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Luigi Nono's Works from the Late 1950s: The Emergence of a New Choral Style*

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Abstract. At the center of attention in the article are Luigi Nono's choral works from the late 1950s. On the example of analysis of two compositions created consecutively one after the other — *La terra e la compagna* (*The Earth and the Female Friend*, 1957) and *Cori di Didone* (*Choruses of Dido*, 1958), — the composer demonstrates innovative techniques expanding the arsenal of technical means and testifying of the intensity of the development of his personal choral style within the indicated period of time, and also manifests the tendencies characteristic for the choral texture of the subsequent years. Special attention is given to the texts of Cesare Pavese and Giuseppe Ungaretti that comprised the verbal basis of the analyzed compositions. It is noted that the pathos of the struggle for liberation of the earlier compositions is overshadowed by a lyricism connected to the composer's focusing to the images of nature. During his work on the texts, Nono actively experiments with the phonetics establishing its impact on the vocal sound. Among the specific peculiarities of the choral writing in the examined compositions, the techniques of timbral modulation, as well as poly-timbral and mono-timbral stereo-monody are emphasized. In the sphere of the organization of the sound material, the transition from serial technique to the technique of sound masses is noted. On the basis of the carried out analysis, the tendencies conducive to the transformation of the image of the choral texture are indicated: the reduction of the melodic horizontal motions to sound-points; the acceleration of attention in mixing timbres within the framework of the unison; and the expansion of the functions of the verbal text (the process of its delinearization and phonetic disintegration).

Keywords: 20th century choral music, avant-garde music, Luigi Nono, choral texture, Klangfarbenmelodie, poly-timbral stereo-monody

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Хоровая музыка

Научная статья

Сочинения Луиджи Ноно конца 1950-х годов: становление нового хорового стиля**

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Аннотация. В центре внимания статьи — хоровое творчество Луиджи Ноно конца 1950-х годов. На примере анализа двух сочинений, созданных последовательно друг за другом — *La terra e la compagna* («Земля и подруга», 1957) и *Cori di Didone* («Хоры Дидоны», 1958), — автор показывает новаторские приёмы, расширяющие арсенал технических средств и свидетельствующие об интенсивности развития хорового стиля композитора в обозначенный период времени, а также выявляет тенденции, характерные для хоровой фактуры последующих лет. Особое внимание уделяется текстам Чезаре Павезе и Джузеппе Унгаретти, составившим вербальную основу анализируемых композиций. Отмечается, что пафос освободительной борьбы более ранних сочинений оттеняется лирикой, связанной с обращением к образам природы. При работе с текстами Ноно активно экспериментирует с фонетикой, устанавливая её воздействие на вокальное звучание. Среди специфических особенностей хорового письма рассматриваемых сочинений выделяются приёмы тембровой модуляции, политембровой и монотембровой стереомонодии. В области организации звукового материала отмечается переход от серийной техники к технике звуковых масс. На основе предпринятого анализа акцентируются тенденции, способствовавшие преобразованию облика хоровой фактуры, а именно: сокращение мелодических горизонталей до звукоточек; рост интереса к смешению тембров в рамках унисона; расширение функций вербального текста (процесс его делинеаризации и фонетического расщепления).

Ключевые слова: хоровая музыка XX века, музыкальный авангард, Луиджи Ноно, хоровая фактура, Klangfarbenmelodie, политембровая стереомонодия

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Introduction

Among the Italian academic music of the second half of the 20th century, Luigi Nono's compositions have attracted special attention to themselves by their unusually keen attitude towards the expressive possibilities of the human voice. The fact of the predominance of vocal compositions in the master's music legacy is predictable in the case of an Italian composer, but what is remarkable is the innovative perception of the vocal texture, the attitude towards each vocal composition as yet another experiment, presuming a significant expansion of the arsenal of technical means, especially noticeable upon the comparison with each other of the compositions written in succession.

Already an initial familiarization with the composer's scores allows the researcher to arrive at conclusions about the characteristic peculiarities, as the result of which the compositions are univocally identified as having been written by Nono. At the same time, in each subsequent composition of his, the Italian master demonstrates a motion towards the mastery of yet another technical means, either completely absent, or being present in a potential, not entirely realized way in his previous works. As a proof of this assertion, we shall present a textural analysis of two works: *La terra e la compagna* (*The Earth and the Female Companion*) and *Cori di Didone* (*Choruses of Dido*), composed, respectively, in 1957 and 1958. Attention to these works seems to be important to us, since they present

a peculiar first denouement, summing the experience of the composer's first period [1] and, at the same time, containing creative impulses, ready for realization in the compositions of the 1960s. [2] Thereby, the present article pursues two aims: on the one hand, to demonstrate the intensiveness of the development of Nono's vocal style, presenting an analysis of compositions created within the interval of one year, and on the other hand, to demonstrate on the example of the compositions of the late 1950s the tendencies that led to the formation and development of the composer's new choral style.

The Poetic Sources

The textual basis of the analyzed compositions is formed by literary texts written by the composer's contemporaries — Cesare Pavese (1908–1950) and Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888–1970). It must be noted that the interest in contemporary literature is symptomatic for Luigi Nono's works. In all fairness, only the composer's turning in the late 1970s to the poetic legacy of Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) appears as a certain exception, quite explainable, judging by the knowledge of the innovative character of this poet's works.

Cesare Pavese is one of the central figures in 20th century Italian literature. The composer set the poet's works to music numerous times in his vocal works: besides *La terra e la compagna*, Pavese's compositions provided the source of many of the compositions from the 1960s: *Sarà dolce tacere* (*Sweet Silence Shall Be*, 1960),

Canti di vita e d'amore (Songs of Life and Love, 1962), *La fabbrica illuminata (The Illuminated Factory, 1964)*, etc. The last turning to the poet's legacy was the inclusion of the image of Deola in the libretto of Luigi Nono's second stage act (l'azione scenica) *Al gran sole carico d'amore (Under the Bright Sun Filled with Love, 1974)*. Explaining the reasons for such a steady interest on the part of the composer towards Pavese's poetry, the famous researcher of Nono's music, Jürg Stenzl writes about the closeness of the musical and poetical worlds of the two artists stipulated by the commonality of the basis of the ideas for their works, with their determinant image of the human being dissolving in surrounding nature, in an atmosphere of primary nature. Let us turn our attention to Cesare Pavese's words: "I am standing devotedly in front of a landscape, before a clear sky, water duct or forest, and in an absolutely unexpected way I am enveloped by a frenetic urge not to be myself any longer, but to be this field, this sky, this forest, to search for that word that would express all of this together, to be a blade of grass, this aroma, this emptiness. I do not exist, the field exists, the sky exists, my perceptions exist as open hungry mouths that devour things." [3, p. 94]

It is curious that the only example of writing an original poem for the composer, the text for his piece *Liebeslied (Song of Love; 1954)*, testifies of the significant influence of Pavese's poetry manifesting itself not only on a metaphorical, but on a syntactic level. For example, Stenzl presumes that the text of the poem *Tu sei come una terra (You are Like the Earth)*

from Pavese's collection of poetry *La terra e la morte (The Earth and Death)*, which became one of the verbal sets of *La terra e la compagna*, is most likely what comprised that example on which Nono oriented himself when he wrote his poem. Let us compare the first stanza of Pavese's poem with Nono's work:

Tu sei come una terra	Erde bist du
che nessuno ha mai detto	Feuer Himmel
Tu non attendi nulla	Ich liebe Dich
se non la parola	Mit Dir ist Ruhe
che sgorgherà dal fondo	Freude bist du
come un frutto tra i rami	Sturm mit mir bist Du
	Du bist Leben
	Liebe bist Du ¹

Textural Organization:

The connection between *Liebeslied* and *La terra e la compagna* is not limited to the similarity of their verbal source with the typical identification of the beloved with various objects within the framework of the characteristic structure of "you are..." ("du bist..."; "tu sei..."). While studying the connection between the aforementioned compositions, Stenzl turns his attention to the specific timbral color formed by the sounds of percussion instruments: the metallophone, the vibraphone, the bells, the marimba, the timpani and the cymbals. This sonority is present throughout Nono's most important works of the 1950s, with a few insignificant variations: we encounter it in the third *Epitaffio per Federico Garcia Lorca* (mm. 101–127), in the *La victoire de Gernica* (mm. 93–132), in the *Liebeslied* (the entire

¹ Cit. ex: Stenzl J. L'azione scenica und Literaturoper. *Muzik-Konzepte*. Vol. 20. Luigi Nono. Juli 1981, pp. 45–57.

piece proceeds with the accompaniment of the harp, the metallophone, the vibraphone, the timpani and the cymbals). When analyzing its application in the composer's first choral pieces, as well as l'azione scenica (stage action) *Intolleranza*, the researcher comes to the conclusion that this particular timbre possesses the function of the leitmotif timbre — the composition's utopian symbol contrasting with the real one — of “the other world — the world of women, children, purity and spring.” [Ibid., p. 117]

Let us add from ourselves that it is referred in this case not only to the choice of a compatible instrumentation, but also the similarity of the textural techniques. In the third *Epitaffio per Federico Garcia Lorca* (mm. 101–127) the composer simultaneously on the basis of one serial row forms a monody played by the wind instruments and a pointillist texture

of the percussion, which makes it possible to achieve the effect of a reflection of sounds expounded in the horizontal aspect of the winds in another part of the stage in a different timbral process (Example No. 1).

In *La terra e la compagna* (mm. 117–120) we encounter once again a similar type of textural organization, differing from the earlier specimen by the inclusion into the ensemble of the pointillist fabric not only of instrumental, but also of vocal sound points, which is stipulated by the accentuation of the line of a solo tenor as the relief horizontal line. Let us also turn our attention to the fact that just that in the *Third Epitaffio* the aim of the composer turns out to be not only a stereo effect, but also constant timbral modulation (Klangfarben-Übergang) (Example No. 2).

Example No. 1

Luigi Nono. *Epitaffio per Federico Garcia Lorca*.
Epitaffio No. 3, mm. 101–104

The musical score for Example No. 1 consists of eight staves. The top staff is for Auto 1.2 (flute), with parts for Clarinet 1, Oboe 1, and Horn 1. The second staff is for Arpa 1 (harp), with the instruction 'tastiera' (keyboard) and 'p' (piano). The third staff is for Xil. 1 (xylophone). The fourth staff is for Cel. (celesta). The fifth staff is for Arpa 2 (harp), with 'p' (piano) and triplet markings. The sixth staff is for Xil. 2 (xylophone), with the instruction 'bacielle di gomma' (rubber mallets). The seventh staff is for Vibr. (vibraphone), with 'non vibrato' and 'p' (piano). The eighth staff is for P. jazz (jazz percussion), with asterisks indicating specific parts. At the bottom, there is a performance instruction: 'Arpe, Celesta, Vibrafono lasciar sempre vibrare' (Harp, Celesta, Vibraphone always let vibrate).

Example No. 2

Luigi Nono. *La terra e la compagna*,
mm. 117–120

The musical score for Example No. 2, measures 117-120, features several parts: Soprano-Solo, Tenor-Solo, Soprano (1 and 2), Chorus (Soprano 1 and 2, Tenor 1 and 2), Vibraphone, and Glockenspiel. The lyrics are "È UN CENCIO DI SANGUE". The score includes performance instructions such as "bocca chiusa", "rall.", "mp", "mp3", "ppp", and "5mp#". The tempo is marked "rall." at the beginning and end of the passage.

Single-Timbre Stereo-Monody

What distinguishes the later timbre of the poly-timbre stereo-monody from its earlier example? The interest in timbral modulation within the framework of related timbres, which in *Cori di Didone*, and later in *Ha venido: canciones para Silvia* (*She has Come: Songs for Sylvia*, 1960) would lead towards a curious experiment with the creation of the effect of Klangfarben-Übergang by means of an ensemble of homogenous timbres. In the scores written two years apart from each other, the composer experiments with one timbral group — the soprano parts. The fifth movement of *Cori di Didone* is written for an octet of sopranos, the textural organization of which during the course of 22 measures is situated in a constant mutually reversible motion from the unison to complex eight-voice complexes. At the same time, it is referred not to the traditional unisons and harmonic

constructions. The expounding by means of “drooping” sounds, typical for Nono, differs from the other movements of the *Cori di Didone* by permanent changes of the density of the sound-points, depending on the number of vocalists simultaneously performing one and the same pitch (Example No. 3).

In the piece *Ha venido: canciones para Silvia* composed for an ensemble of six solo sopranos the given experience would demonstrate itself in the organization of an exceedingly mobile unison texture manifesting a change in the density of its line by means of the entrance and withdrawal of voices, as well as the appearance of islets of polyphony by means of suspension of separate tones of the melody sounding simultaneously with the subsequent unfolding (Example No. 4).

In the research of the connection between Nono’s compositions within the framework of the evolution of his

Example No. 3

Luigi Nono. *Cori di Didone*, mm. 178–180

178 $\text{ca. } 80$ $\text{ca. } 60$ *rall.* $\text{ca. } 40$ $\text{ca. } 120$

1 A GLIE C CHE SI DRA

2 A GLIE C CHE SI DRA

3 FO C CHE SI DRA CON...

4 FO C CHE SI DRA

5 C CHE VE...

6 C CHE VE...

7 SE VE...

8 SE VE...

Sopran

Example No. 4

Luigi Nono. *Ha venido: canciones para Silvia*, mm. 61–65

1 QUE NADIE MIRA. DE LOS PERALES

2 QUE NADIE MIRA. DE LOS PERALES

3 QUE NADIE MIRA. DE LOS PERALES

4 E A DE

5 E A DE

6 E A DE

QUE NADIE MIRA. DE LOS PERALES

vocal writing, the attention given to *Cori di Didone* and *Ha venido* makes it possible to see the first examples of the unique *monotimbral stereo-monody* — a type of musical statement in which the subtlest nuances of timbral metamorphoses are connected

with the mutually stipulated processes of condensation/rarefaction of sound points by means of change of the number of vocalists performing one tone, as well as with the fact of a more significant difference between analogous vocal timbres in comparison

with the instrumental timbres. Subsequently, the given textural phenomenon, in many ways reminiscent of the monochrome compositions by 20th century artists (Yves Klein, Brice Marden and others) would become one of the crucial technical ideas for Luigi Nono's second "l'azione scenic" *Al gran sole carico d'amore* (*Under the Bright Sun Filled with Love*, 1974), where, aspiring towards a anonymization of a few separate acting characters (Louise Michelle, Tatiana Bunke, and Deola), the composer would recourse to presenting them by means of a quartet of sopranos.

The Phonetics of the Text and its Impact on the Timbre

It is important to assert that one of the conditions providing for the possibility for experimenting in transmitting sound in combination with its timbral transformations in vocal compositions was the fundamentally different attitude towards the presentation of the verbal text. Already the pieces titled as *Epitaffio* presented an unusual perception of the text in the guise of a "hidden program," despite the fact that, overall, the given work is still rather traditional from the point of view of the typical process of "musicalizing" the words. Gradually departing from the horizontal exposition to the segmented variety, Nono passed from the fragmentation of the phrase into separate words to the splitting of words into separate syllables in his composition from the years 1955–1956 — the cantata *Il canto sospeso* (*The Interrupted Song*). This work, according to the composer himself, plays one of the most important roles in his creative evolution, signifying the transition to a new choral style: "In *Il canto sospeso* I developed a new choral style, having divided the set words first to syllables, and then to separate sounds, which I sent 'traveling' across

the choral score. The critics that had become used to the pointillistic technique of composition and the performers immediately detected in my work with the text yet another proof of isolation of the acoustical events. However, I aspired to a horizontal melodic construction spanning all the registers; to a levitation from one sound to another, from one syllable to another — i.e., to a line emerging from the alternation of separate sounds and pitches, lines sometimes thickening to sonorities." (Cit. ex: [4, p. 25])

The fact that a pointillistic presentation of a musical-verbal text does not cancel out the connection between sounds intrinsic to horizontal exposition may be demonstrated on the example of a number of Nono's compositions. Ivanka Stoianova, when discussing one of the fragments of *Cori di Didone*, proves that the vertical-diagonal disposition of the intonational material does not in the least hamper the acquisition of the meaning of the verbal text: "The microstructural pointillistic segmentation of the words in the space of the musical texture and the allotment of the smallest elements of language to different vocal parts usually corresponds to the succession of phonic elements in words and makes it possible to a certain degree to understand the content of the text." [5, p. 191]

In this work, along with the diversity of text segments (the peculiar "pieces" of words forming an uninterrupted mosaic of the verbal set), the composer also turned his attention to the impact of the phonetic component on the quality of the vocal sound. Larisa Kirillina wrote very expressively about this: "...he [Nono. — A. R.] 'illuminates' by means of other voices the vowels, the phonism of which possesses its own expressiveness and semantics: the mournful 'o,' the blood-crimson 'a,'

the ‘i’ and ‘e’ seeming to hang on one thread.” [6, p. 29] The isolated vowels accompanying the separate syllables of the text already provide a testimony that Nono is going farther along the path of segmentation of the verbal row. The following stage, signaling of the final stage of such a segmentation, — the free manipulation not only of vowels, but also of separate consonants, — is demonstrated by the score of *Cori di Didone*.

Nono himself wrote about this score: “After *Il canto sospeso* and *La terra e la compagna* here [in *Cori di Didone*. — A. R.] my technique of new vocal expressivity based on the connection of two form-generating functions of the text — the phonetic and the semantic — is continuing to develop.” (Cit. ex: [7, p. 158])

In *Cori di Didone*, in addition to including the voiced consonants (<l>, <m>, <n>), the composer also turns his attention to the possibility of intonating the unvoiced fricative consonants (for example, <s>), in the situation of intonating by means of definite pitches of the sounds transforming into their voiced analogies (<s> transforming into <z>). But even in the conditions of insignificant phonetic distortion of the verbal text, this type of technique contrived by the composer makes it possible to expand significantly the timbral resources of the vocal lines in comparison with those that are already there. It is necessary to notice that the indication for the vocalist to intonate of a particular consonant helps concretize the goal the singers are faced with. For example, intonating the consonants <l> and <z>, which are different from each other in terms of the achieved sound effect, in general, corresponds to the written comment “quasi bocca chiusa.” At the same time, intonating the sonorous <n> may

be reflected by the written comment “quasi bocca chiusa e nasale.”

As we have observed in the beginning, Nono’s compositions written one after the other are in a position of succession to each other, which also allows the development in each subsequent composition of the intentions expressed in the preceding work. In this regard, the work *La terra e la compagna* forms the following stage in relation to the cantata *Il canto sospeso*. Thus, the principle of simultaneous exposition of various texts used in *Il canto sospeso* (in the third movement) realizes itself on a new stage in *La terra e la compagna*. Whereas in his cantata Nono, while using the voices of three soloists, does not reject the horizontal exposition of the verbal text, in *La terra e la compagna*, while simultaneously presenting two sounding texts, Nono also makes use of the principle of verbal segmentation in relation to each of the two verbal sets. At the same time, the singularity of the verbal disposition also determines the division of the chorus into two sections, which presents a peculiar reflection of the Venetian tradition of *cori spezzati*. A constant dialogue with the traditions of Venetian masters is one of the characteristic traits of the musical legacy of Nono, who, according to the reasonable comment of UH Hue-Eun, “...never overlooked early music, particularly Renaissance music, and his avant-garde works were created on the basis of late Renaissance and early Baroque music.” [8, p. 241]

When speaking of the goals of the verbal strategy of the musical score, Nono indicated: “One of the texts — *Terra rosa, terra nera*, — performed by the soprano, the alto and the bass, “revolves” around the relationship between woman and nature. At the center of the second text — *Tu sei come una terra*,

performed by the tenors, — of the woman as the beloved entity. The simultaneous presentation of both texts creates the connection between nature and the lovers in the sense of a possible substitution <...> The combination of both of the texts thereby intersects the semantic content, as the result of which they receive simultaneously a complementary function.” [9, p. 43] Similar to the way the juxtaposition of both of the choral groups creates an integrality of spatial-musical composition, the superimposition of the two texts on each other is conducive to a capacious perception of the central idea — the unification of the lovers with the nature surrounding them.

From Political Engagement to Lyricism

The compositions from 1957 and 1958 demonstrate the composer’s unexpected move towards “pure” music, after a series of politically engaged compositions (*Epitaffio per Federico Garcia Lorca*, *La victoire de Gernica*, *Il canto sospeso*). In this regard, most intriguing is the juxtaposition of the verbal basis of *Cori di Didone* with Giuseppe Ungaretti’s composition with the same title. A comparative analysis of the texts discloses the composer’s deliberate rejection of the use of the stanzas referring to the historical realities of fascist Italy.² While lining up the composition of the cycle, Nono concentrates his

attention on the correspondence between the respective movements of the cycle by means of revealing several “leitmotif-type images”: the evening, sea, and silence in nature, contrasting with the experienced tumult of the soul. Thereby, Nono remains faithful to the poet’s conception expounded in his own preface to the cycle: “...the songs are called to describe in a dramatic way the parting with the last glimmerings of the youth of a separate person, but also of civilization, since civilizations too are born, grow, become old and die. Here I had the wish to present the physical experience of the drama with the revival in my memory of the happy moments, with the raving of doubts, with the shame that divests of peace, which leads to madness the passion that itself sees that it is perishing and becomes repugnant, hopeless and empty.”³

Ungaretti’s text presents a person who bids his youth farewell, tortuously analyzing his traversed path. And in a certain sense, for the 34-year-old Nono *Cori di Didone* became a first summation, a comprehension of the creative results. The pathos of the struggle for liberation in the compositions of the first half of the 1950s is overshadowed by the lyricism of Pavese’s and Ungaretti’s poetry connected with the references to the images of nature in the perceptions of a person endowed with an extraordinarily subtle sensitivity.

² Such references are written about by various authors, including the translator of Ungaretti’s cycle V. Leonenko: “The image of Aeneas is the specter of the Empire that was called upon in its own dreams to world dominance. <...> In Ungaretti’s poems not only the forsaken woman, helpless in her attempt to free herself from her corporeal and psychic attachments, cries out in Dido’s voice. Here vivacious life cries out in full voice, in its contradictions, in the combination of the brightest, sublime and gentle aspirations with the unaccountably destructive outbursts of passion. And adjacent to this vivacious life, life “as it really is,” directed primarily by the instinct of sensuous love and childbearing, stands, pragmatically using and betraying it as Aeneas betrayed Dido, the ideology of progress and expansion, the will towards the achievement of ‘high historical aims.’”. See: Ungaretti G. *Khory o Didone* [*Cori di Didone*]. Trans. and intr. by V. Leonenko. URL: https://leonenko.ucoz.ru/publ/stikhi/dzh_ungaretti_khory_o_didone/1-1-0-42 (accessed: 21.05.2024).

³ Cit. ex: Ibid.

However, it must be noticed that even Nono's politically engaged compositions create a strong impression by their profound, diverse, sincerely emotionality. In his book *Choral Music in the 20th Century*, Nick Strimple describes this peculiarity of Nono in relation to the cantata *Il canto sospeso*: "Setting letters from condemned antifascist resistance fighters, it strikes a beautifully delicate balance between political and emotional sensibilities." [10, p. 187] The aim of musical creativity formulated to a considerable measure by British composer Arthur Bliss ("...to try for an emotion truly and clearly felt, and caught for ever in a formal perfection" [11, p. 1]) may also be applied to Nono's compositions from the 1950s.

The two main sides of the content characterized in the compositions from the 1950s continue their parallel existence in Nono's works from the 1960s and the 1970s, as the result, joining together within the conception of Nono's second stage action *Al gran sole carico d'amore* concentrated around the image of a woman (a beloved, a mother) in the context of world revolution.

From Serial Technique to the Technique of Sound Masses

The technical side of the composer's works also becomes subjected to a rethinking. The serial technique of the works written in the years 1949–1956 gives way to a new method of pitch organization labeled by the composer as the technique of sound masses (*Klangflaechen*). An analysis of the works *La terra e la compagna* and *Cori di Didone* makes it possible to convince ourselves of the organic quality of the transition from serial technique in Nono's perception to a new principle of organization of the sound material.

The disclosure of the manipulations with the pitch set in the pieces titled *Epitaffio* and in the *Liebeslied* demonstrates a freer attitude towards serial technique in comparison with the orthodox variety of dodecaphony.

The composer, taking as the twelve-tone technique as a basis, for the most part operates with small segments of four, five or six pitches, resorting to repetitions of tones within a single structure and disclosing the intonational resources of the respective segments by means of the change of order of the succession of the pitches.

It may seem that the composer creates on the basis of the series, interpreted by him as an original modal scale, a typical neo-modal composition. The aforementioned conclusion is also in accord with the composer's utterances. When speaking of the specificity of his serial compositions, Nono accentuated his listeners' attention to the phenomenon of improvisation preserving its relevance even in the conditions of an extremely determined serial context: "My work took course in three steps. First I chose the material: the intervals, pitches and the rhythms. Then I experimented with this material, subjecting it to various predetermined processes, in order to determine, in what direction it could be developed. And only then I started composing, bringing out the form from this material and the possibilities intrinsic to it. At the same time, composing music for me was never only a concretization of pre-compositional structures. As far as improvisation is concerned, it has always been present, and up to the last moment I reserved for myself the right of the final decision." (Cit. ex: [4, pp. 26–27])

The first measure of *Cori di Didone* remind of a typical beginning of a serial composition (Example No. 5). The composer

Example No. 5

Luigi Nono. *Cori di Didone*, mm. 1-4

3/4 ca. 48 accel. 1 ca. 60 Luigi Nono

Sopran div. a 8

Alit div. a 8

Chor

Tenor div. a 8

BaB div. a 8

LA SERA SI PROLUNGA

1

consistently (albeit, avoiding all repetitions of pitch) brings in all the twelve notes of the chromatic scale. The first hexachord is gradually formed on the basis of addition of pitches along the vertical line towards the initial pitch C. The second hexachord, divided by means of juxtaposition of registers into two segments of three pitches, appears simultaneously: [C–C#–B–D–B♭–E♭] — [G–A–A♭]+[E–F–F#]. As the result, by the appearance of the 4th measure, the vertical entity fits into itself all the twelve pitches of the “series.” The subsequent development demonstrates Nono’s attitude toward the material presented in the first measures not as a series, but rather as a standard chromatic scale on the basis of which there may appear groups of three, four or five pitches situated in semitones apart from each other. At the same time, within the framework of the groups, the composer is endowed by the possibility of freely varying the succession of the pitches: [B♭–E♭–A–G#–D]–[E–F–G–F#]–[B–C–C#] (see Example No. 6 compared with the scheme).

Marina Chistyakova in her dissertation *Luigi Nono: issledovanie kompozitsionnykh printsipov* [*Luigi Nono: A Research of Compositional Principles*] writes that for the first time the departure from the serial technique took place in *Cori di Didone*. [4, p. 95] We beg to differ from the author, indicating the first composition that realized the technique of Klangflaechen to be the *La terra e la compagna*. We shall also express the following supposition: one of the fragments of the musical score

(mm. 63–66) turns out to be an immediate prototype of the beginning of *Cori di Didone* (see Example No. 7 and Example No. 5).

Thereby, beginning from 1957, Nono used as his basic material one and the same series — the ordinary chromatic scale. (An exception to this was Nono’s first stage action, the so-called *l’azione scenica*, *Intolleranza 1960*, created in the serial technique. [12]⁴) The pre-compositional work includes in itself variants of segmentation (most frequently, the non-symmetrical type) of the initial series with the possibility of restructuring the pitches within the structure, since what is important is not the order of the presentation of the pitches, but the creation of the vertical sonority of semitones. Characterizing the composer’s new manner of writing, Chistyakova writes in her dissertation: “In the second half of the 1950s, reflecting the overall tendencies of the serialist composers, Nono attempts to overcome the isolated position of the pitches, by developing the technique of structuring “sound fields” (*Klangfelder*). At the center of this type of composition is not merely a single pitch, but a group of pitches situated at the proximity of semitones from one another and the vertical “sound strips” (*Klangbaender*) formed as the result of the “verticalization” of the series (to use Lachenmann’s expression), characterized by their heightened density of sound.” [4, p. 30] Along with his own pitch technique, Nono provides a considerable amount of attention to the timbral formation

⁴ An explanation of this fact can be found in the presence of the dedication — the composition is dedicated to the memory of Arnold Schoenberg — the creator of the twelve-tone technique: “While analyzing the score of Nono’s composition, we observe his interest towards the twelve-tone method in the way it was present in Schoenberg’s scores: the use of the orthodox twelve-tone series, structural and symmetrical segmentation, the choice as the main row of a succession of tones perceptibly manifesting the traditions of Schoenberg’s Wunder-Reihe.” [12, p. 150]

Example No. 6

Luigi Nono. *Cori di Didone*, mm. 36-39

36 ♩ ca. 48 rall.

Sopran

1

2

3

Alt

4

5

6

7

8

SI TACQUE.

Tenor

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Ba.S

1

2

3

4

The image displays a musical score for a choral piece, specifically Example No. 6 from Luigi Nono's *Cori di Didone*, measures 36-39. The score is arranged in three systems, each with four staves. The first system is for Soprano (Sopran) and Alto (Alt), the second for Tenor (Tenor), and the third for Bass (Ba.S). The Soprano part begins with the lyrics 'TE RA' and 'SI'. The Alto part has lyrics 'EN NE' and 'A'. The Tenor part has lyrics 'A' and 'E'. The Bass part has lyrics 'CHE' and 'A'. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (pp, p, mp, f), articulation (accents, slurs), and phrasing. A tempo marking 'ca. 48' and a performance instruction 'rall.' are present at the top. The lyrics 'SI TACQUE.' are centered between the first and second systems. The Soprano part is marked with 'pp' and 'p' dynamics. The Alto part is marked with 'pp' and 'p' dynamics. The Tenor part is marked with 'mp' and 'p' dynamics. The Bass part is marked with 'mp' and 'p' dynamics. The score is written in a standard musical notation with a treble clef for Soprano and Alto, and a bass clef for Tenor and Bass. The time signature is not explicitly shown but appears to be 4/4 based on the notation. The lyrics are written below the vocal lines.

Example No. 7

Luigi Nono. *La terra e la compagna*, mm. 63–66

The image displays a musical score for Example No. 7, featuring vocal parts for Soprano, Alto, and Tenor, and a Chorus. The score is written in a complex, multi-stemmed format. The Soprano part (staves 1-3) includes lyrics such as "l'e... sta..." and "te". The Alto part (staves 1-5) includes lyrics like "mi", "a", "te", and "e". The Tenor part (staves 1-6) includes lyrics such as "tu", "nel.", "tre...", "e", "l'e... sta-", and "e". The Chorus part (staves 1-6) includes lyrics like "mi", "a", "te", and "c". The score is marked with various dynamics, including *f*, *ppp*, *mp*, and *p*. A tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 40$ is present at the beginning. The score is numbered 16 at the top left.

of the musical fabric. And while in the early compositions titled *Epitaffio* Nono appears as a successor of Schoenberg in the use of the expressive means of *Sprechgesang*, already in his piece *Liebeslied* he comes to the idea of the delinearization of the musical fabric, stemming from the Klangfarbenmelodie made known by the Second Viennese School, but going

in the direction of poly-timbral stereophony, in the final outcome becoming the essence of the acoustic conception of all the compositions beginning with the cantata *Il canto sospeso*.

Conclusion

Analysis of *La terra e la compagna* and *Cori di Didone* makes it possible

to summarize the facts about the presence of several tendencies, which asserted themselves in the very first compositions and led to a number of evolutionary changes, which transformed to a great degree the image of the composer's choral textures. Let us settle upon a short characterization of each one of them.

The reduction of the melodic horizontal progressions to sound-points. The traditional melodic horizontal progressions in the pieces titled *Epitaffio*, having been replaced with short motives in *Liebeslied*, already in *Il canto sospeso* are contracted to the level of sound points. The pieces that followed the cantata, namely, *La terra e la compagna* and *Cori di Didone* demonstrate the composer's aspiration towards the differentiation of the points in relation not only to time but to the coloring of the sound obtained by means of timbral modulation (*Klangfarben-Übergang*).

The development of the attention towards the mixture of timbres within the framework of the unison. The unison of the alto and tenor parts opening the *Liebeslied*, so typical for the works of Schoenberg, presents the first link in a chain of experiments in mixing not only the middle but the high and low voices of the texture. In each following musical score, Nono searches for even more unexpected timbral mixtures endowed with the ability of changing during the process of sounding, which is stipulated by the differentiation of: a) the dynamic nuancing (presented by the mobile nuances), b) the rhythmical formation of the sound-points initiating a permanent process of the entry and the withdrawal of the choral voices from the unisons.

The expansion of the functions of the verbal text. Whereas in the compositions of the first half of the 1950s the verbal texts are perceived by Nono as the bearers primarily of the function of semantics, starting with *Il canto sospeso* the composer's attention is also attracted by the phonetic covering, which creates a determining impact on the timbres. This tendency stipulates the process of delinearization and phonetic segmentation of the verbal text, which may be seen in the musical score of 1958, *Cori di Didone*.

Having started as a composer who created instrumental works, in the 1950s Nono demonstrated an increasing interest in vocal works and, in particular, compositions for vocal and instrumental ensembles. The expansion of the number of experiments in relation not only to the textural organization, but also to the timbral formation of the musical fabric made it possible for Nono to become one of the "arbiters of fashion" in the domain of vocal composition. At the same time, basing ourselves on the composer's utterances and the analyses of his musical scores, we may assert that experimentation for its own sake never presented an aim for him. Nono's choral music, notwithstanding the modernization of the musical language, preserved the "self-sufficient beauty of *bel canto*, intonation flexibility, and vocal expressiveness." [13, p. 207] The composer saw his aim in the disclosure of truly boundless possibilities of the human voice. It is not by chance that in one of his late interviews Nono admitted: "I have a passion for the human voice, the richest instrument of all those in existence." [14, p. 236]

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