity in an electronic studio.

Maderna was preoccupied with the ancient Italian music (especially of the Venetian composers, the result of the study with Malipiero): in 1967 he transcribes *Orfeo* by Monteverdi, in 1968 Belli's *Orfeo dolente* (*Sorrowful Orfeo*, fragments of which he included in the 1968th *Hyperion* version in Bologna) and in 1972 transcribes for the orchestra Gabrieli's composition *Canzon XVI* (*Song 16*, later included in *Ritratto di Erasmo*) and other operas composed by Vivaldi, Galuppi, Pergolesi and Stradella. He also transcribed composers out of the Latin territory, transcripts that he will use and even cite in his opera: Rameau (*Platée, Plataea*), Bach (*Ricercar a 6* from *Musikalisches Opfer, The Musical Offering*), Gluck (*Danza degli spiriti beati* from *Orfeo ed Euridice*, included in the sound track of the movie *Sangue a Ca'Foscari* from 1946, *Dance of the blessed spirits*), Musorgski (*Pictures at an exhibition*).

In 1971 Maderna becomes the main conductor of the RAI Orchestra from Milan and proposes the following repertoire: „Half of the repertoire should be composed of operas by composers since Monteverdi, or even earlier works, to Mahler, 30% of works from Mahler to Webern, and the rest to be post-war and contemporary music”⁵.

Maderna's didactic activity develops rapidly, he is invited to lecture in Milan (1957-1958), at the Darlington College in England (1960-1962), in Rotterdam (1967), Salzburg (1967-1970), Berkshire (Tanglewood-Massachusetts) and Juilliard in New York (1971-1972).

At the same time, during this period he leads an intensive conducting career all around the world. Maderna was an appreciated conductor in the United States, Japan, Argentina, Italy, Austria, Germany, both at the direction of his own opera and the works of composers such as Monteverdi, Mozart, Debussy, Malipiero, Schönberg, Webern, Stravinsky, Ligeti and other contemporary composers (he was one of the conductors of Stockhausen's *Gruppen* premiere, together with Stockhausen and Boulez).

In 1963 he transferred to Darmstadt, obtaining German citizenship, where he would live with his second wife, Beate Christine Köpnick and their three children.

⁵ Letter addressed by the composer to the management of the RAI from Milan
<http://larevue.conservatoiredeparis.fr/index.php?id=650#ftn12>.

Ten years later Maderna dies shortly after conducting the premieres of his last two works, the opera *Satyricon* and the *Oboe Concerto no. 3*.

The works for voice

Maderna's compositions are not entirely published. There are lots of scores missing or incomplete or not edited. Nevertheless, the published works are unlikely to be produced because of the great ensembles used by the composer. This is the reason why only big theatres and cultural institutions can afford to represent such productions.

Maderna will plead for the creation of a new language, which consists of re-evaluating the traditional principle through the lenses of contemporary resources, will seek new opportunities for the serial expression and will even experiment heterogeneous concepts.

The first works signed Bruno Maderna are under the influence of the innovations of the period. He offers particular importance to his musical writing, but leaves to the conductor and performers the interpretative possibilities, a method that he will adopt in many of his works. His few indications, however, are precise and require to be respected. In his maturity compositions, he explicitly sets out his conceptual vision of the work, issuing requirements of scenography, direction and performance (see *Hyperion*).

Maderna's style is fluent, intelligible, and therefore can be assimilated. The performance of his scores energizes and revitalizes and contrasts with the extravagance preferred by some of the avant-garde composers. Maderna passes from the structural methods to aleatory music with a great taste for details. The composer's improvisation is controlled, rather positive, and has a sense of dramatic tension that can be easily learnt by the audience and which is not found in the scores of other composers of the time.

Although Maderna activates in an avant-garde and an intensive experimentation period, the composer prefers to explore the new creative aspects of the epoch without neglecting the traditional basis and teachings of Malipiero.

In his music, the composer integrates harmonic and conceptual aspects of his contemporaries, but without overly complicating the score, on the contrary, giving his work its own logic and fluency that offers an exceptional performance and audition.

Of all his works, there have been identified 21 compositions for voice, from which the lieder cycles contain 3 songs, the cantata 4 songs and the operas assume various versions.

There are sketches and incomplete or unpublished scores such as *La sera fiesolana (Evening in Fiesole)*, for tenor and orchestra, *Non so chi sei (I*

don't know who are you), for voice and orchestra, *Ci vedremo a mezzanotte* (*See you at midnight*), *Ho letto in cielo* (*I read it on the sky*), *Fiori del cielo* (*Flowers of the sky*), *Al muro del suono* (*At the borders of the sound*), for voice, orchestra and piano, *Quando la tristezza* (*When the sadness*), for voice and piano, *Cinque brevi pezzi* (*Five short pieces*) for trio strings, choir and accordion, therefore the number of his vocal works could be more generous.

His compositions for voice are not many, but are diverse as they cover different genres: lieder, opera, cantata, requiem, radio drama, electronic music. Thus, Maderna composes one lieder for contralto, *Alba* (*Sunrise*, 1937-1940), two lieder cycles for soprano: *Liriche su Verlaine* (*Lieder by Verlaine*, 1946-1947), *Tre Liriche Greche* (*Three Greek Lieder*, 1949) and the work in progress opera *Hyperion* (1962) and the *opera aperta* creations *Ausstrahlung* (*Broadcast*, 1971) for female voice and *Satyricon* (1973) for soprano, tenor, bas.

Maderna had also composed vocal-symphonic titles such as *Requiem* (1946), for soloists and double choir, the cantatas: *Studi per 'Il Processo' di F. Kafka* (*Studies for The Process of F. Kafka*, 1950), for soprano, *Vier Briefe* (*Four Letters*, 1953), for soprano and bass, *Gesti* (*Gestures*, 1969) for choir and *Suite* (1969) for choir and reciter (included in *Hyperion*), *All the World's a Stage* (1972) for choir and *Venetian Journal* (1972) for tenor.

Other vocal compositions are: the radio dramas *Il mio cuore è nel sud* (*My heart is in the south*, 1949) and *Don Perlimplin* (1961), for soprano and recited voice, *Ritratto di Erasmo* (*The Portrait of Erasmus*, 1969) and *Ages* (1972) for voices and choir, choral music: *Psalm* and *Zombies chorus for a cappella choir* (included in *Hyperion en het geweld*, *Hyperion and the violence* from 1968, a variant of the cycle *Hyperion*).

The composer was widely recognized due to his electronic music as *Dimensioni II / Invenzione su una voce* (*Dimensions II / Improvisations on one voice*, 1960) and *Aria* (1964), autonomous compositions that are also included in *Hyperion*.

The majority of his vocal compositions are written for the soprano voice. There are few opuses for the alto, tenor or bass voices, however, in the vocal works for ensembles these voices have well-defined attributions.

Maderna's vocal music presents complex aspects and evolves in the rhythm required by the changes of the musical language of the time, while opting for a reinterpretation of the tradition with the help of new compositional techniques.

Maderna's texts combine traditional libretto and unconventional content such as phonemes. His approaches include Italian poetry (*Alba*), French poetry (*Liriche su Verlaine*), Greek poetry (*Tre Liriche greche*), religious text in Latin (*Requiem*) and Sanskrit (*Ausstrahlung*), German novels

(*Studi per ,Il Processo', Aria*), Spanish novels (*Don Perlimplin*) and old Latin (*Satyricon*), Italian folklore (*Venetian Journal*), letters in German and Italian (*Quattro lettere*) and old Italian legends (*L'augellin Belverde*), phonemes (*Dimensioni II, Tre Liriche greche, Studi per ,Il Processo', Ages*).

Although *Venetian Journal* is mostly a dissonant opera, Maderna includes tonal fragments such as the tenor's song, reproduced from the Italian folklore (see Example 1), *La biondina in gondoeta (The blondie in the gondola)*. This is permanently interrupted by the French horn, not allowing the singer to finish the word *indormenta (falling asleep)* that becomes a meaningless word, *indormen*.

We can find the same process of interference in *Hyperion*, where the orchestra constantly intervened in the flute score, disintegrating its sonority, perhaps a metaphor of the society that breaks aspirations and dreams.

E.g. 1

La biond - in - a in gon - do - e - ta ___ l'alt - ra se - ra mi go accom - pa -
 gna - o, ___ Dal pia - ser la po - a - ret - ta ___ la se ga qua - si in dor - men

Folkloric pattern in *Venetian Journal*

The characters are complex and individualized through themes and musical series (*Tre Liriche greche, Studi per ,Il Processo', Il mio cuore é nel sud*), characters specific in the *commedia dell'arte (Satyricon, L'augellin Belverde)* or in the religious area (*Ritratto di Erasmo*). In *Studi per ,Il Processo'* (see Example 2), the character Leni, who is a soprano, is described through her theme serie (measures 21-24), a vocalize which will reappear in the score of the saxophone and clarinet (measures 62-65), but also through the *Wiegenlied (Lullaby)* tempo and the mute emission (*a bocca chiusa*), that suggests her loose woman character.

E.g. 2

The image shows a musical score for 'Studi per ,Il Processo''. It features four staves: Leni (voice), Sprech. (voice), Cl. (clarinet), and Sax A. (saxophone). The Leni part is marked 'p dolcemente e legato' and 'bocca chiusa'. The Sprech. part has the lyrics 'Ach, Leni... was für ein Mädél...'. The Cl. part is marked 'p' and 'gliss.'. The Sax A. part is marked 'p dolce'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'f in fuori ed espressivo molto'. Arrows and ovals highlight the lyrical phrase in the Leni part and its reproduction by the saxophone and clarinet.

**Leni's theme, a lyrical phrase (*Studi per ,Il Processo'*),
is reproduced by the sax and the clarinet**

The composer introduces the instrument as the principal character of a vocal work (*Amor di violino*-violin, *L'augellin Belverde*, *Hyperion*, *Don Perlimplin*-flute), therefore a character that does not own an oratorical libretto, but an exclusively musical part. And last but not least, there are characters that do not have a physical appearance in the opera, but they are only referred to through the interventions of another unnamed character (*Quattro lettere*, *Studi per ,Il Processo'*, *Hyperion*, *Don Perlimplin*, *Ages*).

The general characteristic of Maderna's opera is the lyricism, in the majority of the works the soprano and the wind instruments such as flute or oboe exercise the supremacy of the lyrical phrases (*Canto mattutino*, *Le Danaidi*, *Don Perlimplin*, *Studi per ,Il Processo'*, *Aria*, *Ausstrahlung*). „Much of Maderna's writing for solo instruments has an expansive, singing quality: the flute in *Hyperion*, the violin in *Concerto per violino* (1969), the oboe in the three oboe concertos in 1962, 1967 and 1973".⁶ Thus the instruments acquire a distinct, lyricized phrase, becoming the echo of the solo voices. The wind instruments assume the vocal line and, implicitly, its lyricism, extrapolating the discourse into its own rhetoric.

⁶ Vivienne Suvini-Hand. *Sweet Thunder: Music and Libretti in 1960s Italy*, Legenda, London, 2006, p. 152.

The compositional language is diverse, there are both tonal and dissonant fragments that involve serial patterns (*Tre Liriche greche*, *Studi per 'Il Processo'*, *Il mio cuore é nel sud*), aleatory (*Ausstrahlung*, *Satyricon*), dodecaphony (*Tre Liriche greche*, *Studi per 'Il Processo'*), citations (*Tre Liriche greche*, *Don Perlimplin*, *Ritratto di Erasmo*, *Hyperion*, *Venetian Journal*, *Satyricon*), polyphonic structures (*Requiem*, *Satyricon*), folklore references (*Venetian Journal*) and *Klangfarbenmelodie* (*Stellato*). He uses the rhythm of exceptional divisions and polyrhythm, frequent changes of tempo, micro intervals, and overlaps of parallel fifths, all specific to that period. He quotes modern structures, involving the *tempo di tango* (*Sérénade*), jazz (*Il mio cuore é nel sud*, *Il cavallo di Troia*, *Don Perlimplin*), blues and boogie-woogie (*Il mio cuore é nel sud*), *Wiegenlied* (*Studi per 'Il Processo'*), rhythms of *Habanera* and *Rhumba* (*Il cavallo di Troia*). Regarding the creation of lieder, it is organized both according to traditional structures (*Aquarelles* and *Sérénade* have a ternary form of lied), and constructions that do not conform to predefined patterns (*Alba*, *Sagesse*, *Canto mattutino*, *Le Danaïdi*).

The extended vocal technique and the instrumentalization of the voice are represented through several vocal effects such as: intonational declamation (*Satyricon*), rhythmic declamation (*Le Danaïdi*, *Studi per 'Il Processo'*, *Il cavallo di Troia*, *Dimensioni II*), speaking (*Il mio cuore é nel sud*, *Studi per 'Il Processo'*, *Quattro lettere*, *Don Perlimplin*, *Ausstrahlung*, *Ages*, *Venetian Journal*), mute emission (*Le Danaïdi*, *Studi per 'Il Processo'*, *Quattro lettere*, *Hyperion*, *Ausstrahlung*, *Venetian Journal*), grumbling (*Aria*), vocalize (*Tre Liriche greche*, *Studi per 'Il Processo'*, *Quattro lettere*, *Aria*, *Ausstrahlung*, *Venetian Journal*, *Satyricon*), shout, laughter, guttural voice and sonorous inhalation (*Ages*, *Dimensioni II*), *Sprechgesang* (*Aria*, *Venetian Journal*, *Satyricon*). In the works involving the use of electronic means, vocal techniques will be overlapped in order to create much more intense sound effects. Maderna was always in the search of new sound structures, therefore he makes use of unconventional resonances.

Approaching such a repertoire as Maderna's takes us back to the principles of *belcanto* in order to resolve difficulties of intonation, pronunciation and articulation, sustaining and controlling the air column of the singer. But the biggest problem seems to be the full control of breathing because of the high vocal tessitura of the vocal scores. Once the superficial breathing is being activated, a series of processes that are not at all beneficial to the singing is about to boost: laryngeal pressure, suspension of the air column, the impossibility of sustaining and a generalized physical tension.

We deem necessary the technical preparation of such a repertoire, approaching vocalizations that correspond to the requirements of the score, even studying the difficult fragments by replacing the text with vocalizes and

mute emission for the correct positioning of the sound. Through the study in detail, both of the score for finding the moments in which the vocal score can support effective communication with the writing of the accompaniment and especially the technical implications, such difficult fragments can be clearly identified and solved, if the performer possesses the necessary vocal features.

The voice has always been a flexible instrument from a technical point of view, while providing expressiveness and a wide range of sonorities. Whether we are talking about single-voice or mixed-voice compositions, with or without accompaniment, the composers tried to discover new timbre colours and vocal resonances. Over the time, the composers have been preoccupied with writing their works in order to highlight the vocal possibilities, even expanding the limits of the voice, emission and singing technique, and treating the voice as any other instrument. The vocal technique has been of particular interest since ancient times, so that song treatises have been written for a good vocal behaviour.

Conclusions

Maderna's compositions do not denote a homogeneity in the true sense of the word. The lack of a such unit can be a consequence of the desire to experiment and research on as many plans as possible. Even more so, his cosmopolite character emerges from the professional voyages to the Asian continent, to America, as well as from the residence in Italy and Germany. In Maderna's score there are echoes of this intense professional life, but also the innovations of his predecessors and contemporaries, the composer translating them into their own creation in a synthetic, personal manner. Therefore in his opera we can find both traditional and contemporary idioms, merged in a very particular approach. Each of Maderna's works reveals individuality. Viewed as a whole, his opera does not necessarily present a unitary construction. However, there are common concepts and directions that make his creation recognizable in the setting of the 20th century works.

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