“LASCIATEMI MORIRE”
o fardò
“LA FINTA PAZZA”

Embodying vocal NOTHINGNESS on stage in Italian and French 17th century operatic LAMENTS and MAD SCENES

BY
Elisabeth Belgrano

A Music Research Drama Thesis in a Prologue and 3 acts

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
“LASCIATEMI MORIRE”
o farò
“LA FINTA PAZZA”
Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Performance in Theatre and Music Drama at the Academy of Music and Drama, Faculty of Fine, Applied, and Performing Arts, University of Gothenburg.

ArtMonitor dissertation No. 25

ArtMonitor is a publication series from the Board for Artistic Research (NKU), Faculty of Fine, Applied, and Performing Arts, University of Gothenburg

A list of publications is added at the end of the book.

ArtMonitor
University of Gothenburg
Faculty Office of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts
Storgatan 43
PO Box 141
SE-405 30 Gothenburg
Sweden
www.konst.gu.se

Translation of data excerpts: Lynn Preston Odengård, Anna Helander, Amanda Petrie and Annika Beijbom in cooperation with the author

Graphic production: Daniel Flodin
Cover & layout: Elisabeth Belgrano
Cover illustration: Detail from La Reunion de La Famille or La reunion musicale by Antoine Le Nain, c.1649
Back photo: La Finta Pazza, 2010, Photo: Per Buhre
Printed by: Intellecta Infolog AB, Källered 2011

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ISBN: 978-91-978477-4-2

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PART I
LIBRETTO

PART II
IL CANNOCCHIALE per “LASCIATEMI MORIRE” o farò “LA FINTA PAZZA”
(A descriptive text following the contents of the Libretto)

Academy of Music and Drama
Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts
University of Gothenburg, Sweden
This music research drama thesis explores and presents a singer’s artistic research process from the first meeting with a musical score until the first steps of the performance on stage. The aim has been to define and formulate an understanding in sound as well as in words around the concept of pure voice in relation to the performance of 17th century vocal music from a 21st century singer’s practice-based perspective with reference to theories on nothingness, the role of the 17th century female singer, ornamentation (over-vocalization) and the singing of the nightingale. The music selected for this project is a series of lamentations and mad scenes from Italian and French 17th century music dramas and operas allowing for deeper investigation of differences and similarities in vocal expression between these two cultural styles.

The thesis is presented in three parts: a Libretto, a performance of the libretto (DVD) and a Cannocchiale (that is, a text following the contents of the Libretto). In the libretto the Singer’s immediate inner images, based on close reading of the musical score have been formulated and performed in words, but also recorded and documented in sound and visual format, as presented in the performance on the DVD. In the Cannocchiale, the inner images of the Singer’s encounter with the score have been observed, explored, questioned, highlighted and viewed in and from different perspectives.

The process of the Singer is embodied throughout the thesis by Mind, Voice and Body, merged in a dialogue with the Chorus of Other, a vast catalogue of practical and theoretical references including an imagined dialogue with two 17th century singers.

As a result of this study, textual reflections parallel to vocal experimentation have led to a deeper understanding of the importance of considering the concept of nothingness in relation to Italian 17th century vocal music practice, as suggested in musicology. The concept of je-ne-sais-quoi in relation to the interpretation of French 17th century vocal music, approached from the same performance methodology and perspective as has been done with the Italian vocal music, may provide a novel approach for exploring the complexity involved in the creative process of a performing artist.

Title: "Lasciatemi morire" o farò "La Finta Pazza": Embodiment of Vocal Nothingness on Stage in Italian and French 17th Century Operatic Laments and Mad Scenes.

Language: English with a Swedish summary.

Keywords: voice, singing, nothingness, je-ne-sais-quoi, 17th century opera, pure voice, lamentation, madness, passions, emotions, nightingale, transformation, ornamentation, observation, improvisation, interpretation, vocal expression, embodiment, creative process, performance, repetition, movement, inner images, artistic research.
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"Only at the cost of losing the basis of all my certainties can I question what is conveyed to me by my presence to myself." - Merleau-Ponty, M. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge, 2006, (1945, 1962), p.504.
Acknowledgment

"Losing the basis of all my certainties" has been possible thanks to the frames provided by all the wonderful colleagues, friends, family and people around me. I would especially like to mention:

My supervisor Eva Nässén, and co-supervisors Cecilia Lagerström, Sven Andersson, Ruth Pergament, Andreas Edlund;

My opponents: Jakob Lindberg, Gunnel Bergström, Efva Lilja, Grith Fjeldmose, Lars Mouwitz;

People linked to the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts and to the Academy of Music and Drama, at the University of Gothenburg, during the years of my doctoral studies: Anna Frisk, Johannes Landgren, Sverker Julander, Lynn Preston Odengård, Johan Öberg, Helena Wessman, Magnus Eldenius, Staffan Rydén, Erika Strand, Asa Bengtsson, Gunilla Gärdfeldt, Per Buhre, Per Nordin, Anders Carlsson, Kristin Johansson-Lassbo, Kerstin Nilsson, David Holm, Tobias Egle, Lars-Anders Carlsson, Jan Gustavsson, Kjell Thorbjörnsson, Margareta Hanning, Staffan Abrahamsson, Erik Jeppson, Pia Shekter, all helpful staff, my PhD colleagues, and students.

Further I would like to thank:

Monica Milocco, Lucas Harris, Anna Nyhlin, Karl Nyhlin, Anders Ericsson, John Powell, Mauro Calcagno, Claire Fontijn, Ellen Rosand, Wendy Heller, Sally Potter, Lorenzo Bianconi, Doretta Davanzo Poli, Aldo Bova, Daniela Ghezzo, Sara Trabacchin, Dominique Brunet, Alan Curtis, Marco Rosa Salva, Ilaria Sainato, Lorenzo Rubin de Cervin Albirizi, Ernesto Rubin de Cervin Albirizi, Rosemary Forbes Butler, Marinella Laini, Eleonora Fuser, Giuseppe Ellero, Francesca Gualandi, Carla Carisi, Sophie Boulin, Anne-Madeleine-Goulet, Georgie Durossir, Clemance Monnier, Sarah Nancy, Laura Naudeix, Jean-Philippe Goujon, Jill Feldman, Emma Kirkby, Agnès Mellon, Anna Edwall, Dianta Dantes, Elisabet Kuhn, Isaura Andaluz, Amanda Petrie, Linda and John Shortridge, Susan Patrick, Anna Helander, Annika Beijbom, Mia Wiedstrand, Anna Björndal, Maria Lazzarini, Maria Berg, Tina Jerkenstam, Maria Mota, Galit Hollinger, and Claudia Cabrera. I also want to thank the baristas at Bar Centro, Gothenburg, for preparing me an infinite amount of espressos during the last 4 years;

I am grateful for the assistance by members of staff at the following institutes, archives and libraries: Institute Suédois, Paris; Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze; Gothenburg University Library.

I am greatly indebted to the following organization for supporting my research:

Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, Alice och Knut Wallenbergs Stiftelse, Adlerbertska forskningsstiftelsen, Jubileumsfonden, Iris stipendiet/KvinnorKan, Kungliga Musikaliska Akademin, Kungliga och Hvitfeldtska stiftelsen, Stiftelsen Anna Ahrenbergs fond för vetenskapliga m.fl. ändamål.

Finally I would like to thank my family:

Irina Belgrano, Claes Laasonen, Vongai Muyambo Laasonen, my parents, Margit and Jouko Laasonen, for their love, trust and support, and Andrea and Miranda Luna, for giving me inspiration to all Wonders in Life.
La Finta Pazza
Drama
Di Givlio Strozzi.
Seconda Impressione.
Con Licenza de' Superiori, e Privilegi.

In Venetia,
MDCXXXI.

Per Gio; Battilla Surian.
To my most illustrious and most excellent reader…

Let me present to you a **music research drama thesis** in a prologue and three acts. The form of the thesis has been inspired by 17th century opera librettos, specifically the librettos of the operas *L’Incoronazione di Poppea*² and *La Finta Pazza*³. The thesis is divided in two parts: part 1. Libretto and part 2. *Il Cannocchiale per Lasciatemi morire o faro la Finta Pazza*.

The second part has been modeled on the text *Il Cannocchiale della Finta Pazza* from 1641. For the purpose of this thesis I see the cannocchiale as the tool it is: a telescope, or in this context a pair of theater binoculars, aiming to clarify, highlight, and describe the contents of the libretto to the reader, or even possibly confusing him or her. The cannocchiale ends with an Epilogue, partly modeled on a French 17th century source, *Les Entretiens d’Ariste et Eugene*, which is a performed dialogue or a witty conversation departing from a specific topic or concept.⁴ In this thesis the dialogue takes place between three singers, walking through the *Garden of the Senses* while discussing the *primitive passions*

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2. Text by Giovanni Francesco Busenello and music by Claudio Monteverdi, performed at the Grimano Theater (also named Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo) in 1641.
3. Text by Giulio Strozzi and music by Francesco Sacrati, performed at Teatro Novissimo, in 1642.
described by Descartes, namely wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness. The quest presented, entered upon and performed throughout the drama is to better understand the meaning of pure voice with reference to nothingness – a concept addressed and debated in both Italy and France in the mid 17th century – from a practice-based perspective of a 21st century singer. The aim of the study has also been to explore and to search for a way of formulating in words the manners of vocal expression, vocal state-of-being and the use of ornamentation in both Italian and French laments and mad scenes. Much has been said about the music of the two different cultural styles in theoretical studies. It has been my wish to observe and address stylistic differences and similarities from a vocal practice-based perspective with reference to theoretical studies. One significant result in this study has been the practical application of the theoretical term je-ne-sais-quoi, a French concept related to nothingness, rarely used as a reference to 17th century vocal performance practice.

Through sounds, words and images I draw attention to and make visible what normally is hidden to the larger audience, namely, the process from a singer’s first meeting with the vocal manuscript, until the first steps of the performance on stage.

My hope is that this research will inspire other singers to ask curious questions and to engage in a wider dialogue with anyone dedicated to the study of 17th century opera and vocal music.

I suggest a few possible ways to approach this thesis:

1. Select a specific lament or mad scene based on the role/scene. Find the music, as referred to in the bibliography, and make your own dialogue with the Singer and the Chorus of Other in the thesis.
2. Simply see the performances on the DVD: Acts I-III, all scenes one after the other, or select an act/scene depending on mood. Use the time in between to reflect.
3. Select pieces of the texts, a word, a phrase. Make analogies. Reflect in practice or in theory.
4. Enter the thesis through the prologue and allow yourself to become inspired to continue to read/listen to the thesis or to whatever might come to your attention.

5. Enter the thesis through the Epilogue and go from there back into the material. Any of your choices will be accepted.

I have no intention to say that my way is the only true way, but rather to say that this is the way I have chosen to go – this being one among many possible ways to proceed. My hope is that other singers, or perhaps any other curious researchers interested in the topic will join me on my walk and then continue their own walks, expanding the field of researching the Art of Vocal Performance and Communication.

Your most humble, affectionate and passionate servant
La Curiosissima Cantante
Elisabeth Belgrano


6. This work has been part of an interdisciplinary research project, Passion for the Real, conducted at the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, University of Gothenburg, funded by the Swedish Research Council (2006–2009).
Scenario

After the PROLOGUE, which introduces the topic of the study in detail and provides background information and a research context,

ACT I

presents the Singer's battle of *embodying transformation*. Nature and Art enter the stage preparing for the arrival of the Singer. Their words propose various Renaissance perspectives of whether Nature and Art are female or male, or perhaps both at the same time, through the embodiment of the female Singer. When she enters the stage she comes dressed as Deidamia, who at first appears as a soldier, calling out to all warriors, to all women, to herself, or to anyone ready to listen to her voice. She changes her being again and again becoming Helen of Troy, the most beautiful being on earth; then the abandoned lover, a person drowning in her own tears. At first she sings in Italian, but her languages vary throughout the drama. She chooses the language best fitted to the moment. She carefully selects every word, at the same time as she ignores the language in itself. What matters most of all is her *presence* in the moment of the *present*, her *being* in the moment. She is her own sound – a sound that transforms along with her passions. She is male and female, strong and weak, mad and sane, representing extremes and opposites, and highlighting a performance of paradoxes through the act itself. She is the Singer herself, dressed in her stage clothes, dressed as another being rather than herself, but always embodying presence nevertheless. Her acts are sometimes naïve, bending the rules out of shape. They are sometimes on the verge of madness. As an audience one can’t stop asking: Who is mad? The Singer? The character she interprets? Is she in control or totally lost, or both at the same time, or none of these? Does she pretend or does she speak the truth? What is real and who is sane?

Scene 2 introduces a woman embraced by words expressing despair, hate, love, jealousy, sorrow and fear. The Singer, through the voice of Ottavia, tastes the colors of every syllable, transforming them into thoughts, passions and sounds. She carefully filters every vowel and every consonant through her memories and lived experiences. Being a queen who is lost and rejected her voice makes fear and sorrow vibrate: sometimes loud and sometimes buried in silence. Ottavia is never mad, but destined to lament and mourn her loss. But isn’t her voice sometimes lost in madness? The affliction freezes her soul and she speaks about her prison: her own prison, her female body; she is dressed in another prison, her costume, which almost inhibits her from breathing; the prison of rules also lingers over any act she undertakes. She calls for help; she calls for revenge; she asks for freedom. Her voice becomes the voice of a rebel. In Rome she is trapped, scorned and finally banned to leave her land for a life in exile, just like the Roman 17th century singer Anna Renzi, who had to leave because of powerful rulers. The Singer on stage searches among her memories of loss: having to leave, taking farewell, saying good-bye to love and friendship, hearing the crowds screaming around her, leaving Rome escorted by men in uniform. She remembers and she sings as if she was Ottavia; as if she was Renzi who had to leave; as if being herself, missing and longing for the life she left behind. Taking farewell.

*Let me die* is what we hear on stage in

ACT II

Scene 1 Arianna is alone on the shore, on a rocky shore. Her words seduce the Singer, who walks obsessed out on her own rocks, following a red thread: the thread of Arianna. Act two allows the Singer to find the pure voice through ornamentation, repetition, movement and improvisation. She tries to understand the wish to die, something so far away from what she would ever imagine. She has learned along her walk with Deidamia and Ottavia that words

---

are strong but signs of vanity. They disappear fast, into the winds and into the waves of the sea. Arianna provides her with the opportunity of meeting another woman: the Dancer. Together they embody the movements and sounds of Arianna. They go far from what is often expected of early music and of performance practice today. They stretch the rhetorical lines, becoming aware of new and, for them, unknown grounds. They don't allow anything to stop their acts. They become one in the voice of a lamenting woman and this makes them stronger in their expression, even in the city of Venice: in the first


Her acts are *becomings* or *being-on-the-move*. Her voice embellishes the simple line. Sometimes she stands there with both feet firmly on the ground. Sometimes she is puzzled about where to direct her toes. She holds herself back, finding pleasure in suspension. The Singer experiences a curious moment perhaps signifying *nothingness*, though that word would never be spoken out loud. But every time sound comes through her mouth she makes her own controlled statement; her own balancing walk; her own ornamented and colorful embroidery. She looks for sounds around her, for sounds of waves and vibration; slidings and glidings reflecting her own images of sound.

The Singer and the Dancer follow her thread. They need to be even more careful in French than in Italian. Careful not to appear too much or too little. However the sensation is never less passionate in French than in Italian. Passion has only a different place within the voice of Ariane.

The voice of Armide flies in

**ACT III**

Scene 1

The voice doesn't know any other way of being. Loud sometimes and soft when the Singer needs it. She finds herself *in-between*. Or on her way towards something unspeakable, performing *je-ne-sais-quoi*, inside and through the vacuum of the voice. At first her language is Italian. She searches for Rinaldo. He has left her. The passions dance rhythmically. They follow a pattern clearly decided beforehand. They are not surprising as are the passions of Deidamia or Ottavia. What captures the Singer is the intensity in the line. It doesn't let go, but holds on to the invisible unknown. She speaks the words and doesn't hesitate to see their effect. They are there sounding and recorded for the future. But in her, she knows that nothing can be told for real, because reality can never be explained. Or rather, reality is everywhere. She learns more and more that everything she knows is true and real. But also that what she knows can always be changed into a different truth and a different reality, meaning that she has to balance herself into the unknown, learning to perform the unknown. Performing a *je-ne-sais-quoi*, for an audience who expect her to *become*, rather than *being*. Her meeting with Armide, first in Italian, then later in French, teaches her that no thing is there forever, except a continuous lingering around the source. It all resembles a riddle, a joke, a game moving around and around and around. And at the core of the riddle there are passions.

Finally in

Scene 2

the Singer opens the score of another Armide. It is an Armide sure about her *pure* sound. She is out there performing for the crowd. Violent and tearful. Fighting the demons of her mind, knowing she will win. She loves her betrayer, she cannot escape her feelings, but her way is to walk back and forth, back and forth, but never in the same manner. It is part of her being, and she knows that it will be this way. Like a lion in a cage she moves around. Enchanted by the sound of strings and rhythms she cannot stop herself from speaking about whatever her mind brings out of her. She is carried away on a wave of instrumental sound. In Armide's voice the Singer senses madness even more cruel than in Deidamia's. Armide is sure about her sound, not being able to leave her pain behind. Madness seemed to be hidden away from her in the French vocal style when she looked at the score the first time. But then in the end she sees it everywhere. Every singer she meets through the voice of Armide walks firmly along their lines, ornamenting the sounds, each one of them in their particular mood, and caring about their voices. Their roads cross but they do not really see one another. Each one of them haunted but their own invisible demons. This makes their voices pure and brilliant. Purified from vulgarity. They stand there right in the middle of what they know, or in what they do not know. In the middle of *je-ne-sais-quoi*. 


I is the SINGER, the researcher and the author of this music research drama thesis, in first person.

In all acts the SINGER is embodied by her MIND, her VOICE, and her BODY. In the Cannocchiale she appears as the SINGER herself, referred to in third person. Finally in the Epilogue she appears with her proper name, BELGRANO.

The DANCER/BODY OF THE CHORUS OF OTHER represents movement and improvisation in ACT II.

The CHORUS of OTHER is the mixed choir of all references, be they theoretical, artistic and practice-based, or indeed any references that prove to be of interest and importance for the Singer’s reflections, acts and decisions. Because of the potentially vast amount of references that could be applied to this study, it is important to emphasis that this thesis is totally based on a performer’s perspective. Therefore references pointing towards different perspectives from other fields of research, have sometimes been omitted.

NATURE and ART opens the first ACT, Scene 1. They appear only once, but their presence is evident in every part of the thesis. It is one of many challenges for the Singer, to understand when Nature speaks the truth and when Arts takes over, making transformation invisible and visible to the audience. Four women, of whom two are dressed in different vocal costumes:

DEIDAMIA is a Greek princess from Skyros, who discovers that her lover Achille will leave her and join the Greek forces for a battle against the Trojans. In order to convince him not to leave, she performs an act of feigned madness, starting with her call out for war: “Guerrieri, all’armi, all’armi.” Throughout the scene she transforms from at first being a soldier, to Beautiful Helen,
to an abandoned lover.

**OTTAVIA** is a Roman empress who is betrayed, scorned and exiled by her husband emperor Nero. In her state of despair she sings two laments, "Disprezzata Regina" and "A Dio Roma".

**ARIANNA/ARIANE** is a princess from Crete, left by her lover Teseo on a shore on the island of Naxos. In her sorrow she laments his escape by singing in Italian "Lasciatemi morire" and in French "Rochers, vous etes sourds".

**ARMIDE** is a sorceress aiming to kill the knight Rinaldo/Renaud. Instead she falls in love with him. She puts him under a spell, making him fall in love with her. He escapes, and leaves her in despair singing "Ah, Rinaldo dove sei?" in the early version, and in the later version "Le Perfide Renaud".

**ANNA RENZI** and **ANNE CHABANCEAU DE LA BARRE**, two highly successful 17th century singers, appear throughout the thesis as partners in a dialogue with the SINGER. Their dialogue culminates in the Epilogue.

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**Prologue**

Towards a deeper understanding and knowledge of vocal expression and pure voice

"The philosopher remains confined to schools, the poet to academies; and for the people what is left in the theaters is only pure voice, stripped of any poetic eloquence and of any philosophical feeling."  

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“Music is gone and left is silence. Yet a vibrating motion is stronger than ever in the silent room. The harpsichord player hurries out with his face covered by his hands. My whole body and soul are one and I am alive. My voice is silent, but the movement in me is bursting with an overwhelming force. Silence, sound, quiet, movement – all is present in this room. I am at the center of NOW, in the middle of BEING. It is a moment capturing the absolute conviction that everything has been expressed. Sound is now embodied in a most profound sensation of existence.

The woman I interpret has lost her love. Her inability to transform her destiny forces her through a swirl of extreme emotion. Then suddenly she gives in. She lets go of her breath. We are one. My voice is part of hers. Everyone in the room is part of the vibration in this almost spiritual sensation.

Perhaps I exaggerate? But no… it was true for me. The frame of my reality is invisible. I ask myself if this isn’t the sensation or ambition all (performing) artists strive towards in their attempt to present their art? To me this means reaching all the way into the borderland of fulfillment, and being eternally alive. A voice inside me tells me to sing again and again and again…”

13. This text was composed for a course in Writing and Practical Knowledge, led by Prof. Anders Lindseth, at the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts (University of Gothenburg), which I attended during the fall 2006. The text describes a moment of importance for my own vocal practice and it became the formulated point of departure for this research project.
Searching for pure voice in performance

The text above describes a point of departure to this project. It is where it all starts. My curiosity to understand the pure voice experience has inspired me to study the abstract sources of the voice. The moment when nothing matters more than a voice streaming out of me, reaching out into infinity. In 2005 I found an article by Mauro Calcagno addressing pure voice in early Venetian opera. Since then this article has been my guiding star throughout the PhD project. Calcagno argues for the relevance of the emerging protagonist of opera production, that is, the female singer. According to him, she becomes a symbol for two important tropes associated with an intellectual discourse on the concept of aesthetics, referring to “the pure voice and over-vocalization: the concept of nothing and the singing of the nightingale”.

Nothingness

What does nothing mean? I get this question almost every time I talk about my research. I never know how to answer in a simple way, even if completely I understand its true meaning. It is so simple and yet so complicated. Is it a sign of nothingness, that is, when everything can be said, even in silence? A paradox. Could that be the answer to the question? I hope to be able to better describe and perform my understanding of nothingness and the pure voice with this thesis. I turn to my own vocal practice, to other voices and practices as well as to theories addressing the wonders of nothing, hoping to find more answers that enhance my own vocal skills and expression.

**Accademia degli Incogniti:** observers of nothingness and supporters of the Venetian 17th century opera

Throughout my project I battle daily with the fear of how to make my singing research valid and respected in the midst of traditional academia. There seems to be rather an uneasy relationship between artistic research and the academic world.  

What makes the research of an artist so different from traditional academic, scientific and scholarly research? Is it the artist’s fear to become too theoretical or perhaps to loose touch with the art practice itself? Becoming too academic? Or is it perhaps the academia fearing a transformation of its perceived and performed status, which is usually defined by truth, objectivity and realism, when linked to artistic research which is often mysterious, subjective, unreasonable by nature. With the help of Calcagno I will examine the definition and essence of a specific academy more closely, namely the Accademia degli Incogniti, an academy directly linked to the first productions of the new opera genre in 17th century Venice. Accademia degli Incogniti seems to have been an academy striving towards total freedom and openness of mind. This academy has been described to have

‘created an intellectual style that depended on conversation. The most important activity was the oral presentation followed by debate. They created an “academic” style that placed enormous emphasis on the virtuosity of word selection and the power of language, not just for self-expression, but as an instrument for perception and deeper cognition.’

For the Incogniti everything could be turned inside out forever and ever no matter the topic. In their wordplay one could observe a sense of indeterminacy of meaning and a dynamic process of understanding. They walked through the words and transitioned themselves into unknown meanings, without any intention of finding a final explanation.

This academy observed the essence of nothing (il Niente) and in 1635 their theories of nothing were published. For its members,

“celebrating the nobility of nothingness opened a door onto aesthetic and semiotic theory. Examining nothingness was a device for exploring the impossibility of representation in language, which led to a distrust of verbal language and to the cultivation of stylistic extremes for their shock value or, to put it in seventeenth-century terms, for the capacity of poetry to achieve novelty and produce the marvelous.”

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17. Ibid. p. 79.
They searched for a space, where thoughts could be thrown into the air and played with by the academy members. The themes they explored ranged from the most trivial to the most serious. The members all shared the vision of a search for the unknown. In fact, the unknown explained their own identity: Accademia degli Incogniti (Academy of the Unknown). Their motto was Ex Ignoto Notus – known from the unknown. Their emblem pictured the river Nile, referring to the bizarre associations of the words Nilo (the Nile), Nihil, (in latin: nothing), Nulla.¹⁸ From a singer’s perspective it is intriguing to notice that the emblem is shaped like an open mouth, as pointed out by Calcagno. Perhaps referring to the singing voice?

¹⁸. The Accademia degli Incogniti can be explored further in the following papers: Calcagno, 2003; Miato, Monica L’Accademia degli Incogniti di Giovan Francesco Loredan, Venezia (1630–1661), Leo S. Olschki Editore, Firenze, 1998.
Singing voices from the 17th century: the voices of
Anna Renzi and Anne Chabanceau de La Barre

I have been following one of the first opera singers, praised by members of
l’Accademia degli Incogniti for her passionate interpretation on the stages in
Venice. Her name was Anna Renzi. The following words were dedicated to
Renzi by librettist Giulio Strozzi in 1644:

“The action that gives soul, spirit, and existence to things must be governed by
the movements of the body, by gestures, by the face and by the voice, now raising it, now
lowering it, becoming enraged and immediately becoming calm again; at times speak-
ing hurriedly, at others slowly, moving the body now in one, now in another direction,
drawing in the arms, and extending them, laughing and crying, now with little, now
with much agitation of the hands. Our Signora Anna is endowed with such lifelike
expression that her responses and speeches seem not memorized but born at the very
moment. In sum, she transforms herself completely into the person she represents,
and seems now a Thalia full of comic gaiety, now a Melpomene rich in tragic majesty.
I call her the fourth Grace…”

19. “L’espressione con la quale si dà l’anima, lo spirito, e l’essere alle cose, deve essere governata dal
movimento del corpo, dal gesto, dal volto, e dalla voce, hora insultandola, hora abbas-
dandola, stendandola, e tornando subito a pacificarvi: una volta parlando in fretta, un’altra ada-
gio, movendo il corpo a questa, hora a quella parte, raccogliendo le braccia, e distendendole,
ridendo, e piangendo, hora con poca, hora con molta agitazione di mani: la nostra Signora
Anna è dotata d’un’espressione si viva, che paiono le risposte, e i discorsi non appressi dalla
memoria, ma nati all’hora. In somma ella si trasforma tutta nella persona che rappresenta, e
sembra hora una Talia piena di comica allegrezza, hora una Melpomene ricca di Tragica
Maestà. Io la chiamarei la quarta Gratia…” – Strozzi, Giulio Le glorie della Signora Anna
Renzi Romana, Venice, 1644; Surian, p. 8–9. This quote, except the last sentence, has been
translated to English by Ellen Rosand: Rosand, 1991, p. 232. For further reading about
Anna Renzi: Glixon, Beth L. Private Lives of Public Women: Prima Donnas in Mid-Sev-
enteenth Century Venice, Music & Letters, Vol. 76, No. 4, Nov. 1995, pp. 509–531; Sartori,
Antonio La prima diva della lirica italiana: Anna Renzi, Nuova rivista musicale italiana, 2,
1968, pp. 430–452.

It is my opinion that the female singer from the 17th century can teach us
all a great deal more about singing, acting and opera than what we already
know. It can of course be said that nothing can be true, and that nobody will
ever know for sure who the first opera singers really were, how they sounded
or what stipulated their acts on stage, but I know that I need my illusions and

fantasies. It is very much about creating images based on no other evidence
than what has been left behind in documents. Still, this can be compared
to the creative process of preparing a performance. I have a score, I have a
context, I have experience of communicating emotions, but I need to let my
wonder and my curiosity for the amazing and unrealistic visions and inner
images come alive, otherwise my performance will have no meaning at all.
Anna Renzi, along with the French 17th century singer Anne Chabanceau de
La Barre20 has accompanied me throughout the project21. They are the
two singers I turn to when I emerge into the words, into the music, into the
phrasing and into the gestures. Together with them, my mind creates images,
which are then represented and embodied by my voice and my performing
acts. These women, representing to me a female sound in 17th century opera,
created new tools to achieve what was so much desired, namely to touch, en-
chant and move the souls of the audience.

Renzi’s portrait has served as a model for creating a costume for my proj-
et. During research and discussion with an expert on 17th century fashion in
Venice, an observation of her costume confirmed important matters related
to her appearance on stage. It was a costume realizing both male and female
aspects: she was wearing a male casacca, which is a type of coat or shirt, un-

The result was the CD Eclatante Amarante. A portrait of The French 17th century Singer
Anne Chabanceau de La Barre (1628–1688), EB 2004. For more information: www.elibel-
grano.org. See also: Tiersot, Julien Une famille de musiciens français au XVIIe siècle les de
famille de musiciens français au XVIIe siècle les de la Barre, Revue de musicology, Vol 9,
No. 26. May 1998, pp. 68–74; Brezet, Michel Les concerts en France Sous l’Ancien Régime,

21. These women can be considered as two of the first prima donnas in the history of opera.

Texts were published during the seventeenth century dedicated to Anna Renzi (Stro-
zzi,1644) and Anne Chabanceau de La Barre (Loret, Jean La Musie Historique ou Recueil
des Lettres en Vers contenent les Nouvelles du Temps, écrits a son Altesse Mademoiselle
de Longueville, depuis Duchesse de Nemours, 1650–1665, vol. 1–4, 1857) highlighting
their important roles in the development of the new operatic genre. These texts celebrate
Renzi and La Barre’s passionate interpretations and glorious performances. On a more
general level, these historical texts also provide us with highly significant and direct infor-
mation about the performing qualities of female 17th century singers and their manners
of expressing the passions. Another interesting piece of information is that throughout
the texts both women embody some of the attributes closely related to a philosophical
discourse concerning the paradoxes of nothing, for example the singing of the nightingale
(Calcagano, 2003; Loret, 1857).
derneath which is a slashed doublet upper body with paned sleeves. Across her chest a ribbon can be observed, possibly holding a sword hanging on the side. Her curly hair fell down on her shoulders and she had a fashionable short fringe, which was a typical hairstyle in the 17th century. The female attributes in the portrait were the hairpins, earrings, brooch and necklace. Her costume proves to fit perfectly well with Renzi’s highly celebrated interpretation and performance of paradoxical mad scenes, demanding her ability to rapidly transform into male and female characters.²²

²². I am most grateful to Prof. Doretta Davanzo Poli (Facoltà di Lettere e di Filosofia, Università Ca’Foscari, Venezia) for her advice, interesting discussion and for her generosity in providing me with laces for the costume.
Selecting music manuscripts

Enchanted with the melancholy so often present in 17th century vocal music, and especially after many years of work on French 17th century airs serieux and the passions beyond this genre, I was often tempted to create a concert/performance of only lamentations. But when I reconsidered the outcome of such a concert, I decided there would be too much of sorrow for the ears and hearts of the audience. However, spending four years doing research on lamentations for a PhD project seemed fully acceptable.

After some time I realized there was another scene much appreciated in earlier opera and which was linked to the lament, this was the mad scene. They both shared the "antithetical digressions and 'stunning transformations' – i.e., those abrupt deviations between opposing states of mind".

The lament and the plainte

The two following quotes describe the essence of the lament as a genre in itself very well, clearly succeeding in its purpose to move the affections of the audience.

"The lament scene is a scene of desperation, imprecation and self-pity on the part of the heroine; a monologue, it comes at a critical point of in the drama; for the protagonist, it represents the culmination of various inner conflicts raised in the course of the preceding action."

"The lament was different for the other operatic conventions. It came to opera as an entity in its own right, with a distinct definition and a generic integrity of its own. [...] Throughout its history the lament asserted its independence, standing somewhat apart from its situation. An emotional climax followed by resolution of whatever action was involved, it was a soliloquy, a moment of particularly intense expression for the protagonist, the affective crux of a narrative structure. [...] As a clear demonstration of music's power to move the affections, the lament embodied the operatic ideal."  


27. Some other examples of French Plaintes except the ones examined in this project: Plainte Italienne "Deh, piagete..." from Lully's opera Psyché, 1678; "Quel prix de mon amour", from Médée by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, 1693.


The mad scene and the scene of fury

The mad scene can be found in Italian and French drama from around mid-16th century. It appears in comedies and pastorals, but also in tragedies.

“in the commedia dell’arte, mad-scenes were regularly presented as bravura pieces, required by convention to be ridiculous in whole or in part.”

An example of a mad scene from the commedia tradition comes from La forsennata principessa, where Alvira

“…speaks of the grief she feels for her murdered lover and of the joy of seeing before her head of her enemy, and contrasting these various thoughts she becomes mad: frantic and delirious, tearing her hair and rending her garments she runs outside the city towards the sea…”

Another example performed by commedia dell’arte actress Isabella Andreini, who was particularly famous for her interpretations of mad scenes, comes from La Pazzia d’Isabella (The Madness of Isabella).

“I remember the year I don’t remember, when a harpsichord was tuned for a Spanish Pavaniglia with a Galiarda by Santin of Parma, for that something then the lasagne, the macaroni and the polenta was dressed for mourning, not being able to suffer that the Gatta Fura was a friend of the sweet girls from Algeria; clearly, as the caliph of Egypt prefer, it was concluded tomorrow morning both would be placed in pillory.”

Everything became exaggerated. Passions mixed in a fast tempo, using senseless words and vivid articulation: it all broke up with the baroque ideal of affect, rhetoric, control and reason. Words and gestures lost their references as soon as they had been pronounced. The mad scene came to play an interesting role since it was very much esteemed by the audience, while at the same time it came to represent an upside-down anti-rhetorical opposition to Renaissance ideals supported and powered by the Catholic church.

It is also interesting to note that the mad scene in a way embodies a paradox of perfection claimed by the republic of Venice itself.

The first known evidence of madness in the opera genre was the planned opera production of Giulio Strozzi’s and Claudio Monteverdi’s La Finta Pazza Licori (The Feigned Madwoman Licori), a comic opera most likely never performed. Here again, the emphasis on words become evident when Monteverdi in a letter to Alessandro Striggio writes:

Since this text is an important proof of how the mad scene evolved while it was performed, I have made an attempt to translate the words straight into English, just to point out the chaotic and unreasonable use of language:

“I remember the year I don’t remember, when a harpsichord was tuned for a Spanish Pavaniglia with a Galiarda by Santin of Parma, for that something then the lasagne, the macaroni and the polenta was dressed for mourning, not being able to suffer that the Gatta Fura was a friend of the sweet girls from Algeria; clearly, as the caliph of Egypt prefer, it was concluded tomorrow morning both would be placed in pillory.”

34. a delicious tarte (possibly from the region of Liguria).
35. I would like to point out that even if the tradition of the mad scene was mostly female there are examples of men acting mad, such as Orlando’s mad scene in Orlando Furioso, see I Canovacci della Commedia dell’Arte, pp. 329–352. I will also mention Ophelia’s mad scene in Shakespeare’s Hamlet as an English answer to the baroque phenomenon. Ophelia’s performance also includes singing in her monologue, which is a sign of madness in itself in the context of the drama. See Rosand, 1992, p. 241. On madness and folly, see: Kromm, Jane The Art of Frenzy. Public Madness in the Visual Culture of Europe, 1500–1850, Continuum, London-New York, 2002; Guidorizzi, Giulio Ai confini dell’Anima. I Greci e la Follia, Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2010.
According to Fabbri, there would be only one way to go: to imitate, respond and express the impulse of each word, in its present appearance. For this to be done one would have to set aside any other impulse. Furthermore, since the laws of rhetoric were so deeply imprinted in human behavior at this time, the reasonable gestures would of course be visible; but they would had to have been challenged by the intuitive impulse of a female body.

In France the way Italians used the passions was often considered acts of bad taste, vulgarity and extravaganza:

“The Italians have a false, or at least outrageous expression, because they do not accurately understand the nature or the degree of the passions. They break out laughing instead of singing when they express some joyful sentiment; if they want to sigh, one hears sobs that are violently formed in the throat rather than sighs that escape secretly from the passion of an amorous heart; from a painful reflection they make the strongest exclamations; tears of absence are funeral lamentations; the sad becomes the gloomy in their mouths; they cry out instead of complaining in sadness, and sometimes they express the languor of the passion as a weakness of nature.”

Their own use of passions was performed with grace and sublety. The emotional intensity was hidden in between balance and moderation. The calculated movement of a phrase could never be repeated; it had to stay simple but never below a certain level of politesse and elegance. It was a performance for an audience attracted by something-never-to-be-touched.

Although this controlled vocal ideal was evident in France, something changes with the first operas of Lully. The voices of furies are heard through female personalities such as Medée and Armide. Both of them walk out of what is vocal normality. Their voices exhibit violence and are animated by passions of strong character in a completely new manner. In the end, however, it is logos, measured and pure, that cleans the musical and vocal disorders, and leads the sound towards a state-of-being that can only be seen as a continuous purification of the pure. The pronunciation of the words wins the battle and the music conforms instead to the metrical calculations, conveying the structure of pathos into a state-of-becoming rather than state-of-being.

37. According to Fabbri, 1985, Monteverdi used the word ‘passioni’.
38. This letter from Monteverdi to Alessandro Striggio, dated 7 May, has been translated to English in two different publications, though they are interestingly enough identical: The New Monteverdi Companion, ed. Dennis Arnold and Nigel Fortune, Faber & Faber, London/Boston, 1985, (1968), p. 64; and Fabbri, Paolo Monteverdi, p. 200–203(translation to English by Tim Carter). Since I have noticed some differences in the English translation from the version published by Fabbri in Italian in 1985, I have included it here in this footnote: “La invenzione non mi par male, né men la spiegatura; è vero che la parte di Licori per essere molto varia, non dovrà cadere in mano di donna che or non si facci omo et or donna con vivi gesti e separate passioni, perché la immitazione de tal finta pazzia dovendo aver la considerazione solo che nel presente et non nel passato et nel futuro, per conseguenza la immitazione dovendo aver il suo appoggamento sopra alla parola et non sopra al senso de la clausula, quando dunque parlerà di guerra bisognerà immitar di guerra, quando di pace pace, quando di morte, di morte, et va seguitando, et perché le transformationi si faranno in brevissimo spatio, et le immitazioni. Chi dunque averà da dire tal principalissima parte che move al riso et alla compassione, sarà necessario che tal donna lassi da parte ogni altra immitazione che la presentanza che gli somministrarà la parola che averà da dire.” in: Fabbri, Paolo, Monteverdi, Edizioni di Torino (E.D.T.), 1985, p. 262–263.
Singing and observing: a method

“She silently observes the actions of others, and when she is called upon to represent them, helped by her sanguine temperament and bile, which fires her (without which men cannot undertake great things), shows the spirit and valor learned by studying and observing.”

In simple words, this quote describes a method applied by a singer from the 17th century. She observed. She observed the context of her surrounding, the voices, the gesture, the passions and affections. Based on this quote I formulated my own research method: to observe the context where the music was performed for the first times; to observe myself in those surroundings in a contemporary context; to observe my own inner images when studying the manuscripts; observing the vocal reactions to the previously mentioned observations and to formulate the thoughts and reflections otherwise kept in secret from a wider audience. All observations were then filtered through the concepts of nothingness, je-ne-sais-quoi and passion.

Affection, passion, feeling and emotion, with reference to rhetoric

Theses four words have been subjects for study and debate for as long as we can remember. In the baroque era, the two most commonly used words were affection and passion. They referred to the inner movements and agitations that occurred when stimulated by an exterior act or an inner sensation. Descartes pointed out wonder, love, hate, desire, joy and sadness to be the primary passions. It has been said that passion was a word more often used in France, while affection was the word used by the Italians. It has also been stated that affection was a more active movement, thus directly linked to the body, while passion made mind suffer passively. In the 17th century the passions were associated with body liquids moving through the human system, affecting the character and personality of a person. Rhetorical treatises on speech, gestures and music were formulated in order to inform, persuade, delight and entertain the public in a controlled manner. The purpose was to affect the soul of the listener.

Concerning gestures in the mad scene, I have asked myself on a number of occasions how far I could stretch the rhetorical gestures, and have come to the conclusion that in the state of madness the gestures escaped what was normal and considered to be acceptable. In madness the person would have moved furiously and in an agitated way throughkrative acts, stretching the arms both high and low, and screaming louder to show a growing anger. Madness took a different standpoint from the rhetorical tradition and I suppose it was not without reason that a book by Ferrante Pallavicino, with the title “La Rhetorica delle puttane/Composta conforme li precetti di Cipriano. /Dedicata all’università delle cortigiane più celebri” (The Rhetoric of the Whores/composed based on the outline of Cipriano /Dedicated to the university of the most celebrated courtisans) was published with the support of Accademia degli Incogniti in Venice in 1642, based on a rhetorical treatise by the Spanish Jesuit Cipriano Suarez.

The word feeling in English had been associated with the sensation of touch, coming from the Italian word sentire meaning “to feel, to hear, to smell, to...”

42. Descartes, 1649.
taste, to perceive, to conceive. Used also to approve, to allow, or to yield consent unto." Therefore, feeling becomes synonymous with a concept of sensation.

The last word emotion is a more recent word stemming from the word motion (muovere in Italian). E-comes from ex-, meaning out, which gives e-motion the sensation of a movement directed out of the body.

In 1994 Antonio Damasio suggests that emotion and feeling "provide the bridge between rational and non-rational processes, between cortical and subcortical structures". His comment appears as a natural link back to the topic of my thesis, where my intentions have been to be aware, while exploring the bridge between the rational and the non-rational sounds and actions of the lamentation, the mad scene and nothingness.

Seeking vocal nothingness & je-ne-sais-quoi
by applying mindful awareness

Accademia degli Incogniti played an important part in productions of the first public operatic events in the republic of Venice around 1640; their philosophical discourse around the concept of nothingness has been an essential topic for my research. As a singer I used Incogniti's "device for exploring the impossibility of representation in language" aiming to create "stylistic extremes for their shock value" testing the natural vocal sound or "to achieve novelty and produce the marvelous" by applying various ornaments and vocal decorations. Based on a dialogue with a dancer, with instrumentalists, other singers and researchers, who all share the common interest in 17th century culture, I have studied my own vocal sounds and paradoxes along with theories of nothingness. I understand this process to represent moments of absolute awareness.

At the end of 19th century William James made a remarkable breakthrough, arguing that emotion was an ongoing process, starting with a stimulus that caused the body to move and thus experience an emotion. His statement established the foundation of a theory of emotions. Today there is an increasing interest in the history and science of emotions, and scholars and scientists try to understand what impact sensations and passions have on our state-of-being. The singer’s paradox consists of allowing the voice its intuition, to be expressive and passionate on stage, yet attempting to remain within in conscious physical and emotional control. There is a need for the singer to become aware of the self in this balancing act. Where is I on stage? What does I mean when I interpret the voice of another being? In my research I have linked the experiences of my vocal practice to the theories of emotion, mindfulness, embodied cognition and embodied mind pronounced by neuroscientists such as Francisco Varela and Antonio Damasio. Both Varela and Damasio explore a non-Western philosophical tradition that derives from a Buddhist method of examining experience called mindfulness, which means "that the mind is present in embodied everyday experiences". Through a dialogue between this non-dualistic method and cognitive science Varela addresses factors that can be directly juxtaposed with phenomenological arguments by Merleau-Ponty for example. In my practice I also apply the Alexander Technique, which is another method used by many performing artists, and which allow the mind to acknowledge habits in everyday experience, and in this way obtaining, through practice, an awareness of the self as a whole.

48. Florio, 1611, search on the word sentire.
51. My references to theories of nothingness include for example: Manzini, Luigi, 1634; Merleau-Ponty, 2006 (1945, 1962); Heisig, 2001; Cavalcante Schuback, Marcia Sá Løvstal til Intet, Glant Produktion, 2006; Olsson, Anders Läsnings av intet, Albert Bonniers Förlag, 2000.

55. Varela et al. p. 22.
Over-vocalization and the singing of the nightingale

For a contemporary analysis on the phenomenon of pure voice with regard to other historical periods, Calcagno refers to Lawrence Kramer, who calls the moments when the voice surpasses the textual meaning “overvocalizations”. Another formulation is provided by Nietzsche, when he describes the melismatic act as a “musical excitement that comes from all together different regions” than does poetic excitement.⁵⁷

These theories have met my own understanding of ornamentation. From the composer, singer and voice teacher Benigne de Bacilly, I learned the importance of animer with regard to the voice, that is, to animate and make the voice come alive.⁵⁸

When a word has been sung, the voice has made a vocal statement; from then on any sound could happen or be allowed. The voice goes on living apart from the text or the word. This developed during the end of the 17th century into a style where the voice transformed into something extraordinary or virtuoso. The singer became the diva or as Gian Vincenzo Gravina pointed out, a pure voice⁵⁹, losing to some extent the curious tension connected to the text. It is interesting to try to understand why this division between word and sound happened, while at the same time every sound was a reflection of the sensation of the words. This is again a paradox, bringing the nightingale back into the picture. The male singing bird was perceived as a female. His/her sound enchanted the listeners with its own rhetoric. Ovid transformed Procne and Philomela into birds, depending on different regions. His/her sound washed away the darkness of the night and made way for morning light. These female singers went out on stage, making way for mad songs full of passions. Across the whole world their voices rang, coloring the minds of all humans who heard them singing. They made way for an army of amazons, Divas, who would enchant, tease and seduce on opera stages around the world up to the present day.⁶⁰

Creating a music research drama thesis

I started to write a pure voice experience with only one intention: to deliver and express my thoughts straight into words without any rewriting. I wanted to describe, as simple as possible, the sensation of an experience that proved to be something significantly valuable to my profession as a singer and a performer. It was a description of my driving force, which provided my being with the desire to communicate.

Then, as a second step my aim was to explore the first text and continue to research the meaning behind the words, its images and its sounds. It became obvious to me that I needed to keep my senses open and try to understand what the affects, passions and emotions behind the words could tell me.

My work with this thesis has been done in a similar way. I decided to keep the pure voice experience as an introduction to my research as well as the Prologue, since it has been my driving force since the day it was written. After that my research began and what I found I have collected in the three acts of this music research drama thesis.

It is a collection of impressions and inner images, recorded both in sound, with film cameras and still images, and in words. I had to collect it all by myself in order to be truthful to my research. The collection and the curating of my material could never be truthful to my own acts if left it in the hands of another person. I am a documenting and collecting singer, nothing else.

Every act follows a different lament or a mad scene. My choice of music is based on instinct, but I was also trying to follow Anna Renzi and her

⁵⁹. see quote on page 29, footnote 12.
repertoire in Venice. She was the first one to perform the roles of both Deidamia and Ottavia.

Since I wanted to explore both Italian and French vocal music I had to find two lament based on the same character composed both in Italian and French. I had always wanted to work on the Lamento di Arianna but had never really had the chance to go deep enough into the piece. Now I had the perfect opportunity, since I knew the Plainte d’Ariane from my long project working with music connected to Anne Chabancaeu de la Barre. Plainte d’Ariane by Michel Lambert is not a typical French operatic air, but on the other hand it captures all what French music is about: charm, therefore it is a perfect match to the Lamento d’Arianna. At first I was hesitant, since I knew the Plainte d’Ariane extremely well after years of singing, performing and recording it. I thought that would be a problem, but then I didn’t let this stop me, and looking back I am very sure the music has grown into something quite different. I have come to see Ariane in a new light, which I will tell more about in the Epilogue.

For Act III I decided to turn to the fury scene of Armide, trying out an early version from a ballet by Lully, from 1664, connecting it with the same scene from his opera Armide from 1686. In this act I investigate the development happening musically between the first piece and the second piece. It is also interesting since the first piece is in Italian with a French musical context and the later version is all in French.

The model of making my thesis into a libretto and a performance of the libretto presented on a DVD has of course been taken from the opera genre itself. The libretto was normally published as a tool for the audience to follow the lyrics performed on stage. If a production was successful, the libretto was printed in many editions, and they circulated all over Europe. In this libretto the audience will find texts, translations and footnotes.

When considering the best form of presenting this specific project I was inspired by the opera La Finta Pazza, from 1641. The reason was in fact a second volume published along with the libretto, entitled Il Cannocchiale della Finta Pazza. The aim of this text was to explain, highlight and describe the libretto and the opera performance in more detail, even to the people who never had the chance to see the actual performance and all the wonders of this opera. For me the form of a Cannocchiale seemed perfect, since I could use such a text as opera glasses or a pair of theater binoculars, in order to further explain the mad ways, thoughts and acts of a singer’s process from the first sight of the musical manuscript towards a performance.

My curiosity about the power of the voice and all the possible colors and shades available in the art of communicating vocally, draws my attention back in history to a period that musically has been especially interesting for me, that is, the last 15 years. I didn’t strive to enter into my research as a musicologist, but as a curious, researching singer. What I hoped to achieve with my research was to assemble different facts and stories presented by scholars and artists who specialized in the 17th century, adding my own practical experience of baroque singing.

As a performer I can choose whether to make my road easy or more difficult. I can turn directly to a modern contemporary printed edition and just sing. Or, I have the choice to look for more. I decided to choose the second option. I searched for original sources along with the modern editions. I searched for the unspoken truths not apparent on the page in front of me, not printed in black on white. I went to archives searching for other manuscripts and other writings related to the 17th century prints. I asked myself: who held this paper in his/her hand before me? I noticed my thoughts, and imagined the thoughts of the singer who interpreted the same music for the first time ever. Who was she? How did she live? How did she sound? What did she see, hear, feel, smell and taste?

But why did I need to know all this if I intended to do my own version? What was the purpose of all the searching? Obviously, one might argue that all this information would not make any significant difference to the sound of my voice? Well, maybe not. Nevertheless, I suggest that the new knowledge and experience I gained throughout my research, does indeed affect the sound of my voice. A singer learns her way to sing through images and sensations. Her sound grows with time and along with her perception of life. Books are available, but the master can never be substituted with a written textbook. The search for a meaning in a song is based on experiences, both technically and emotionally. For a singer this is an essential truth in the aim to achieve new ways to touch the soul of the observer and listener. It is my belief that these lived experiences can be stimulated and supported by theories of all kinds, if one allows the singing mind to be free, curious, aware and open to any possible truth or to one’s imagination.

My way of describing my singing state-of-being is totally subjective and might appear irrelevant for any further academic research. Yet it is a moment signifying all what I need in order to be a singer. These glowing moments
rising out of the awareness of pure voice fire my desire. Their appearance seduces my mind with amazement, wonder and curiosity. What I learn in my practical research on the powerful qualities of the voice gives me courage and energy to be open to expression and communication with my surroundings. The voice inside me encourages me to be bold and not afraid of what I might find. It is this openness that draws me towards fascinating encounters on all levels: such as when the voice meets the word, and, together, accompanied by images and thoughts, find a variety of sounding and spoken melodies; such as the meeting between the vocal instrument and the costume: the sensations of close physical tension and the restriction of a 17th century corset used in an experiment 12 hours a day for 2 weeks, creates a totally new perspective of air and space; or the meeting between my voice and a 17th century theater, now transformed into a romantic garden, yet confined to the limited space (700 m²) that the theater once occupied. All these experiences and many more to be described in the Libretto and the Cannocchiale allows me as a 21st century singer to explore the transformations of sound and of my instrument as a whole, and to imagine and intuitively follow the most fantastic scenarios in the art of being pure voice – a flowing voice – a voice of nothing, “that includes in itself all that is possible and that is impossible”.

62. “E pure il Niente include in sé tutto che ciò ch’è possibile e tutto che ciò ch’è impossibile”, words by Luigi Manizini, 1654, translated to English by Mauro Calcagno, 2003, p. 468.

Act I
Embodying Transformation

Scene 1
DEIDAMIA

Nature & Art are waiting for the entrance of the Singer. They trust in her power of embodying the paradoxes of Every Thing and No Thing. Words celebrating their existence are rolled out as a red carpet, preparing for the Singer’s appearance

CHORUS of OTHER

“...Artusi [...] invite an interpretation of consonance as both natural and masculine and dissonance as unnatural and feminine.”


64. Ibid, 125.

65. Ibid, 125.
MIND

“By bringing together humanistic ideas and aesthetic values, her madness on stage made space for it all…”

CHORUS of OTHER

“…playing at the boundary of decorum and excess.”

CHORUS of OTHER

“…you speak extemporaneously, […] with such richness and fullness that, when nothing can be added, nothing remains unaddressed – with such gestures that I could imagine your fingers themselves were speaking – with such a voice that I could suppose that the harmony of the Sirens sang within you – with such propriety and, finally, success, that by your nod and authority, you can hold the reins of a full theatre.”

The Singer appears as

a soldier

embodied by MIND, VOICE & BODY

VOICE

Guerrieri, all’armi, all’armi;
All’armi, dico, all’armi,
Ove stolti fuggite?

66. Ibid., 125.
67. Ibid., 311.
68. Warriors, to arms, to arms! / To arms, I say, to arms. / Where are you fleeing fools? (Deidamia’s mad scene has been translated from Italian to English by Ellen Rosand, unless otherwise mentioned. See, Rosand, 1992, pp. 246–247). I am grateful to Prof. Lorenzo Bianconi for providing me with his transcription of the music score of Deidamia’s mad scene.

MIND

I am dressed. Ready for war.
In consonance, I sound like a trumpet of war.

VOICE

Guerrieri, all’armi, all’armi;

MIND

Ready to use my weapons.
And I call for you all. Women. Follow me. Come on.
Where are you going? Don’t go away. Come along.
O God, you are so girly and so foolish
Look at me.
As a man, I am ready.
Dressed in a male costume.
As a real soldier I am dressed for the battle.
Ready for a battle of words and gestures.
A rhetorical battle.
I know this game.
A game of male authority,
But I have my secret weapon that none of them can use.
Only my strength can move my sword.
Come on. Listen. It is time for us all to move on.
Scream, shout and make noise.

VOICE

Armi, allarmi, ALLARMI, ALLARMI, all’armi!!!

MIND

Noise! To arms!
Fight for something better.
For something real and important.
Fight now and for the moment of action.
In action.

(Laughing to herself)

Am I not clear?

Perhaps not.

But I do understand myself.

That is a key.

And I am convinced my words are the right ones.

You may choose for yourself.

Choose the ones you find the best,

The most touching, or why not,

The ones that make you more upset.

Because they don’t make any sense at all.

That is in fact the whole point.

I know every word I utter,

Every one of them carefully selected.

Selected… yes, that is the word I like to use.

And I repeat them again and again…

Repeat and REPEAT AND REPEAT AND REPEAT AND REPEAT EVEN LOUDER AND LOUDER AND LOUDER

That makes sense

CHORUS of OTHER

“Io di te canto più forte

Perche amo piú di te,

Chi risente un mal di morte

Piú chi puó

Piú chi puó grida mercé

Piú chi puó grida mercé.”

VOICE

La fiera d’Erimanto,

L’Erinne Acaronte,

Il Piton di Tessaglia,

La Vipera Lerne,

Ci sfidono à battaglia 70

MIND

Ha ha, they are all there.

Senseless phrases.

One looking worse than the other.

Monsters of men – powerful men.

Words.

Controlled, stiff and correct.

Should we play their game?

Yes, let’s go to war and pretend we believe in every word they say.

VOICE

Mugge il Toro di Pindo,

Rugge il Nemeo Leone,

Udite, udite Cerbero che latra. 71

MIND

Where is the truth in this?

The truth is in my sound.

What about if I continue in Swedish?

Would that make more sense?

Ja, varför inte?

Ni förstår… att jag älskar pesto!

Ha ha… Det är fulkommelt sant!

Den intensive kombinationen av basilika, vitlök, parmesan och…


69. In a dialogue between the Italian and French Music, “Gentil Musica Francese…” (composed by Jean-Baptiste Lully for his Ballet de La Raillerie in 1659), the Italian Music proclaims these words: I sing louder than you, since I love more than you. The one who feels the pain of death, cries loudest for mercy. (Translation to English my own).

70. The wild beast of Erymanthus, / the Acarontean fury / the python of Thessaly / the Lernean hydra / challenge us to a fight.

71. The bull of Pindus bellows, / The Nemean lion howls / Listen, listen to Cerberus who barks.
Och jag talar om något som jag fullkomligen ÄLSKAR!
Och om jag pratar svenska
Så är det inte alla som förstår,
Utan lyssnar till mitt tonfall.
Ja, ordet pesto förstås säkert.
Det ordet känner väl världen till vid det här laget.
Men i ett slag, in a battle, skulle man mycket väl kunna göra pesto av varandra.
Att slå varandra i bitar. Hugga varandra i bitar.
Jag förstå mat, men inte krig.
Helt enkelt.
Krig, en manlig vansinnesakt.
No…
No…?
Je vais continuer en française…
Vous comprenez pas?
The language doesn’t make any difference.
The sound is what counts. Yes.
The accent and the mad way in which I claim I am right.
Only if I know what I say
And mean every word of it.
I tell a truth.
I tell a lie
Never be sure.
Or be sure, you know the truth yourself.
The truth is NOW!

CHORUS of OTHER explaining the word Pazzia
“Pazzia, folly, fondness, madness, dotage”73

CHORUS of OTHER
Ciaconna (sounding reference)74

MIND
Madness…PAZZIA… FOLLY… FEMALE FOLLY…

CHORUS of OTHER explaining the word Fondness
“Warm affection or liking. See synonyms at love
A strong inclination or preference; a taste: a fondness for sweets; a fondness for travel.
Archaic: Naive trustfulness; credulity.”75

MIND
I say a word, and believe in what I say.
Could it be so simple, and still, in this I will be considered mad?
If I say a word and PRETEND to mean what I say, how can that be sane?
Being naturally truthful would be my preference.
By imitating something which I don’t believe in at all,
And yet to be truthful, would it mean that I need to trust in my dishonesty?

CHORUS of OTHER
Ciaconna (sounding reference)76

72. The words are by Claudio Monteverdi, translated by Ellen Rosand in: Rosand, 1992, p. 244.
73. Searching for the word Pazzia in Florio, 1611.
74. Lislevand, Rolf Nuove Musiche, ECM Record GmbH, 2006, track 16, Ciaconna.
75. Searching for the word fondness http://www.answers.com/topic/fondness (June, 2010).
76. Lislevand, 2006.
MIND

It sounds mad.
The melody comes again and again.
Repeated, but slightly changed every time.
Decorated.
Ornamented.
Illustrated in more and stronger colors.
Overdone perhaps
But real in every new sound.

CHORUS of OTHER

Ciaconna (sounding reference)⁷⁷

MIND

La Finta Pazza,
The False Mad.
What would be the opposite?
The Honestly Clear and Sane?
Immediately I see both male and female images.
Both in one.
Just like in my dress.
Male and female.
Sane and mad in the same person.
The key is to know where the boundaries are
Between the two extremes.
Or to know
That there are no boundaries to remember.
Just to be.

CHORUS of OTHER

“What melodies are these?
Tell me, New Theaters,
So many scenes
Appearing in Sciro?
Also I would like to
Work beside,
Since I don’t lack the art
That of a single whistle
Changing in hundred different variations of stage settings
Of feigned seas, of erected mountains,
Beautiful shows of the Skies and of the Stars:
Openings for Hell, and on the graveled strand,
Shaping hell and roasting.”⁷⁸

CHORUS of OTHER

“An easy step it is from feigned follies to true madness”⁷⁹

CHORUS of OTHER

“Today, the stars,
After much work, are set up bright and new,
The Architecture rains,
And also I would like to explain,
Excellent and beautiful machinery,
Risking to break the necks of hundreds of Orfei.”⁸⁰

77. Ibid.

78. Deidamia’s words in the middle of the third act, second scene, libretto La Finta Pazza, p. 75: Che melodie son queste? / Ditemi? che Novissimi Teatri, / Che numerose scene, / S’apparecchiano in Sciro? / Voglio esser ancor’io / Del faticare à parte; / Ch’a me non manca l’arte ad un sol fischio / Di cento variar scenici aspetti, / Finger mari, erger monti, e mostre belle, / Far di Cieli, e di Stelle: / D’aprir l’Inferno, e nel tartareo lito / Formar Stige, e Cocito. (Translations to English my own in footnotes 78–82. My aim is not to be poetic, but to find an honest meaning of every word).

79. Nodrice replies to Deidamia’s words just presented here above, and their dialogue continues until note 82. Un facile passaggio / E da finte follie / a veraci pazzie.

80. Deidamia: Hoggi, che da le stelle, / Per tante opere ornar illustri, e nove, / L’architetture pi- ove, / Anc’io spegar vorrei / Macchine eccelse, e belle / Da far romper il collo à cento Orfei.
CHORUS of OTHER

"Rimes, machinery and singing
Are acts that makes
The wisest Prophetess mad:
And if you add
Amorous affect,
There is no wonder
If this woman
Has lost her reason."

CHORUS of OTHER

"Let's try, let's try:
Help me on with the wings,
Tie them tight, tight,
I want with eager courage
To fly along the roads of the wind."

MIND

There she goes, Deidamia.
Bye bye, and see you soon!
She came out of nowhere,
Straight on to the stage.
Like she left, just right now.
With the winds.
What do I know about winds?
That they can be strong.
That they make waves.
That they make me dizzy.
That they come out of nowhere,
Followed by clouds.

Isn't THAT amazing!
The warrior became HERSELF.
Herself – the Singer in her own shoes.
Shoes made for her feet.
Shoes fitted and formed in the softest leather.
Look at my feet.
Are they not amazing?
High up in the air I raise my head.
On golden heels.
Isn't it amazing?
Imitated and made like in the old times,
But made new, for now.
I embody history in golden shoes.

VOICE

Volete, che v'insegni,
Ingeniosi discepoli di Marte,
À brandir l'asta, à maneggiar lo scudo?
À ferir, a vibrar, di punta, in giro,
Di dritto, e di rovescio,
Questa fulminea spada
A farsi piazza e strada
Sovra i corpi nemicì? Ecco un fendente
Come in testa si dona. 

MIND

Ha, ha ha…
Don't you follow me?
Here, look here. Yes, up here.
No, I mean down here. Look at that. Follow my hand. Puff!
All gone! Where did it go…?

81. Nodrice: Versi, macchine, e canto / Son atti à render pazze / Le più saggie Sibille: e se v'aggiungi / Un amoroso affetto. / Meraviglia non è, se da costei / Partito è l'intelletto.
82. Deidamia: Alla prova, alla prova:/ Applicatemi l'ali, / Strette, strette, annodatele, ch'io voglio / Con feroce ardimento / Varcar le vie del vento.
Oh, right in your chest.
I am so sorry, I didn't mean to hit so hard.
My tongue is fast and I know
How to twists it around in my mouth.
Like a snake, I am ready to hit.
Or like a scorpion.
Stinging.
My words hit you as hard as a stone.
You trained me to speak and to sing,
And now you found your new master.
I stand here in front of you.
Follow me!
Stand straight in a line!
Noses up, and feet on the ground.
Don't forget to let the neck to be free,
And to let the back to be long and wide!

VOICE

Sù, sù stringete le file,
Formate lo squadrone,
Abbassate le picche.
Soldato dormiglione,
Camerata d'Acchille,
Destati, destati ch'il nemico
Di qui poco è lontano.

Armi, armi, armi alla mano,
Armi alla mano,
Armi, armi, armi alla mano
Armi, armi, armi alla mano.⁸⁴

In this moment the soldier becomes a beautiful woman. Her hand gestures as if she is holding a sword.

Helen of Troy

VOICE

Fermate, o là, fermate.
Oh Dio, silenzio, oh Dio
Tacete, homai, tacete,
Chetatevi, chetatevi, che chiede
Il traditor perdono.
Della schernita fede.
Schernita, della schernita fede,⁸⁵

MIND

Look up,
See your master.
A woman makes your tongues silent.
Like a God I reign.
Silence at last.
Listen to the wind.
And look, there flies Deidamia,
High above. She waves to us and laughs.
In silence.
The soldier speaks to you through me.
He asks you kindly to forgive him
For becoming a woman.
Though proud he stands here inside me.
Proud to be me,
To be myself.
I tell a lie when I ask forgiveness.
But I tell it well
And you will think I am honest.
Think whatever you want.
Listen to her voice.
And to your own.
She tells her true name.

⁸⁴ Come, tighten the lines, / form a squadron, / lower the swords; / Sleepy soldier / Achille's comrade / wake up, for the enemy / is little distant from here. / Arms, arms, arms in hand.

⁸⁵ Stop, hey, stop / Oh god, silence, oh god; / be still now, be still. / Hush, hush, for / the traitor asks pardon / for his betrayal.
VOICE

Elena** bella io sono,
Tu Paride Troiano
Sù, rapiscimi sù, Ladro melenso,
Stendi, stendi,
Stendi stedi la mano.
Tu picchi? Ti rannicchi? T’incrocicchi?**

MIND

I am here.
I am real.
Look at me.
Take my hand.
What happens?
Are you not feeling well?
You fall over? You shrink?
Is it the power of my hand that makes you fall?
Are YOU afraid?
Or do you only want to be left alone?
I thought you wanted ME, La Belle Helen!!
I wanted you and no one else. Not even a God.

VOICE

Giacer io volea teco,
E lasciar il mio Giove,
Ch’ogni notte stà meco,
Ma stanco dal lunghissimo camino,

86. Searching for meanings of the name HELEN: Gender: Feminine, Usage: English, Greek Mythology (Anglicized), Pronounced: HEL-ən (English) [key] English form of the Greek Ἑλένη (Helene), probably from Greek ἱέλις (helis) torch or corposant, or possibly related to ἑλέος (helo) moon. In Greek mythology Helen was the daughter of Zeus and Leda, whose kidnapping by Paris was the cause of the Trojan War. http://www.behindthename.com/name/Helen (1 February, 2011).

87. I am beautiful Helen, / You Trojan Paris, / Come, carry me off, come stupid crook, / Extend, extend your hand. / You hit yourself? you crouch? you crisscross?

88. I wanted to lie with you / and leave my love / who stays with me every night / but tired out from the long journey / that he makes from heaven to earth, / the great thunderer often turns out to be / a sluggish lover.
MIND

I don't want to hear, I don't want to hear!!!
No no no… don't tell me…
Oh….well…
Tell me then, tell me. I can't wait.
Don’t keep me waiting.
Oh, come on.
Tell me the truth.
God, you are worse, than God himself!
Goodness me.
I cant believe I am soooooo unlucky?!!!

VOICE

Non sò, per quale influsso,
Nemiei segreti amori,
Urto ogn'hora in soggetti
Più stolidi, e peggiori?
Non si può più parlare.

MIND

No point to say a word.
I am surprised though.
At first there were words.
That was the truth then.
I had to learn how to declaim.
You gave me compliments on my performances.
I made it your way.
But then when I knew how to speak,

89. Alas, tell me, tell me the truth, / if ever you told it, / what fixed stupidity assails you? / Why are you surprised? / Yellow wagtail, chaffinch, goose, hawfinch / Barn owl, idiot,
90. I don’t know from what planetary influence / in my secret loves / I collide always with subjects / ever duller and worse? / One can’t speak anymore.

VOICE

Ognun, à quell ch’io sento
Hoggi mi vuol glossare,
Mi vuol far il comento,
A stride quiete, dunque,
Ad intendersi à cenni,
Alla muta, alla muta,
pronta man, occhio presto,
Quel che diria la lingua,
Quel che diria la lingua,
Esprima il gesto.

MIND

You were all so taken by wonder.
I remained the only one knowing how to talk.
You had all lost your tongues!
So strange?!

You were all so taken by wonder.
I remained the only one knowing how to talk.
You had all lost your tongues!
So strange?!

Everyone, from what I hear, / wants to gloss me today, / to comment on me. / Let’s be quiet, then / and communicate with signals, / mutely, mutely. / Ready hand, quick eye, / what the tongue would say / let the gesture explain…
VOICE

Aita, aita, aita.
Ohimè quest' onda, ohimè,
È l'ultima per mè.
Dunque pietade in voi non hà più luogo?
Non vedete, ch' a
ffog, a
ffog, a
ffog?

MIND

It's the end.
Your touch and the gesture took me too far out.
The sea is deep
Now it will end. I will die.
I WILL DIE.
HEEELP ME SOMEONE!!!

VOICE

Ah sò ben io
Qual di racchiuso pianto al mesto core
Fa lago al mio dolore.
Verga tiranna ignobile
Recide altri papaveri;
Per questo io resto immobile,
tra voi sozzi cadaveri.
Il foco mesto ardetemi:
Il sepolcro apprestatemi,
Donne care,
Donne care, piagetemi,
Pace all' alma, pace all'alma pregatemi.93

92. Help, help, help... / Alas, this wave, alas, / is the end for me. / Has pity no place in you then? / Don't you see I'm drowning?

93. Alas, I know too well / while the tears are coming to an end / at my heart / a lake is made out of pain. (my own translation).

94. Tyrannic, ignoble rod / cuts down tall poppies; / For this I remain stationary, / among you loathsome corpses. / The funeral fire, light for me; / Ready my sepulcre: / Dear women, weep for me. / Pray for the peace of my soul.

95. I am being violated, o neighbors, / My honor is lost. / Help, friends, help.
Scene 2

OTTA VIA

VOICE

disprezzata
afflitta
che fai? ove son?

dure
siam costrette
siam fortunate

colare morte
in braccio di Poppea

tu dimori felice e godi

Disprezzata Regina
Regina Regina disprezzata
Disprezzata Regina del monarco Romano

MIND

Despised and rejected...
Scorned and rejected???
Something so out of reality.

A queen I am, forever.
I was given the title REGINA and
NOOO ONE SHOULD TAAAAAKE IT AAAAAAY FROM MEEE
No one,
Not even my husband, the emperor
No,… No,… NO NO NO!

CHORUS of OTHER

"Despair! I feel as if something is eating me up from inside.
The voices in me consumes me alive!
I ache, and I bleed.

My heart is in RED FLAMES of sorrow and despair.
I feel the solitude and emptiness…"*97

CHORUS of OTHER

Ottavia's appearance marks "a disconcerting intersection between history, opera, and politics."*98

96. Despised queen, of the roman emperor... (translation to English of Ottavia's lamentations are my own).
97. From my diary, June 2009.
MIND

For some I am despised
For others I come with something new.
For some I am a scorned queen,
For others I am a true victorious Queen.
To myself a queen without a land,
— a landless queen.
A queen of NO-MAN-LAND.

CHORUS of OTHER

“And if we turn to politics, you see that its aim is nothing else than increasing or augmenting the magnitude of the wonders of Nothing. If politics teaches us how to add to the greatness of one Prince, you’ll see in it a great master in annihilating the greatness of another one.”

99. The words are by Marin Dall’Angelo from the discourse published in 1634, Le Glorie dell’Niente, in: Calcagno, 2003, p. 470.

MIND

So then, I am all,
And always a queen.
So I will sound like a queen
I will move like a queen.
In all, I will act like a queen.

CHORUS of OTHER

“what makes Ottavia so unusual is not solely a result of her insistence on speaking rather than singing”

MIND

If you despise my acts,
Then allow me to be different.

By applying another mode of speaking,
Moving and performing through an opera,
I embody the essence of nothing.
You want me not to speak, but to be silent.
So I will speak in song.
I will sing the flames of my heart;
My fear for being alone;
My anger for being wrongly treated;
My love for the one I once loved;
My hate for the one who stole your heart;
My sorrow for having to leave.

VOICE

Disprezzata Regina
Regina Regina disprezzata
Disprezzata Regina del monarco Romano.

afflitta

VOICE

Afflitta afflitta moglie

MIND

I was your wife,
How did that change?
I trusted in you,
Like I trust in my own words.
And now,
I lost trust in you,
And in every word you speak.
Your act has made me fall,
As well in the trust of MYSELF.

101. Wretched wife.
CHORUS of OTHER

“…the Incogniti aesthetics, […] reveals a profound distrust of verbal language – words, in their view, are as unsubstantial as the outside world which they mirror and to which they refer.”

MIND

If I can not trust in you or in myself,
What is then left?
Speaking singingly
Parlar cantando.
Cantar parlando.
Singing speakingly.
There are two sides.
In that I could trust, if I dare.
And in my affliction
I have two choices:
To lay down on the ground, never rising again.
Or to stand up, and walk out of my trouble.

CHORUS of OTHER

“In contrast with the humanistic ideology predominant in the Renaissance, the author claims that the disciplines of the Trivium (grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric), far from empowering man in his search for knowledge, teach him nothing else than to embellish ‘those voices that serve only as midwives to the vain products of our imagination, delivering them perfect into the air in order to vanish into Nothing’.”

MIND

So then I have nothing to loose.
After having learned to control
Through grammar, dialectic and rhetoric
I will now move towards a free will of expression.

103. Ibid, p. 470.

And this free will include total control
As well as total freedom.

VOICE

Afflitta…
(exploring control and freedom)

MIND

Ottavia, your voice came to me
Through the heavy silent reading room
In the old library in Venice.
You gave me a performance of consonants,
Spitted out of your body.
They made me close my eyes and only listen.
But who did I hear?
Who did I hear?

CHORUS of OTHER

“Ottavia’s unique manner of expression is apparent in the nature of that recitative: a terse, angular, often colorless recitative, sometimes dissonant, other times forbiddingly consonant, but devoid of sensual chromaticism.”

Ottavia lends herself to “countless subtle variations. The result is a highly nuanced reading of Busenello’s text that easily accommodates Ottavia’s alternation between outspoken rebellion and stilted depression.”

MIND

If the score made your voice look colorless
And devoid of chromaticism,
I didn’t hear that in your performance.
Chromaticism lay between the written notes.
They were invisible to the eye.

Yet audible to any attentive ear.
They were sliding and drawing the contour
Of affliction, regret and pain.

VOICE
Afflitta moglie

MIND
I am trapped inside the prison of cotton and laces.
It pulls tight around my chest and it is impossible
To catch breath like I normally do.
God, it feels as if someone wants me to stop breathing all together.
Stop living freely.

VOICE
Disprezzata Regina,
Afflitta, afflitta afflitta moglie.

MIND
Just let me out. I need to be free.
Freed from all rules and restrictions of how
I should be and what I ought to do.
Free to be myself and just to fly
With my own wings.
High above all of you
Who think you own all power on this earth.

che fò, ove son, che penso? che penso?

VOICE
Che fò, ove son, che penso? Che penso? 106

MIND
What?…Oh no… I shouldn’t say
No, God I fear everything…
Freedom,
Is it worth it?
How could I even think about leaving?
My senses told me to follow my own voice,
Thoughts and desires,
And my way will be happy.
I will find real love one day and forget…
Yes, forget…
Forget something that once was important.
There are too many options.
Freedom scares me.
Where should I go? What direction?
Direction.
I should allow myself to be tall
And to be wide.
Space in between my ears and hips.
In fact in my prison,
In my corset I sense a freedom where I didn’t sense it before.
My hips can move,
How strange, it is as if my hips connect to my jaw.
Freedom around my jaw
Means freedom around my hips.
But only if I keep thinking long and wide.
And if I think Queen, I grow long and wide.
I become the woman who owns the stage and the theater.
Yes, the entire the world.

ò delle donne miserabil sesso

VOICE
Ò delle donne miserabil sesso. 107

106. What should I do? Where am I? What do I think? What do I think?
107. Oh, women of a miserable sex.
MIND

I pity you all.
As I pity myself.
Yes, it is true.
We are neglected.
But just because of the neglect,
We should look out for something different.
You, women on earth.
I will pray for you and for all your daughters.
I am also a woman, a slave destined to mourn my own life.
Sob and cry, SOB and CRY!!!
Cry out love, because I loved and now I am forgotten.
Like words.
Reduced into air.
Into nothing.

VOICE

Se la natura, e'l cielo
Libere ci produce,\textsuperscript{108}

MIND

Just like NATURE HERSELF is free to give new life.
So will I.
I can choose this meaning for my sound.
But I am not here to preach,
I am here to cry
I think:
If life only would be like this freedom,
Like the freedom of Nature
but no...

VOICE

Il matrimonio, il matrimonio c’incatena serve.
Se concepimo l’uomo
O delle Donne miserabil sesso
Al nostr’empio tiran formiamo le membra,
Allattiamo il carnefice crudele
Che ci scarna, e ci svena,\textsuperscript{109}

MIND

No, I am born to nurture a monster at my breast.
To give birth to A MONSTROUS MAN!!
Il carnefice crudele
THE CRUEL MEAT!
He,
He will suck milk from my side.
That is our destiny.
Oh... I am cold.
I can’t move.
FROZEN...

fabricar la morte partorir la morte

VOICE

E siam costrette
Per indegna sorte
À noi medesme fabricar la morte.\textsuperscript{110}

MIND

Frozen and freezing,
I know that I am forced

\textsuperscript{108} If nature and heaven sets us free, the marriage chains us as slaves. We conceive the man,

\textsuperscript{109} O miserable women. To our own tyrant we shape the limbs. We nurture the cruel torturer, who will flay us and let us bleed.

\textsuperscript{110} And we are constrained, by an outrageous fate, to create our own death.
To create my own death.
To make my own death.
Make it out of steal or metal.
It makes me think about making a car
Or a set of knives in stainless steel,
No,
There is another version:

VOICE
E siam forzate
Per indegna sorte
À noi medesme partorir la morte.¹¹¹

MIND
Our destiny is to give birth to monsters.
To give birth to our own death.
I say these words with heavy throat,
Though I know
They mean nothing.
Its only a play.
A game of power, where I have the role of the lamenting woman.
The powerless and colorless woman
The sorrowful queen.
Please, will anyone put up the heating?
I can't move, the cold has frozen my heart.
It's as if all feeling have left me.
I am ignorant of any passion.
Cold and frigid.
I would need someone to hold me,
Caress me and warm my heart,
To the passions I once knew.

¹¹¹. And we are forced, by an outrageous fate, to give birth to our own death.
In braccio di Poppea
Felice è godi, felice è godi, 114

MIND
How could you?
Leave me for her?
A whore?
Is she what you want now?
Oh god!
OH GOD!
I feel disgusted…
I feel dirty…

pianti miei miei martiri

VOICE
E in tanto
Il frequente cader de pianti miei
Pur và quasi formando un diluvio di specchi,
In cui tu miri dentro alle tue delizie
I miei, i miei, i miei martiri. 115

MIND
So all my tears will flow
And make a lake,
Where you can watch
My pain.
But why should you care?

114. In the arms of Poppea, you are staying with Poppea. Enjoying happily.
115. While the continuous flow of my tears, almost forming a liquid mirror, in which your delights and my distresses are reflected.

I mean Nothing to you.
I am alone.

destin punir fulmini t’accuso t’incolpo

VOICE
Destin, destin se stai là sù
Giove ascolta mi tù. 116

MIND
I am calling for help.
Help from the Gods.
I pray,
Giove, please come and help me to punish

VOICE
Se per punir Nerone
Fulmini fulmini fulmini fulmini fulmini
Tu non hai,
D’impotenza t’accuso,
D’ingiustizia t’incolpo. 117

MIND
If you don’t come
I will revenge myself.
I will scream loud and make a noise.
I will accuse you for everything.
You will be the one to blame.
You, the great God of all men.
But incapable of ruling men.

116. Fate, if you are up there, listen to me, Jupiter.
117. For punishing Nero, you haven’t any thunderbolts, I will accuse you of impotence. Accuse you of injustice.
They ignore you,
Like they ignore words, feelings and everything else.
If you don't set the world on fire
I will myself.
I feel the strength coming back
Through my hate,
My disgust
And my wish for revenge.

mio lamento mio tormento

VOICE
Ahi trapasso tropp'oltre, e me ne pento
Suprimo, e sepelisco
In taciturne angoscie
Il mio lamento.  

MIND
Oh, it took me too far,
The feeling of revenge.
I should not have...
For my own sake
I will say no more.
I will be quiet.
But my reaction came,
And will not be forgotten.
I know it stirred you all,
You came with me into
The hall of violence.
Let's take a break and close the door.
It means nothing in the end.
It is already forgotten.

118. Ah, I have gone too far, and I repent. I will suppress and bury in silence my languish.

à Dio

MIND
Leaving.
Never really belonging to a normal life.
To a life with a home and a kitchen table.
A common way of living.
Always leaving friends behind.
Always feeling guilty
For not being close as before
And keeping contact with the passed.
Sorrow of living away from family.
A feeling so sad that it hurts in me.
Painful.
A painful longing.
Longing and missing the land of birth.
The land where I was born

Longing and missing.
Memories comes to me.
Faces and landscapes,
I know my pain caused by longing.
Her sorrows I will never know.
Only mine.

VOICE
À à à Dio Roma  

MIND
A note a pause
A note a pause
A note a pause
I could just sing the letter A,
Give it strength and intensity,
But the pauses inhibits me
From forming a normal singing sound.
With 'normal' I mean a sound
Being placed on a specific tessitura.
The note is indicated and composed
On a specific place of course,
Though in this context I see it
More as an indication for me
To perform the passion behind,
Rather than the actual written note in the score.
To God I go
Farwell, my life,
I will take leave,
And long forever

VOICE
À à à Dio Patria
À à à amici, amiiiiiiIIIIiiiiiiici
à Dio
ammmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

MIND
I am leaving you my friends.
And I wont
Come back.
No, never. I wont see you faces any more,
And I am drowning in my own sorrow.
God, help me be strong. I turn to you.
FRIEEEEEEENDS stay with me.
Hold me and be with me.
Oh God,

120. Farewell my homeland, my friends o God, farewell friends.

VOICE & BODY
À à à à Dio Patria
À à à amici, amiiiiiiIIIIiiiiiiici

vado

MIND
On my way, I trust.
I learn to trust.
In the chromatic movement,
I let myself go

VOICE
Vado à partir l'esiglio in pianti amari 121

MIND
I am leaving.
I have to raise myself up from the ground
And be strong and bold.
I will be exiled and I will cryyyyyyyy bitter tears.
In all this emotion, I see myself in a bubble, all alone.
Like being in a emptiness
Not really understanding what happens.
It's quiet and I don't dare to stir.
My tears come in silence.
They tremble and again, intuitively,
I alternate the sound of the tone,
Like the motion of a wave.
Like a really slow tremolo

121. I am leaving for exile in bitter tears.
Navigo desperata desperata i sordid mari,\

If my voice can enchant the sea,
I will try to calm the waves.
I will ask the winds

to bring my name with love and kisses
back to the stonewalls of my home.

If my voice can enchant the sea,
I will try to calm the waves.
I will ask the winds

to bring my name with love and kisses
back to the stonewalls of my home.

Air. Winds and breath.
I can hear them.
In fact it is breath from inside me.
It comes from inside and it travels out –
Towards my home.
Even my whispers are loud now.
Stronger than the storm inside me.
The sea has no chance any longer.
My tears are gone.
The sea is calm

My voice brings my heart
Towards anyone with ears.
The moment this happens I sense the spine.
There is a freedom leading right through me.
Every vertebra is floating on air and
Flexibility allows me to grow out of my body itself.
The words transforms to thoughts.

The winds that from time to time receive my breath, brings the name of my heart, to see
and to kiss the walls of my homeland.

122. I will navigate desperately across the deaf seas.
123. Words are by Jean Loret, in a poem dedicated to the young singer Anne Chabanceau de La Barre, Lettre Trente-Huitième, 29 Sept. 1652: Je te dis mille fois adieu! / Je croy qu’aux climats de Neptune / Tu ne courras malle fortune, / Car, si les vents ou flots mutins / Vouloient faire ille les badins / Tes chants, tes apas, ton visage, / Auroient bien-tôt calmé l’orage.
124. The winds that from time to time receive my breath, brings the name of my heart, to see and to kiss the walls of my homeland.
If I remain open to these thoughts
They have a direct impact on my physical directions.
I see:
The walls,
The house,
Where I slept;
Where I ate;
Where I bathed.
The garden where I played.
I can dream of these places.
And I will kiss everything.
There is a physical awareness in my mouth.
Of sweetness.
My lips tastes the word 'baciare' bbbbbb –
The space inside my mouth is round
Embracing and preparing
For the next vowel
— aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaar.

io solinga pianti passi

VOICE

Et io
Starò solinga

MIND

Me
Io
Self
Again I battle with who I am.
But here in this place it doesn't matter who I am.
Myself.
Self and alone.
Staying with the strong awareness of my spine,

125. And I will remain alone.

Creates a secure landscape for the voice to be in one place.
Not loud, not week, just there.
I will stay there
On my own.
Aware of my rooted feet and my whole growing being.

VOICE

Alternando le mosse ai pianti, ai passi

MIND

Here I start to move from one side to the other.
In search of something.
Something I cannot see since my eyes are so full of tears.
Again, a mist.
The feet move anywhere,
But I don't know where.

VOICE

Insegnando pietade ai freddi sassi

MIND

In this state I can teach you to be vulnerable.
Look at me.
I am here even if I am weak.
You, cold stones, look at me.
It hurts, but I don't die of it.
I will live and I will feel alive.

126. shifting my moves between tears and walking.
127. Teaching the cold stone to have mercy.
sacrilego duolo

VOICE

Remigate, remigate, remigate
Oggi mai perverse genti
Allontanarmi, allontanarmi

MIND

Move, move, MOVE,
Don’t just stay there.
ACT now.
Get me out of here.
Take me away from this cold and unfriendly place!!!
Yes, away. I want to leave.
Here is no love at all.
Just cold stones, ignoring any feeling.
Wanting to kill...
To disrupt life.
To disrupt any feelings.
To hurt.
It hurts me right into my sacred soul.

VOICE

Dà dà dà gl’amati lidi

MIND

Yes, I said, far away from the shore
Out at open sea.
Sobbing, I am sobbing out these words.
D d d d
The D comes as a punch.

128. Row, row, row today, you perfidious men. Take me away, take me away.
129. From my beloved shores.

Gl – a soft movement at the back of the gum
Preparing for Aaaaammmmaaaaati lidi.
I know of so many lovely sea shores.
Shores where I played as a child.
Shore on the other side of America.
The sound of waves hitting the rocks in the north;
Or shaping the stones on a shore in the Mediterranean Sea.
The familiar sounds of boats and playing children,
People calling for someone.
VOICE
Ahi, ahi, ahi sacrilego duolo.
Tú tú tú m’interdici il pianto
Quando lascio la Patria

MIND

You steal, my holy soul.
I am so full of wounds.
The pain, the pain, the PAAIIIIN,
It doesn’t want to go away.
And you won’t let me cry.
Can you not see my feelings?
Can you not feel yourself?
Or perhaps your feelings are too strong to face.
Are you listening to me at all?

VOICE

Interdici il pianto quando lascio la Patria
Ne stilar una lacrima poss’io
Mentre dico ai parenti e à Roma

130. Ah, ah, ah sacrilegious pain when I leave my home you forbid me to weep.
131. you forbid the tears when I leave my home, not even a tear may fall when I say to my family and to Rome.
MIND

No, you don't.
So what is the point to try to convince you?
I see you have decided.
So I will cry for myself.
Quando lascio la patria
I need to say it slowly to understand.
It seems like a foreign language.
What, how, no, yes, no
But yes, it is so.
I will leave.
And while I take farewell from my parents and family
And from Rome
Not one tear will fall.
And I will say, farewell.
A Dieu,
With Gods will
I go.

VOICE

Ne stilar una una lacrima poss’io
Mentre dico ai parenti e à Roma
À Dio.132

Act II
Finding pure voice through
ornamentation, repetition, movement
and improvisation

Scene 1
ARIANNA

VOICE uses the ornament trillo, while exploring the opening phrase of
Lamento di Arianna
Lasciatemi morire...133

MIND

The sound draws me
Closer and closer
To a source I can hear in the distance.
I walk on a red line.
Following the shape of the rocks.
I cannot think of anything else
Than your opens sounds,
Open wounds,
Of pain and sorrow.
I feel close,
But also foreign
To the feelings you express.
The sound confuses and confirms,

132. not even a tear may fall when I say to my family and to Rome farewell.

I stand in the middle.
I follow the line into the sound,
And I find myself being.
But what brought me here, really?
Who brought me here?
Myself?
The place?
Your voice?
The score?
What did I do to arrive here and now?
I laugh and I cry.
Now.
And I want to understand.
Or should I just stop asking?
Lay down,
Let go of all my thoughts.
What do you bring me,
You, Body from the Chorus of Other?
Let us follow together.

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER

Lasciatemi morire
E che volete voi che mi conforte
In così dura sorte, In così gran martire
Lasciatemi morire, Lasciatemi morire. 134

MIND

My back rests against yours.
Rests but not without energy.
It is alive more than ever
Sensing your motion,

134. Let me die, let me die; and why do you want to comfort me in such a harsh fate, in such a great martyrdom? Let me die.

Awake and aware.
I see through my spine.
We follow one another.
I sound, you react.
You lead and
I follow you
Into the next sound.
I enjoy.
You stretch your arms,
I sigh,
And shiver.
The sigh grows into a cry.

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER continue to improvise

Lasciatemi morire…
O Teseo, o Teseo mio
Si che mio ti vo’ dir,
Che mio pur sei
Benché t’involi
Ahi crudo
A gli occhi miei.
Volgiti Teseo mio,
Vogiti Teseo
Oh Dio 135

MIND

I arrive, and I see only the horizon.
Sounds are embracing me.
I am right inside
You.
Languish.

135. Oh Theseus, oh my Theseus, although I want to call you mine more than you are really mine, although you have vanished, ah, cruel man! from my eyes. Come back, my Theseus, come back, Theseus, oh God!
Your breath is in my neck
This time you fly high above my head.
Like a bird or a spirit
Leaving my dead body.
I embrace the ground
And search for new energy to raise my head again.
I call for you Teseo.
I remember your kiss.
Don’t go,
Don’t go,
Don’t go,
Don’t leave my sight.
Don’t leave me
Don’t leave me
… or just go.
Go away,
Just leave!!!!

VOICE alone
Volgiti Teseo mio,
Vogiti Teseo
Oh Dio
Volgiti indietro a rimarar colei,
Che lasciat' ha per te la patria e il regno
E in questo arene ancora cibo di fere dispietat'e crude
Lasciera l'ossa ignude. 136

MIND
Leave!
Come back to me…
I won’t live without you.
I left everything for you.

Everything!!!!
EVERYTHING!!!!
CAN YOU HEAR ME!
EVERYTHING!
AND NOW YOU LEAVE ME HERE
To be consumed by evil.
Alone!
Alone to decide for my self.
To live
Or to die
On my own?
To stay on my own?
Without a guide to comfort me
When times are hard,
Or to laugh with me in joyful moments.

Oh,
If you could just see my thoughts…
If you just knew…
Here, on the cold rocks,
I call for your attention
Please listen to me!

VOICE alone
O Teseo,
O Teseo mio
Se tu sapessi, oh Dio
Se tu sapessi, ohimè
Come s'affanna la povera Arianna
Forse forse pentito
Rivelgeresti ancor la prora al lito. 137

36. Come back, my Theseus, come back, Theseus, oh God! Come back to see again she who gave up her homeland and reign for you, and on these sands, once more, you will leave the bare bones of foods for the wild beasts.

137. Oh Theseus, oh my Theseus, if you but knew, oh God! if you but knew, alas! how poor Arianna suffers, perhaps, perhaps you would repentant, and turn you ship's bow toward the shore.
MIND

When I say your name
I see your face.
Your eyes looking into mine.
I see you.
I see you.
I see you.
I see love and caresses…
Yet you leave
For glories elsewhere.
Do you really think
You can find a better love somewhere else?
A more loving being next to your side,
That would be ready to walk beside you
Just like I have done.

I gave up my roots.
I gave up my roots.
I gave up my roots…
I found you,
Together we travelled.
Together we created something new.
Something that was ours.
Something new and ours.
Something new and only ours.

VOICE

Ma con laure serene
Tu te ne vai felice
Et io qui piango
A te prepara Atene liete pompe superbe
Et io rimango cibo di fere
Insolitarie arene.
Te l’uno e l’altro tuo vecchio parente stringerà lieto
Et io più non vedròvvi

O madre, o padre mio.

MIND

Don’t you care for what we found?
Don’t you care for what we found?
No, I suppose not.
Instead you search your own roots for happiness.
Were you afraid perhaps?
I look for excuses.
But your friends and family,
Are they more important to you
Than me?
So important that you cruelly could leave me like this,
On a deserted beach,
while sleeping?
So mean of you.
So careless,
Careless,
So careless,
and so cruel.
Where did trust go?
Trust?
Trust.
A trust you so lovingly promised me!

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER

Lasciatemi morire…

MIND

I lean and I fall.

138. But with soft breezes, you sail away happy; and I stay behind. For you Athens prepares a superb celebration, and I stay behind as food for beasts on the deserted sands. One and another old relative will happily embrace you, and I will no longer see you, oh mother, oh my father.
A fall
So strange,
A fall
That truly changes everything.
A fall
Allowing me to forget

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER
Lasciatemi morire...

MIND
We start again.
I fall
Though this time I fall consciously towards you.
And then I grow
Into the fall.
I have to say it again and again:
Falling
Falling
Falling and growing
Because it means everything to VOICE
Since VOICE follows BODY
Together they grow into and out of a fall.
At the same time.
Letting go
And holding on.
Amazement in a detail.
An observation of something crucial
For everything that follows.
Your hand lifts me out of my own sorrow.
I see my own bewilderment
Around me everything is so different.
Where?
Where?
Where?

VOICE, BODY and a BODY of the Chorus of OTHER
Dove,
Dove è la fede
Che tanto mi giuravi?
Così ne l'alta fede
Tu mi ripon devlavi?
Son queste le corone
Onde mi dorni il crine
Questi gli scetttri sono,
Queste le gemme e gli ori
Lasciarmi in abbandono
A fera che mi strazi e mi divori.  

MIND
Did things make you feel better?
Things?
Objects!
I hate objects.
They cannot give me the joy of love.
I smiled when you gave me the crown.
I was happy,
But not for the thing in itself.
But for your act
Of love.
The bracelet was so beautiful,
But now,
Now,
Look at me,
It chained me to this island.
You chained me in the bracelet you gave me.
Chained me to these rocks.

139. Where, where is the promise that you swore to me? Thus, in heaven, you put me away with your ancestors? Are these the crowns with which you adorn my head? Are these the scepters, are these the jewels and the gold: are you leaving me abandoned to the beasts, which tear me apart and devour me?
Chained me to death.
Alone
Yes,
I will die,
Here, for you.
Consumed and teared apart.
Broken and in pieces.

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER
Son queste le corone
Onde m’ adorni il crine
Questi gli scettri sono
Ahi Teseo, ahi Teseo mio
Lascierai tu morire
In van piangendo,
In van gridando aita
La misera Arianna
Chià te fidossi,
E ti dia gloria e vita.\(^{140}\)

MIND
I will cry, Teseo.
Teseo,
Teseo,
My love,
My loooooOOOOOOVE
I WILL SCREAM FOR MERCY
HEEEELP!!!!
HE HAS LEFT ME!!!
Poor me
Povera me
Povera me

\(^{140}\) Are these the crowns with which you adorn my head? Are these the scepters, are these the jewels and the gold: are you leaving me abandoned to the beasts, which tear me apart and devour me?

Poor me…
…but who trusted
Who trusted
Who trusted in you,
And in life.

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER
Ahi che non pur rispondi
Ahi che più dispe' sordà miei lamenti
O nembi o turbi o venti
Sommergetelo voi dentro a quell onde
Correte l’orch’ e ballene
E de le membra immonde
Empiete le voragine profonde.\(^{141}\)

MIND
Where are you?
Are you not there any longer?
You don’t answer!
Your don’t care
Care
At AAAALLL
Not at all,
NOT AT ALL!!!
So suffer then,
Die.
Drown in the waters of the ocean.
Drown and die.
All powers of the sea
Will make sure you meet a cruel destiny.
Your own ocean, the ocean you trust.
Like that,

\(^{141}\) Alas, he does not even respond! Alas, he is more deaf than a snake to my lamentation. Oh clouds, oh storms, o winds, sink him beneath those waves! Hurry, orcas and whales and with his impure body fill up the deepest abyss.
You will perhaps understand
THE MEANING OF TRUST!
TRUST
Ha!
Something that does not exist!

VOICE
Che parlo,
Ahi che vaneggio
Misera ohimé, che chieggio?
O Teseo, o Teseo mio
Non son, non son quell io
Che i feri detti sciolti
Parlò l'affanno mio,
Parlò il dolore.
Parlò la lingua si
Ma non giùl core. 142

MIND
But what do I say?
Who am I,
Commanding the Gods,
To act?
I am so sorry, I am so sorry so sorry so sorry so sorry
Forgive me, please, forgive me
I did not mean
I did not want to say those horrible words
Or think such awful thoughts.
My heart
Could never...
Never
NEVER

BE SO CRUEL??!
What happens to me?
Have I lost my senses?
Only death can end the fire of love.
End my fire of love,
Fire of love,
Fire of love.
I say it over and over,
Without understanding.
What does it mean?
Love?
Love!
I have lost trust
In love.

VOICE
Misera ancor da loco
A la tradita speme e non si spegne
Fra tanto scherno ancor d'amor il foco?
Spegni tu, morte o mai le fiamme indegne
O madre, o padre del' antico regno
Superbi albergi,
Ov' ebbi d' or la cuna
O servi, o fidi amici, (ahi fato indegno) 143

MIND
Enough, enough, ENOUGH, ENOUGH
I still think of love and pain,
When I should turn away and leave it all behind.
I,
I,

142. What am I saying, alas! How am I raving? Miserable, alas! What do I ask? Oh Theseus, oh my Theseus, I am not, I am not she; I am not she who releases those beasts: My anger was speaking, my sorrow was speaking, my tongue spoke, yes, but not my heart.

143. Wretch! I still give in to my betrayed hope, and it is not extinguished. Amidst such scorn still the fire of love? Extinguish, oh Death, those unworthy flames. Oh mother, oh father, oh lofty palaces of the ancient realm, where I was raised! Oh servants, oh faithful friends (alas, unworthy fate!).
I will end this battle
In victory.
Die, flames of love,
DIE and I will live on.
Look at me,
Look at me,
Yes,
Look here, at me.
I was betrayed,
In love.
That is how life is.
Betrayed of my trust.
I need to see life anew.
To live on,
TO LIVE ON,
TO GO ON AND LIVE AGAIN
This is life!
This is how it goes
If love and trust takes over.
If love and trust wins the battle.

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER
Mirate, ove m' a scorto empe fortuna
Mirate, di che duol m'han fatto erede
L'amor mio,
A mia fede,
E l'altrui inganno.
Così va chi troppiama e troppo crede.  

MIND
I hear you, voice,
And I see,

See where cruel fate has brought me! See the sorrow I have inherited from my love, my faithfulness, and the betrayal of another. That happens to her who loves too much and believes too much.

I see my fate.
I see that my fate will be to follow love.

VOICE
Naqui regina, e ne l'antica Creta
Fu bel' il viver mio
Mentre al ciel piacque
Tempo è ch'io mora al mio voler t'acqueta.  

MIND
A queen I was,
A queen I will remain,
I will stand here and listen to my fate,
And if my fate is to die.
I will die
And leave in silence.

VOICE
Vivo
Moro o vaneggio
O pur son larva od ombra
Lassa che far debb'io, che creder deggio?
Ma che sian di Teseo chi m'assicura
Ancor pensi nudrir gli aspri dolori
Speranza iniqua ah mori
Non cercar, Arianna altra ventura.  

145. I was born a queen, and in Crete of old my life was beautiful while it pleased heaven. It is time that I die. According to my wish I appease you.
146. Do Ilive, do I die, or am I delirious? Or am I merely a ghost or a shade? Alas! what shall I do, what shall I believe? But about Theseus? Who will reassure me? Are you still thinking of nurturing your bitter sorrow, your wretched hope? Ah, die; do not seek another destiny, Arianna.
MIND

Am I dead?
Or alive?
I am thrown between words and passions.
What do I trust?
Not in the words, not in passions.
Now, I am here.
That will be my answer.
Here in front of you.
Flesh and bones in front of you,
Singing on a stage.
Standing on a beach.
Singing to a rock,
Singing to my love.
Speaking my feelings,
Singing my passions.
Repeating to understand.
Ornamenting trust and love.
Moving with the waves of the sea.
Hearing the sounds of Arianna.
Now,
Here and Now.

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER

Io sono, io sono contenta,
Scorgimi ov' a te piace
Ma che mi lasci e spregi
Or torni e mi raccogla è folle speme
Non si lieve i pensier cangian i regi.

MIND

In this
I am content.
The facts are placed in front of me.
Even if he leaves me

And comes back again,
I need to trust right now.
To be what I am,
Here and now.
To follow the path and to live.
Here and now.

Scene 2
ARIANE

VOICE

Rochers
Vous etes sourds
Vous n' avez rien de tender
Et sans vous ebranler
Vous mécoutez icy
L'ingrat dont je me plains
Est un rocher aussi,
Mais helas il s'en fuit
Pour ne me pas entendre. 147

BODY, MIND and VOICE walk out through a door, passing houses and boats. They are following a path towards the sea. It is winter and the air is freezing cold. Like a siren the voice of Ariane seduces their motion.

VOICE

Rochers vous etes sourds...

147. Rocks you are deaf. You have nothing tender about you and untouched you listen to me here. The ungrateful one about whom I complain is also a rock, but, alas, he has fled in order not to listen to me. (Translation of Arianne’s lament to English is my own. See also: http://www.elibelgrano.org/recordings.html , 1 February, 2011).
MIND

You,
Rock,
Over there,
Yes,
I point to you, not to myself.
I don't want to talk about me
Only you.
What do you have
That could possibly be measured
With such greatness?
You are firm,
Solid and forever there.

I am weak,
Moving,
And not always here.
Always on my way somewhere.
Always in the air.
Coming and going.
Far away from stagnation.
Never to be trusted.
Not like you,
A rock.
Looking down at me from above.

VOICE searching for a way through words and sounds

Rochers vous etes sourds…

MIND

Nothing.
Rien.
You ignore me now.
Ignore me.
I think of ways to make you listen.

Screaming and calling out loud would never help.
Too vulgar,
Too barbarous.
To be ignored.
But I know that you listen,
Inside you.
If I turn my voice around you,
Lingering forever,
Unpredictable.
I will find a way.
I won't let you escape.
Even if that is what you intend to do.

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER

Rochers vous etes sourds…
Helas t’avoir aimé
Toujours si tendrement
Etoit une raison pour n’être plus aimée 148

VOICE mumbling on the rocks, then continues to sing alone

Ces voeux que tu faisais
Et don’t j’étais charmée
Que sont ils devenue
Lache et perfide amant? 149

MIND

Can you see?
Can you remember?
Long, long ago,
When I first met you
Your voice made me dream,

148. Alas, I did love you always so tenderly. Was that a reason for not being loved anymore?
149. Those vows that you made and by which I was captivated what has become of them, you cowardly and false lover?
Your passion made me into a lake of love,
You found love in me
And we burned together, and every kiss...
Was just like fire
Dangerous, strong, painful, soft and close.
Those charms we shared are still inside me.
We walked together on that line,
So pure, so fine.
We knew we could walk above all troubles
Because our love was pure and cared for.
We gardened the flowers of our love
Gave them water and shelter
From all commotion around us.
In our garden we were safe,
Far away from the fields of wilderness
Purified in a heaven of love.
So why
Did you leave?
Why did you betray the harmony we shared?
Was it not enough for you?
What teased you?
What teased you to open the gate
And walk out of all I could give you?
Did your desire for the love outside
Become too heavy for you to bear?
Was my tenderness not enough?
Was my fire too weak?
I tried to make you feel new in every word I said,
In every thought I thought,
In every sigh I sighed,
In every tone I sang.
I held your hand and looked at you.
I teased your tongue to sing along with mine.
I taught you new words.
Was this perfection?
Fulfillment?
Yet lacking something?
I call you betrayer, because you left me.

Your departure made me wonder
Ask for answers.
Was it your purpose
To leave me with questions unanswered?
In eternal wonder?
Questioning forever
The essence of life?

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER
Rochers vous etes sourds...

MIND
O God,
Why?
Can I never expect to live again?
Love again?
Trust in life?
Was your purpose to leave me in lovesickness forever?
Do you not trust I could love someone else?
Perhaps you know the answer.

VOICE
Rochers vous etes sourds...

VOICE and a VOICE from the CHORUS of OTHER ornamenting together.150

VOICE, BODY and a BODY from the CHORUS of OTHER
Rochers vous etes sourds...

MIND

I will always fly
Searching for the end of the road
Knowing I will never find it.
But never giving up.
Forever wondering
Forever loving,
Forever asking,
Forever suffering,
Always in pain,
Always in love,
Always in desire
Boldly searching for truth.
Sighing
Slowly
Sometimes laughing about the memories I care for,
Sometimes remembering,
Sometimes wanting to follow you out in the world.
Travelling,
Leaving my roots
Do what you did
The words are all I have left
And when the words are gone
The tones will remember every letter,
Every consonant,
Every utterance,
Every suspension,
And they will sound on their own.
Pure.
They will be lingering softly
In the absence of everything else.

VOICE

…pour n’être plus aimée.\(^1\)

Act III
Performing \(je-ne-sais-quoi\)

Scene 1
ARMIDE
(1664)

MIND

Hold,
Even longer.
No I don’t dare to go on,
Pleasure of holding
Fear of losing
Dizziness after holding…
And finally setting down my feet on the ground.
It is not really true,
That I am in the air,
Because I tell BODY to grow
From my heels
Into the soil.
And at the same time to grow
Into the air with all my spine.
It is a joy of hanging on to what was,
While dying to go on

---

\(^1\) An article based on the material in Act II has been published: Belgrano, Elisabeth
Forwards
Into what will be the next,
What follows.
But the essence is in the second just before
I dare to be.
I dare to be.
It is then I ask myself
What will come?
And what did I leave behind?

CHORUS of OTHER

“This in-between describes the actual moment of transformation, rather than a ‘something’ that transforms from one state of being to another, or from one position to another. Like that the content is empty and without details. It is a Nothingness.”

MIND

Yes, a sensation of peace,
Fullness,
The BODY strives to move backwards
While I, MIND, keep rushing into the future.
VOICE sits there in between,
Stretching itself to its limits.
Without hurting.

VOICE

Ah Rinaldo e dove sei
E dove sei?

MIND

Where are you, my love?
Where can I find you?
Will I ever find you again?

The word sei sets off into the sky
Imitating the previous feeling of Being.
It makes a turn – a volt
Comes back to reality
Back to safe grounds,
Landing on both feet.
Fully of grace.
Dove sei? – where are you?

The words are hers
But also mine.
She searches for him,
And I search for myself,
My whole self.

MIND, BODY and VOICE,

The feeling of fullness and NOTHING
Surprises and makes me ask the question:
What? Where? How?
An answer I find:
Je-ne-sais-quoi.
Je-ne-sais-quoi.

VOICE from the CHORUS of OTHER

“La maniere dont je chante
Exprime mieux ma languer
Quand ce mal presse le coeur

---


153. Ah Rinaldo, where are you? (Translation to English my own).
La voix est moins éclatante.  

MIND

Slowly,
I climb
Up with one foot at a time,
Feet slightly touching one another.
Sneakingly moving on.
Moving like a cat
Ready to surprise.

VOICE

Pur da me partir potesti,
Partir potesti
Nel mio duol
Nei pianti miei
Possan far ch’il passo arresti
E questa è la mercè che a me tu dei.

MIND

When I finally arrive,
I still have to wait on neeeel;
Stepping on to the small stone of miiiio,
Before getting to duooooOOOOL
Where I dare
…to grow

...and grow
...and growoowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww

...and grow
...and growoowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww

MIND

This comes to an end and the first chapter is closed.
Now, a new color is there,
In a faster pace,
With a more intense character.

VOICE

Ah Rinaldo, e dove sei;
E dove sei, e dove, e dove sei.

MIND

Again, the exclamation is finding je-ne-sais-quoi,
Though this time much faster.
The last word ME is leaving me in wonder again.
Strong with a hint of accusation.
Indirectly.

VOICE

Ed io chi sola,
Ed io chi sola
Scherno rimango di rotta fé.

354. My manner of singing expresses better my languishes; / When the bad presses the heart / The voice is less shining. In the dialogue between the French and the Italian Music (see Act I, page 58, footnote 69), the French Music ends the first phrase with the following words according to the libretto: Mon chant fait voir par sa langueur / que ma peine est vive et pressante; / Quand le mal attaque le cœur / on n’a pas la voix éclatante. My own translation to English is: My singing shows through languishes / that my pain is alive and pressing; / When something bad attacks the heart / The voice has no power to shine.

355. You could then leave me / Not even my suffering, neither my tears / can stop your steps. / And this is the mercy / that you give me.

356. Ah, you are then flying far away from me.

357. and I remain here alone / I remain ridiculous, after a broken promise.
MIND

Me,
Alone,
ME ALONE!
Io qui sola.
Broken hope, broken hope, BROKEN HOPE,
Repeating, and repeating,
Even if it is said that it shouldn’t happen in French Music.
Repetition.
But here, it is French,
And Italian.

VOICE

Ferma, ferma Rinaldo o Dio.
Se morta e la tua fe,
Morta son io.
Se morta e la tua fe,
Morta son io.
Morta, morta son io.¹⁵⁸

MIND

As if calling for the moment to freeze.
Ferma, stop, stop, stop…
Stay don’t go,
Don’t move!!!
My trust is in you,
Moment of je-ne-sais-quoi.
If you are gone,
I will die.
If you are dead,
I will go as well.
If trust is gone,
I will die.

¹⁵⁸ Stay Rinaldo, Oh my God. / If your trust is dead / I am dead as well.

VOICE

Dunque il bel foco che ti rase gia
Ceduto ha’l loco, ceduto ha’l loco
A duro ghiaccio di ferita¹⁵⁹

MIND

Gone is the fire,
Even if fire fights to burn on,
But it is finished.
No way back.
The wound is cold as ice

VOICE

Deh torna,
Deh torna,
Idolo mio,
Se morta e la tua fe, morta son io.
Se morta e la tua fe, morta son io.
Morta, morta son io.¹⁶⁰

MIND

Come back, come back
My Idol,
My love,
My everything.
MY EVERYTHING…
And Nothing.
Again I will die,
If you are gone.
If you are gone I will die.

¹⁵⁹ So the beautiful fire has already burned you / has left for the place / where the wound
has become hard as ice.
¹⁶⁰ Oh, come back, my love / If your trust is dead / I am dead as well.
VOICE

Ahi che spargo indarno grida; 161

MIND

How do I dare,
To cry out so loud?...
May I, or may I not?
But it is in vain, my cry,
I should be silent
Shouldn't I?

VOICE

Voi che soste ond'io mi moro
Del mio ben, del mio Tesoro
Ciechi amore custodi infidi. 162

MIND

Through chromaticism I move down and up again as if not knowing what to do
And where to go…?
Should I cry or should I fight?

VOICE

Sparite, svanite, fuggite da me
Sparite, svanite, fuggite da me
Fuggite da me
Sparite, svanite, fuggite da me
Fuggite fuggite da me.

MIND

Go away,
Leave me
I am fighting you away.
Let me be,
Just be, don't disturb me
Your fast notes, and your repetitions.
I don't want you to interrupt my
State of being.
I want to die on my own.
To die forever…
On my own.
And you, invisible powers,
Spirits of grace and fulfillment…

VOICE

E voi moli incantate
Ch'al fuggitivo non arrestase il pie,
Ch'al fuggitivo non arrestase il pie. 164

MIND

You, who never want to stop,
But always want to be,
You, spirits of nothing
Leave me,
I cannot anymore.
Split in two, I can't go on.
I am too tired
Of growing.
Just leave!
I will try to sing the phrase till its end,
But then I am gone.
It is over.

161. Ah, I cry out in vain.
162. you who remain will be part of my death / over my beloved, my treasure.
163. Disappear, go away, flee from me…
164. And you enchanted powers / that on the run won't put down your feet.
VOICE
Sparite, svanite, fuggite da me
Sparite, svanite, fuggite da me
Fuggite da me
Sparite, svanite, fuggite da me
Fuggite fuggite da me
Fuggite fuggite da me.

Scene 2
ARMIDE
(1686)

VOICE
Le perfide Renaud me fuit,
Tout perfide qu'il est mon lâche coeur le suit.
Il me laisse mourante,
Il veut que je perisse,
A regret je revoy la claret qui me luit;
L'horreur de l'éternelles Nuit
Cede à l'horreur de mon supplice.
Le perfide Renaud me fuit,
Tout perfide qu'il est mon lâche coeur le suit.165

MIND
This time I know he has gone.
Ah...
He has left me and I know
It is no point to find him back.
But I pity myself.
I hate him and I hate myself.

VOICE
Quand le Barbare estoit en ma puissance,
Que n'ay-je crû la Haine & la Vengence?
Que n'ay-je suivy leurs transports.
Il m'échappe,
Il s'éloigne,
Il va quitter ces Bords,
Il brave l'enfer & ma Rage;
Il est déjà près du Rivage,
Je fais pour m'y traisner d'inutiles efforts.166

165. The false Rinaldo flies from me; perfidious as he is, my cowardly heart follows him.
He leaves me dying, he wants me to perish. In regret I see the light beckoning to me; the
horror of eternal night, surrenders to the horror of my torment. The false Rinaldo has left me...
(Translation to English my own).

166. When the barbarian was in my power, why did I not trust in Hate and Vengeance? Why
did I not follow their urgins? He escapes me, he retires, he leaves these shores. He defies
Hell and my fury. He is already near the shore, my efforts to reach it are in vain.
MIND

Why did I not listen?
No point to ask.
Their advice had to be heard.
But the self had to go through the pain.
It was destined to happen.
He is gone, yes,
I knew he would,
But only now
I can react.
Forth and back and forth again
Let him go you may say.
And leave it.
But no,
The form has to be fulfilled.
The form of languish.
Eternal languish.
Real languish.
I fear the word: REAL,
And still I use it, because I can't find another one.
A better one.
Real is in all.
In every move.
In the accusation,
In love.
Here on stage
I live it all.
In the pages of a score.

VOICE

Traître, atten…
Je le tien…
Je le tien son cœur perfide.
Ah! Je l’immole à ma fureur,
Je l’immole à ma fureur.
Je le tiens… je le tiens son cœur perfide.

Ah! je l’immole à ma fureur,
Je l’immole à ma fureur. 167

MIND

Betrayer.
NOW! WAIT! Stop.
I do dare to make you stop!
To call out and to make you really stop now.
Set down you feet at this moment.
Not in the air.
But in the second I say TRRRR-AI
The moment of silence
After my first calling out
Is of course affected.
You turn your heads towards me
To see what happened.
What made me change?
What made me scream so loud?!
I am not always silent.
I know how to make noise.
I know how to scream and vibrate.

VOICE

Lasciatemi morire…
Que dis-je?
Où suis-je?
Hélas! Infortunée Armide!
Où t'emporte une aveugle erreur? 168

167. Traitor, wait, I hold him, I hold his treacherous heart, Ah, I sacrifice him to my rage…
168. What am I saying? Where am I? Alas! Unfortunate Armide! Where does this blind error leads you?
VOICE from the CHORUS of OTHER

Que dis-je?
Où suis-je?
Hélas! Infortunée Armide!
Où t’emporte une aveugle erreur?

ANOTHER VOICE from the CHORUS of OTHER

Que dis-je?
Où suis-je?
Hélas! Infortunée Armide!
Où t’emporte une aveugle erreur?

MIND

Purifié from the vulgar?
Is that how one may describe my acts?
Voice – a tool for purified expression.
A colorful show for the critical ornamental massive thinking around me
Forward again…

VOICE

L’espoir de ma vengeance est le seul qui me reste.
Fuyez plaisirs, fuyez, perdez tous vos attraits.
Dmons détruissez ce palais
Fuyez plaisirs, fuyez, perdez tous vos attraits.
Dmons, demons, détruissez détruissez ce palais.
L’espoir de ma vengeance est le seul qui me reste.
Partons, & s’il se peut que mon amour funeste
Demeure ensevely…

169. The hope of my revenge is all that remains to me. Fly pleasures, fly, loose all your charms. Demons, destroy this palace. Let us leave, and if it can be let my disastrous love remain buried…

MIND

Only hope of revenge
Anger again, built up throughout the whole scene
Is now coming to an end.
And again, I will die,
Sacrifying my life
For the pleasure of languish
And beauty.
It is my duty
To die in agony
To embody the pleasures of pain.
To live on stage the acts of revenge and fury.
A madness destined to the actress,
Who in the end is mad on stage,
But sane in life in general.
What is then real?
Where does reality find its energy and drive?
In the steps back and forth,
And back, and forth again!

VOICE

…dans ces lieux pour jamais. 170

CHORUS of the OTHER

(Instrumental) 171

170. in this place forever.
171. The research opera ends its final act with the last measures of Lully’s opera Armide (1686) from the following recording: Airs Baroque Français, Patricia Petibon, Les Folies Françaises, director Patrick Cohën-Akenine, EMI Records Ltd/Virgin Classics, 2001, track 9.
Part II
Il Cannocchiale
Act I
Embodying transformation

Scene I
DEIDAMIA

Voice, where is your source?
Tell me,
From darkness,
Or from deep down below the neck and throat?
From above my belly?

Are you air?
Are you movement,
Or are you just a vibrating chord?

The tongue protects the entrance,
And the soft palate is your guard.

I can not see you,
But hear your sound and sense a breath,
Touching my skin the moment you sound.

Observing the inner images: a singer’s method

‘Imagine yourself…’, her teacher said, and she had done so ever since.
At the beginning an image had been given to her in words and movements by someone else.
She had slowly developed an eye and sharpened her attention to absorb details that had previously been neglected or ignored. She had achieved an increased sensitivity towards everything she met, including both mental and physical experiences.
In her research she had expanded her collection of imagined images, by physically experiencing the recreated space of these imagined images.
The song, the melody or the vocal production was always part of the inspiration for her reflective method. In her research project the manuscript and the musical score were the primary points of departure.
Imagining images was perhaps nothing unique, but the Singer transformed the images into vocal movements, which moved the process to a different level. The images came alive vocally and could meet and touch an audience if successfully delivered and expressed.
Now, nobody told her to imagine any longer.
There was no more a need for spoken words.
Words were already clear in her mind, though abstract in the direct physical reality.
The effect of the unspoken image became physical. It touched the emotions and the muscles.
A vivid terrifying image tensed her whole body, and she would freeze. Become cold and absent. An indulging sweet image would make her whole being melt into the air.
Vanish.
Turn into no-thing.
Somewhere in the distance, she heard a sound.

The sound of a singing bird: pointed tones sometimes soft and long, sometimes irritated and enervating, insisting and curious, equilibristic and performing, ugly and teasing. The sound was accompanied by other birds, but also the sound of a flowing river. An image appeared inside her. A landscape in nature – green, wild, untouched and unspoiled. A place left alone far away from human beings.

It was a nightingale’s singing, performing a song from nature. His song was not beautiful, as normally she had imagined it to be. There was something unpredictable in his sound. Honesty, she said to herself. The sound was honest and direct. True. Pure. Perhaps one could call it artless as a critic once had said about her own singing. Not consciously manipulating, trying to touch. It was a sound speaking for itself, not caring about the opinions of others.

It was a continuous sound. But never the same. New in each moment. She could hear how the gurgling sounds came rolling out across the branch, ready to transform into a clear open beautiful tone. Teasingly.

Could she learn from this? Could she make her voice be inspired by a nightingale?

The nightingale and the Singer

Her father had heard him on his nightly bike rides to work. Just after crossing the bridge. She always remembered him talking about the nightingale’s voice. Perhaps it was her first vivid memory of that bird. She imagined the picture of her father biking, enchanted by the sound, just around midnight. She felt the light of the moon and the salty taste of the sea was in her mouth. She had never seen the nightingale for real, with her own eyes. It remained a mystery bird.

Then the day came when she stepped into the garden situated right in the middle of Venice. It was a closed space, framed by a stone wall. An oasis. There time had lost its importance.

She had listened to the sound hiding in the green leaves above her head. She had listened…

“Marino creates a powerful narrative symbolizing the birth of written poetry out of the death of singing: it is necessary for the nightingale to die in order for the poet to start writing (earlier he only improvised). That is: if music and poetry are indeed sisters (as Marino claims at the beginning of the canto), the latter can exist only insofar as the former sacrifices her very essence, although music does survive within poetry as a memory, an absence (i.e., a nothing)”

It was the image of the nightingale’s death followed by a lament that followed the Singer. If the voice died, the words would still remain. She didn’t agree that the voice would die. Voices she knew were there in her memory. Silent, but sounding at the same time.

Another description Calcagno provides was one by the Latin poet Pliny the Elder. Here the Singer almost felt her own throat working while she read the description of the nightingale’s ornamentation:

“To hear a musical monster: oh what a wonder, one that is heard, yes, but only a little bit, how it now breaks its voice, and now recovers, now stops it, now twists it, now soft, now loud, now murmurs lowly, now thins it, now makes of sweet groppi a long chain, which always, whether it scatters it or gathers it, with the same melody it ties and loosens.”


175. Ibid. p. 479–480.
It was a lesson in natural singing, pointing out all the changes and jumps between specific registers, dynamics and characters.

She walked with the text of Calcagno into her studio, and sampled the sounds described in his paper, set to the words of Deidamia. The sounds made justice to madness.

Out there – on stage - performing her observations

“She silently observes”. 176

Two more steps and she would be out there, on stage. She was so close to this other world. She felt a thrill in her body. Secretly, behind the velvet curtain in the dark, she was herself – herself in her own privacy, a self that no audience would ever know unless she herself decided to share it with them. Out there she was an object for the crowd. An object observed, celebrated, envied, laughed at, adorned, loved and hated. Out there she transformed. She became the person or the emotion she found in herself and she merged with the moment without reflection.

In her performance she would meet a soldier, the beautiful Helen, and an abandoned lover. They were characters she had observed, imagined and listened to. She heard them in their own contexts. She knew them well. She knew their words and lines by heart. But how they would come out in the moment she spoke and sang their lines would differ from one time to another. It all depended on everything. And she had to be prepared to respond to her own acts, and her voice would be natural and artful at the same time.

Observing Nature & Art through scores of lamentation and madness

They were part of everything everywhere, Nature and Art. But how could she define them? Would Nature be pure? And Art – was it something from outside this world, something added and not pure?

Confused she looked into her score. It consisted of tearful notes and words in Italian and French. She had selected the scores based on simple curiosity about how the voice would sound in these two different languages and styles. The scores reflected music she loved. She adored the melancholy of a 17th century lament.

She had once considered creating a concert of laments, but reconsidering the outcome, she decided it was not a good idea. It would be too heavy and too sad. But a research project would be the perfect alternative. Four years of lamentation, sorrow, and tears. What a pleasure! Soon she saw the tight connection between the lamentation scene and the mad scene, and she decided her study would include both these types of scenes. In her vocal scores she would search for pure voice, based on reflection of Nature and Art, real and unreal, truth and falsity. She would search for her own pure voice in the vocal line of the 17th century.

By chance she had found a book of prints by Cesare Ripa and had started to look closer at the two ladies, Nature and Art 177. Soon she realized that these women were closer to her than she had imagined earlier. They were with her on stage, part of her acts, inside her being, like they were part of everything around her. Two figures with serious names, both of them powerful and enchanting, always expecting her to perform their qualities with pure honesty. They seemed familiar and foreign at the same time.

Watching them in secret from beside the stage, she wondered who they really were.

In her eyes they could be one and the same person. Nature-Art. A person with a set of different characteristics and attributes, never fully divided. They could even be herself in disguise.

176. See page 46, footnote 41.

"NATURE.
A naked woman, with swelling breasts full of milk, & with a vulture in her hand just like one will see in a medal of the Emperor Hadrian. Made to be a woman, naked, and dividing this principal actively and passively, actively noted with the breasts filled with milk, because she nurtures and sustains all things created, as with the breasts of a woman who nurtures and sustains the children. The vulture, the bird eager for the prey shows the other principal that little by little destroys all what is corrupted."

Her mind translated the description of Nature:
Nature stood there on stage, naked – yes – looking into no-thing in particular. Knowing the audience was looking, but not really caring. The bird on her left arm was waiting. Expecting to meet death. Soon.
The Singer stretched her body in front of her working mirror. She looked herself straight in to her own eyes. Seriously. She observed a gaze filled with pride, ignorant of any other being. It was an unpleasant selfish being. Was that Nature in herself?
Back to Ripa’s image:
Nature’s whole being was like a curve. No signs of straight lines. There was a bend in every joint. Even the ground where she stood was bumpy and uneven. Even the leaves and branches on the small tree behind her presented themselves with a certain feeling of roundness. Her legs, arms, breasts, hair, fingers, hands and face – penetrating sweet round vibrations.
Suddenly the Singer knew that her voice would have to be the same, round, wavy, and all natural. The roundness had shaped earth and Nature. Her voice needed to find the same roundness. Wholeness. Curves.

“Allow the space in between your ears to grow”

Allow, allow, allow, let go and allow, and everything will change by itself.

178. “Donna ignuda, con le mammelle cariche di latte, & con un'avvoltoio in mano, come si vede in una Medaglia d'Adriano Imperatore. Si farà donna, & ignuda, e divendendosi questo principio in attivo e passivo, l'attivo si nota con le mammelle piene di latte perché nutrisce e sostenta tutte le cose create, come con le mammelle a donna nutrisce e sostenta i fanciulli. L'avvoltoio Uccello avidissimo di preda dimostra l'altro principio che strugge a poco a poco tutte le cose coruttibili.”, ibid, p. 311. (Translation to English my own).
179. Words she had learned to repeat to herself from Alexander Technique lessons.
By her thoughts and directions. Round and whole, allow, to grow, round and whole.

This mantra was always there, repeating itself in her head. Like a spell it gave impulses for her to react on.

Improvising on Lucia’s madness

Recently, she had been part of a music drama production at the school. She had brought her own search for pure voice into the project and her aim had been to observe her own reaction of the emotions meeting her on stage. Her body had been alert to the other singers and their acts and she had improvised on their sounds and words. Strictly following any impulse coming to her attention.

She was free. Tremendously free. She had to let go of any evaluating and critical thought.

This letting-go had been her fear before. Of not being able to know what the outcome would be. Now, the freedom gave her the opportunity to experiment with mad sounds.

She had seen a knife on stage in the hand of a smiling woman. She looked at the knife and saw the blood coming from the wound where the knife had cut deep, deep. Her voice tensed and stuttered, in pain and in shock. Coldness spread in all her veins and the fingers could almost not bend anymore. Her head tilted forward and her eyes were just on that weapon in the woman’s hand. Then something made her look up. It was the voice of the other woman.

‘Now, he is quiet’ she sang with a smile on her face. The woman looked at the knife and smiled. She saw that the knife had made him calm, a victim, her husband. And she smiled.

The smile spread in her face and now she could only see the smile. It was an honest smile ignorant of any harmful acts, a smile that could go on and on, as if she existed inside a bubble ignorant of the rest of the world.

The Singer had watched the smiling woman and she started to laugh. She saw herself in that other woman. That was her role – to be the emotional inside of the other. Making her audience believe she was the woman on stage, while she was the woman she was in her own shoes. Confusing but simple at the same time. The movement of the other woman’s hand in front of her was her own movement, and she moved her hand and looked at the invisible knife she was holding. She had taken over the other being and they were not two on stage any longer, but one. Her task was to exaggerate, to over-vocalize the moment and to ornament the smile of the other woman. Giggles, bubbles and sparkles filled her body. Prosecco. Prosecco from Venice. In a high tessitura her voice jumped into the air like the cork popping from the bottle. The laughter grew out of her body and filled the hall. She saw nothing else than the jumping high sound that came out of her and out of the smile.

Leaving intellect behind. She had done so in this experiment. Left reason and conscious reflection on the chair in the audience, from where she had started her move on to the stage. The stage had transformed her reasoning to unreason and it happened in the motion of bodies: moving hands, expressive facial muscles, vibrating vocal chords. These were sources for her own reactions.

“To free the voice is to free the person, and each person is indivisibly mind and body. Since the sound of the voice is generated by physical processes, the inner muscles of the body must be free to receive the sensitive impulses from the brain that create speech. The natural voice is most perceptibly blocked and distorted by physical tension, but it also suffers from emotional blocks, intellectual blocks, aural blocks, spiritual blocks. All such obstacles are psycho-physical in nature, and once they are removed the voice is able to communicate the full range of human emotion and all the nuances of thought. Its limits lie only in the possible limits of talent, imagination or life experience.”

180. Lucia möter Pajazzo was a performance created and directed by Prof. Gunilla Gårdfeldt, at Academy of Music and Drama, October 2010. The Singer had performed an improvisation based on the Lucia’s mad scene from Gaetano Donizetti’s opera Lucia di Lammermoor, from 1835.

The soldier (and a woman)

She walked straight out on stage. Firm and bold in her steps. Her spine grew long and she screamed at all the men resting on the ground.

She had met him many times, the soldier, on TV, on posters, on films, as sculpture, in books, in paintings. She knew how he looked, the soldier, ready for the fight, in full control.

Him.

And her.

In her eyes, male or female made no difference on stage at all.

She held the same power as him. Absolutely.

It might only be reflected a little different. It might seem as if she was out of control.

Being a woman in a costume from the 17th century.

But this was her point.

She was a woman and that was her weapon in the game for power.

She would seem insane, but her feigned insanity was her conscious intension.

She played a double game, a game with many faces.

Art & Nature – male & female – or all in one

Stepping in and out of personalities in a fast tempo seemed quite odd. How could mind follow throughout the transformation? What happened with the role? Who was she when the voice turned dark and unlike anything in her own personality? Male? Female? Or if she knew she was to enter the role of a man, what happed to her voice, to her body and to her thoughts?

All'armi, all'armi...
all'armi, all'armi

To arms to arms!

Make noise make noise!

The panic. Sound of fear, it could not be ignored, the fear of a scared human being, a female fear, a woman screaming as if haunted.

Male or female made no sense to her. She was a woman, with physical signs of a woman. She tried to imagine herself being haunted by men for being a woman. Placed and directed by powerful men to follow certain rules and regulations.

Before setting down her feet on stage she considered her next step.

Every act had been rehearsed and prepared for the moment of display.
Her every day habits were part of her act, but they have been polished and surveyed, colored and sharpened into the mold of the role she embodied.

Curiously she questioned the simple and consonant behavior in all what normally was expected to be. The line between Nature and Art was perhaps thinner today, than in the 17th century. The male act called for consonance and control. How could that be? Nature would equal control? That seemed to her to be an obvious paradox.

Nature is wild, she thought. Unpredictable. Unexpected. Always there, like the line of the horizon. Always right in between the sky and the ocean or the desert.

Art seemed to control and define.

Both opinions were pronounced in the Renaissance. Paradoxes and word games. Though truth could be found in the fact that the mass considered the female being to be less competent and should always be placed somewhere below in the male power structures.

In the performing spaces in Venice, these rules where challenged. These rules, which traditionally decided what was accepted and not, became the floor of the stage. A firm wooden floor stepped upon by women in golden high heeled shoes. A ground beautified by women in colorful dresses. A simple floor artfully exposed by a beam of light. A light that was there just to expose the gestures of a moaning human being. A floor essential to the drama since it provided the ground and a resistance. A floor made of granite, firm and hard and cold and ignorant.

The traditional static, controlling rules lost their absolute power during the enactment. Only movements became visible. Human movements were inspired by a meeting between Nature and Art – or lets say by facts and fantasies.

The Singer had decided to ignore the rules and rather to be alert of anything catching her mind. If it would be a gender issue she would follow it out in her arguments, but only if it was the most important topic. If not she would leave the gender aspect for others to expose. She would display her calculating mad mind through her performance. Set an issue in focus. Point it out. If her acts triggered any questions in her audience, she would have achieved her goals and she would respond to their concerns. If no questions appeared, and if none opposed her statements, her performance would not have fulfilled her hopes and aims. Her work would be left behind and quickly forgotten.

Rehearsing the Amazon on the roof

Loud, loud she cried into the sky. She has decided to see what volume would make of her voice.

She put her hand to her mouth and called the loudest she could.

She knew that volume made no difference, only the intensity of her motions. If she became too loud she might hurt the ears of someone, but she could not break a heart just with loudness. The scream meant something else. The scream meant intensity. The scream meant power and destruction. The scream meant that love was broken and forever dead. The scream meant fear and hate, also inside the one who screamed.

Her mouth touched the imagined trumpet and her breath transformed into a call, visible though invisible, sounding but silent. There she stood high up above all noise of the city. Looking out, searching for her army.

She remembered the image from Paris.

She had seen her from the bus window on her way towards the south side of the river. By chance her eyes turned upwards. On the roof of the old opera house a woman caught her sight. She was there trying to assemble her warriors, making people on the ground hear her melody. It was a melody aiming to touch the Gods in the sky. The female warrior had been standing there in between the ground and the sky.
The kabuki dancer

She had been visiting Kyoto, as a tourist.
She had walked along the river running right through the city.
On the shore she noticed a statue of a woman. It was a proud and powerful looking woman.
At the base of the statue she found the following inscription:

“Izumo no Okuni

In 1603, Izumo no Okuni presented her Kabuki Odori (Kabuki Dance) here on the Shijo Gawara the dry riverbed alongside the Kamogawa River near Shijo. At a time when Kyoto was in disarray after the Battle of Sekigahara, Okuni’s performances dressed in flamboyant men’s costumes delighted and caught the imagination of the people, receiving tremendous acclaim. Okuni is considered to be the founder of kabuki, but her birthplace is unknown. She was a miko (shrinemaiden) at Izumo Taisha Shrine in Shimane who brought her troupe of performers to Kyoto to solicit contributions. Here in Kyoto, she first gained fame for her shows on the Noh stage at Kitano Tenmangu Shrine, then toured around amid growing popularity.

Later, in the beginning of the Edo period, onna kabuki (kabuki played by women) was banned as a corrupting influence on social morals. Men took over, even playing the female roles (onna-gata), and the resulting shows developed into the kabuki of today.

400th Anniversary of Kabuki, November 2003
Kyoto Prefecture...”

What a coincidence. A woman performing in male clothes, being banned for “corrupting social morals” and replaced by male performers playing the female roles. It could have been a description of Anna Renzi, being one of the first female opera singers, banned by the Pope from Rome, replaced by male singers disguised as women. And the years when the performers had been active was amazingly close to one another, 1603 and 1641, with Izumo being active before Renzi.

She looked up at Izumo’s face observing her head, directed with such dignity, power and boldness. Ignorant of any disruption, she handled her sword. Like a man would have done in the act of war.

The fan in the right hand balanced the sword in her left hand. These were two attributes confirming her ease in portraying both male and female acts. She performed without much reflection, enchanting the crowd with her steps and sounds. Burlesque and seductive was her appearance.

Izumo teased the Singer to dream about a meeting between the Far East and West. Between merchants, artists, poets, women and men. In Europe exoticism influenced both art and trade. It did not seem strange to her if creators of Venetian opera had seen the birth of Japanese sound and drama. It was all speculations. Her dream continued and she knew she had more to search for in Japan in the future.182

182. Her visit to Japan had occurred in December 2008. After that she read as much as she could about Izumo. She contacted Prof. James R. Brandon, a specialist of Kabuki theater from the University of Honolulu. He suggested her to read his English translation of Arioshy Sawako’s Izumo no Okuni (The Kabuki dancer). Since the book was difficult to find, she decided this would be saved for a future performance project.
The calling woman by the wall

Every day they met. They greeted one another and smiled. Finally. They had never noticed each other before the stormy day in October. She had been walking towards her office in the school, expecting a day of solid work, seminars and talks. She stopped…

…and turned around.

Who was there? Someone had been calling. Impossible. Her eyes absorbed the space from where she had come. No one had been walking behind her and the street was empty. Unusual. Then she noticed someone to her right. A woman’s face caught in the act of calling for somebody. Her hand was close to her mouth. Made out of stone, but with a voice so alive.

From that day, they greeted one another and both knew that voices could be heard even through silence.

Guerrieri all’armi – or observing a hand, that will never kill

“Armi alla mano… fermate, o la, fermate…”

Right in between these two phrases she sensed an immediate transformation, which she tried to explain to herself in words. The first phrase ended abruptly and the second took over in a state of overwhelmed surprise.

Perhaps it was not at all that difficult to understand. She had looked at her hand when she pronounced the word mano (meaning hand in Italian), and with a warlike sound of Armi alla mano, she saw a woman’s hand never able to touch a weapon. At least never a weapon meant to kill.

In between boldness and fear – finding the theater and a baron

She decided to call. Now, nothing would make her change her mind. His name was there on her computer. She had found it on-line on the yellow pages. A real baron.

No, perhaps she ought to wait. And reconsider.

Perhaps he would be offended? How could she just think of calling a stranger, a baron, asking him if she could visit his garden?

She hesitated for another minute, but then she picked up the phone. She had absolutely nothing to loose. She dialed the number.

— Buon giorno Signor. Mi chiamo Elisabeth Belgrano… Volevo chiederti se sarebbe possibile visitare il Vostro giardino, per favore?

— Si

She could not believe what she heard. She was so close to her goal. She would enter the theater, just as she had dreamed about. She had found the key to the gate of Teatro San Cassiano. Its owner had said yes when she asked if she could visit his garden. A yes, without hesitation.

When fear took over, her body tilted forward. She sensed herself closing up her chest and as always in this situation, her left arm tended to loose its circulation. Her left hand turned white and cold.

The day she became aware of this physical reaction, she understood why it all happened. If she had ignored it all, she might eventually hurt terribly. Closing off and fencing in the chest and the upper part of the body meant she could protect her heart and her feelings. But this would only increase the physical effects of fear that would be even more difficult to deal with.

Instead she imagined her self as a proud and bold being inside a closed off space, inside a frame where she was in power. Here inside she could be open and free. She could carefully control this space from outside, but when inside she had no limits to consider. She would ignore fear, cold control, worries and pride. There inside she had not to be afraid. Not at all.


183. The woman in the wall was one sculpture in a series of four, by J.A. Wetterlund, located at Göta Källare, Hotellplatsen, in Gothenburg. The names of the sculptures: Navigation, Agriculture, Trade and Industry.
Curls in Venetian red

Nobody could possibly tell the color of her hair. The portrait of Renzi was in black and white. So the Singer had decided to choose the color herself. She arranged for a visit with Signora Carlotta, one of the best wig makers in Venice. Late in the afternoon one day in November 2008 she had stepped into Carlotta’s studio in the area of Castello. She had brought the picture of Renzi with her and Carlotta looked at it.

They had tried out different colors and in the end found the right one. A red one.

She looked at herself in the mirror. She had been alone in Venice for ten days and had talked to Renzi so much that she almost lost herself when she saw the woman with red curls in the mirror. It was Renzi. The hair was hers at least. They smiled to each other. The Singers’ own hair had started to fall off so eventually she might have to wear this wig for real one day. That would be something, if she came to the local store on the island, dressed in a red wig. It would surprise.

Astonishment and surprise was what she was looking for. Disguising herself, becoming somebody else. In Venice it was nothing strange. A cashier from a supermarket in Paris became the most enchanting countess once a year, inviting all her friends to a most remarkable feast. Who knows who the friends were? When the feast was over, she would return to her normal life. Return to a common life without much excitement, far away from the glamour of Venice. She lived a double life and her disguise was all that counted. The blue uniform made her accepted in one city, while the softest velvet and laces opened the doors to fabulous palaces in Venice. And it was real. Not a show for others. She made it for herself. The disguise was her code. A code for transformation.

She looked herself around in the studio. There were wigs all around. Wigs that signified change. They were meant to hide away something, to recreate something from the past, to renew, and to complement.

They made a new appointment from the next Saturday. The wig would be ready then. She opened the door and walked out into the street. She thought about her own codes. Codes that opened up new doors.

Her wig was one of her codes. It changed her identity.
Beautiful Helen of Troy

Elena bella io sono...

“There is nobody else that can more certainly explain to us the glories of Nothing than Beauty: she, the glorious hand that in the great painting of the universe brushes for us the wonders of Nothing; she herself is the vague and most gracious Nothing... the first mother of the glories of Nothing.”

She had been called the most beautiful woman on earth. That title had pleased her. But she knew that it meant something different to them. There was something more hidden in their words. The coin has two sides. Always. She was their beauty – a beauty that would disappear in vain. It was so obvious and that was why she could flower right there in front of them. She could tell them everything and they would be amazed. She had no fear and nothing to cry for. So she would cry, to seduce their hearts. They would never leave her, but instead talk to her and honor her for any of her acts.

And if everything would go wrong, she would start looking for others who would listen. That was her life, the life of the performer.

She saw their eyes and heard their words. They spoke about death and beauty and since she was in the room with them she could observe their faces. Turned slightly to the left, all of them in a long row. Looking at her. Giving her applause, smiling, looking at each other.

The Singer had opened the book. They all looked the same to her, all these men. Printed in black and white just like Anna Renzi. They had decorated the pages with words about themselves. The book told everything about the members of the Academy of the Unknown. Like that, they were not at all that unknown. Already there, an obvious paradoxical statement.

They had formed a cluster, a group exchanging words, thoughts and ideas. She had been invited to their meetings. She wasn’t sure they saw her as one of them, or just as a temporary visitor, invited for her beauty, or for her vocal beauty. Another paradox? Who knows?

She had invited herself. Searched for the palace of Lorenzo Loredan, the founder of the academy. He was a witty man and a brave person. She would argue that he himself was a sign of nothingness, a beauty, just like her. He and his academy transformed beautiful words into nothing. And when she would be gone, their words would still be there. Printed. Her voice and beauty would only be mentioned in their books, but her sound would disappear. No matter how passionate it was. Her voice could never be printed in black on white, just like her expression. It could not be described, because it would not be real. Words were not voices.

So what did she try to do? Researching pure voice? Why? Vanity? A researching artist, finding answers in theories. Did she need those answers?

She knew what she needed. She needed to reflect. With others, let it be through books or with living people. She would never accept to go on singing just for vocal beauty. For tones floating out of her being just for the sake of themselves. She needed the verbal space to take in and absorb her situation.

Silenzio o Dio

Fermate o là fermate O Dio
Silenzio o Dio
Tacete omai tacete
Che tatevi che tatevi che chiede
Il traditor perdono della schernita fede!

In silence something changes. It is when something important could happen. Who knows what will come? What the next moment will exhibit? Silence is a waiting, a suspension of interest and desire. She had sung her lines, had dropped off her words, and had left them aside. Listening for sound to come back: to enter stage, to create noise and fullness, opposite absolute nothing of silence.

Only the God would be able to speak, as a betrayer of peace and silence. He would make his statement, use his power and turn the page to a new topic, creating a logos, embellishing the page in front of her. Her own voice would be speaking in silence. Or if she wanted she could chose to speak again. Or sing, without words. In that way her voice would succeed against all obstacles around her. It would be in her hands.

186. Le Glorie degli Incogniti, Venice 1647, see Muir, 2007, p. 77.
187. This text on Silence was inspired by a text of Vladimir Jankélévitch, Music and Silence, see: Jankélévitch, 2003, pp. 130–155.
Fermate o là'
silence after o là'.

She would slide down with her voice just before ending her line. The sliding motion, curved as Nature had taught her, could not be avoided. It had to be. On her way down she took her time. Sailing inside the sound. There was sensuous temptation in this silence. And the pause, which followed, became more and more dense, misty and mysterious. After an opening with a chaotic warrior calling for order, she had entered. The woman, who with her silence made everything stop. Reasoning and logos disappeared out from the stage, and as the woman she was, she held the audience in her arms. There was a force in her silenced sound, charged with a gesture that nobody could neglect. A force louder and more overwhelming that anything. Then, when she got everybody’s attention she spoke of herself:

Elena BELLA Io SONO.

The accents came on Bella and Sono, Beauty and Being. She stood there in the center and she hypnotized every ear and soul. With a spell she pointed her hand towards them and exclaimed:

Tu... Paride Troiano.

She put a spell on them and they remained frozen and unable to move away from her. They burned into their seats and could do nothing else than listen. As if speaking words of divinity her whole being had changed. When did that happen? During the moment of silence? Just before she stated her phrase ferma. A chord introduced her entrance. At that point, she knew she was someone else?

She had put a question mark in her notebook, since she couldn’t understand it fully. Silence created many words, and many words desired nothing else than silence, a paradox as everything else in her.

Sometimes when two thoughts met, or when a thought met something outside of her, her mind started to move.

...Alla muta, alla muta

Pronta man, occhi presto,
Quel che dirà la lingua
Esprime il gesto.

Everyone talked, they praised her actual being over and over, but she called for them to become silent, and told that in silence she would move them even further, into a different state of mind. Without using the sounding explanation she made them understand, each one of them in their own way. It was her gesture that expressed it all.

The abandoned lover

The moment she called for death, her body slowly fell to the ground. She lifted her hand towards her head and she covered her eyes. Searching for darkness. In darkness she would forget and ignore what was left outside. Her soul was in a state of emptiness.
There is a vitality of the Neutral: The Neutral plays on the razor’s edge: in the will-to-live but outside of the will-to-possess.\(^{188}\)

In desperation she screamed out her anger and despair. Help me! Help me! Every sound was alive and she needed to hear it with her own words. She needed to recall her sensations. If not, she would be lost, gone. In the will-to-live her voice whispered, searching for minimal concentration of life. Searching as a magnifying glass. Trust must be hidden in this will-to-live. Somewhere she had to find it. She would not give up… She held on to the air inside her, air that held her whole body together. Air lifted her up, supported her. Someone was holding her under her arms. Space and air were the only two she could trust. In them she could rest, without them she was nothing. With them she was neutral, with a fair chance to go on.

Scene 2

OTTAVIA

Words, words and only words

It was them she saw first, when she opened the score. Words arranged in a continuous line telling the reader a story. Together with the melodic line they told even more about the details, the lies, the secrets, the whispers, the contrasts. But in the end the contents of the story was the same.

Every word brought its own subconscious story individual to every reader. Every one of the words had an emotional impact. Even small words like ‘and’, ‘with’, ‘perhaps’, ‘yes’, and ‘no’. If they stood alone, one by one, on empty white sheets, the reader expected something more, or perhaps made her own story connecting ‘and’ to her own thoughts and words.

The singer tasted all of these words, one at a time. She fitted them into her mouth and her mind, connecting them to her inner images. She tried the out deep down in a low register or then suddenly searching for a higher range. Sometimes her body followed. A hand reached out, without having been told to do so. It was an instinct deeply rooted inside her bodily system.

\(^{188}\) Barthes, Roland The Neutral, Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 73.

Words and contradictions

*If there is any meaning to opera at all... then that meaning is to be sought out in contradiction itself.*\(^{189}\)

It was her duty to perform contradictions. And it was not difficult for her. Contradictions were to be found in between the stories. In between words and the letters. Even consonants and vowels spoke about extremes and contradictions. A soft vowel was eaten by a bursting consonant. These details had to be sought out by her, enlarged and emphasized. She had to forget the line. Forget. One connection would quickly make a new connection. She lived temporarily in the micro contexts belonging to each one of the words.

Of course sometime it was inevitable to neglect a sentence. But then her contrast had to be reflected even stronger when the sentence came to an end. *Disprezzata* cried for its life; while *Afflitta* knelt under heavy weights of troubles; *Che fò?* ran in circles smiling without sense and reason; while *Vado* gently moved across the stage in modesty; *Pianto* looked into the eyes of her audience, searching for their empathy; and *Lamento* was the title of the ritual she was expected to perform with dignity and gestures they all knew by heart.

The words told stories about life and about nature. And in the Nature of herself and the world around her, the Singer found the textual contexts.

Scorn transformed though a flow of air

Her neck was stiff,
It all seemed impossible.
She had been safe just now, and suddenly all was gone.
The air, normally transported along her spine and in between the vertebrae, must have frozen. She felt the cold around her bones. And she couldn’t move.

She couldn’t do anything. Not even cry. She felt more dead than alive.
Her power had been destroyed and she was an outcast in her own country.
Finally she fell to the ground, to her knees. Alone in the room she was crying on her bed.
How could he? Was she not worth more than this? Didn’t he know her after all these years?
The singer sat there on the bed, bending her body forward, with her head in her hands.
The room was silent except for the heating system, which echoed around her. Water was flowing through the pipes.
Slowly, slowly she started to wake up. Looked at her self in the mirror. Realizing that somehow she had to react.
She remembered how the air felt when it moved inside her body. Just like the water in the pipes of the heating system. No pains, no ache. Only energy.
If she could just play along, mourning, cursing and rejecting, then she would find her life back.
She knew it wouldn’t help to tell her self to start breathing, but to take air.

She looked at her self in the room.

“Allow air to fill you body.”

The words were part of her continuous mantra.190

“Give new life to every vein and every muscle.
Allow one power to give in to another.”

Because you are a queen, a woman, a singer, a living being.

“Doing what comes naturally requires no conscious effort of will. Isn’t living something that comes naturally to all living things? Why, then, does one need to use one’s will or to be determined – to live? One doesn’t unless there is a wish to die.”191

190. Words inspired by her Alexander Technique lessons. Most of the time incorporating the word allow.

She looked at herself again. She knew she would stay, stay with her body. Stay alive until the body itself ordered her to give in. No command from another being would make her leave. She was sure about this.
Dying was not her desire. Screaming, yes, and calling out hateful words, making noise and opposing rulers, yes, this was more a part of her life. She had learned it from friends. Italian friends. Friends who never stepped back from passions. That which to her had seemed mad, was normal to them. And she had learned.
So she stayed on and acted in her own special manner. This was important to add. She would act like a woman of dignity. Her way became law. And she had no intention now to listen to any body. She would walk across the stage, with her head high and with plenty of space behind her jaw.

She felt the air filling up under her arms. Arms flowing out of her body. She allowed her neck to grow long and she felt her feet finding the ground.
She would fight and love. She would speak in song.
She smiled to herself in the mirror.
Her body had filled up with air.
She dropped her jaw

*Disprezzata Regina...*
the effect distrust and lies had in life and society. In fact when she considered
the world around her, trust was something rare. But her intention was yet to be
honest in whatever she decided to do. Make people trust at least in her words.
Then something had happened.
Someone close to her had made her appear false.
She felt ashamed and over a long period she battled with anguish. Was she
really to blame? Had she not kept the promise she had made to herself?
What had happened? Why?
Her words had been hard, yes, and she had been very angry. But she was
not the only one. And there were reasons to be upset.
The phone had been put down in her ear. Something she had never ex-
pected to happen. Since then they never really spoke again.
Communication did not work this time. It was painful to accept. Commu-
nicating with people was normally something she truly enjoyed. So why had
it not worked this time?
At first she had tried to find her way back to the lost trust. She had apologized
for her anger and hard words, hoped things would return to what they had been.
Or what she thought had been.
But looking back, she learned that she had seen something that had never
really been there.
After years of mourning the loss of the ones she had cared for with such
great love, the sorrow started to give her physical pains. Then she decided to
stop. Stop accepting her own languish.
She had to live herself and to go on with her life.
She had left the city. She had travelled far, by boat. She still remembered her
parents the day she left. Her mother, hiding her face, trying not to show her tears.
They trusted in her.
She arrived one day in the city build on water, in sparkling place, like a
crown full of jewels.
She had passed the marketplace. Spices, herbs, bread, meat, fish,…
With the smell of fish still in her nostrils she found her way to the palace
where she had been promised a room.
It was her first day. Her senses where filled with wonder and amazement.
She entered the room where she would stay. There was a bed next to the
wall on her right side. She placed her suitcase next to the door and looked into
the bathroom. It was clean.
The windows were made of Venetian glass. She could hear the sound of
water outside.

With the head on the pillow, she closed her eyes and thought of all she has
left behind.
Here she could start again. Find new friends and family. Build a new struc-
ture around her self and sing again.
She had to learn to trust in her own directions and in her self. Her body and
mind had joined fully. Helped her to leave and make things change. They had
followed together and learned along the way. Learned to leave and to let go.
Leave the troubles behind.
The note was struck with violence. Then it almost disappeared into no
sound at all. When it was almost gone, it started to grow forward again.
Flying across the score placed on the harpsichord. It had nothing to loose.
Stretching out in full lengths, longer and longer. The motion was part of
her room.

“Movement is thus one of the principal ways by which we learn the meaning of things
and acquire our ever-growing sense of what our world is like. This learning about
the possibilities for different types of experience and action that comes from mov-
ning within various environments occurs mostly beneath the level of consciousness. It
starts in the womb and continues over our life span. We learn an important part of
the immanent meaning of things through our bodily motions. We learn what we can
do in the motions by which we learn how things can be for us.”

The longer she became, the more trust settled inside her.
The spine widened.
The consonants flew all over the room. Vowels sliding up and down the walls.
The echo rang through out the whole room. Slowly upwards then fast down
again, playful and mourning. The suddenly she got stuck.
She looked up in the ceiling. One of the laces in her corset had hooked itself
in the gorgeous chandelier. How annoying! With her whole body she tried to
get out of her difficult situation, but the corset was tightly tied to her back. It
seemed impossible to get out.
She was trapped in her own corset, trapped, hanging from the ceiling.
The light came on. Anyone below would think it was part of the perfor-
mance. A woman singing, like a spirit or an angel, an unearthly creature, un-
real, not to take for real or to be trusted.

192 Johnson, Mark *The meaning of the body. Aesthetics of human understanding.* The Uni-
Her legs and arms moved. It was an extreme situation and her gestures grew out of proportion. Left arm stretched out much too high, not coordinated at all.

It had all been prepared for. The show. She would sing from the chandelier attached to the ceiling in a 17th century palazzo. A mad scene never seen before. A success!

The lace broke and she fell.
Down, down, down.
She landed with her feet firmly on the ground.
She had been taking photographs. Observing. Holding the camera with her right hand and the tuning fork in the other. Catching the moments while trust grew within her body.
Click, click, click,
Sound was recorded on her iPod: her singing and the noise from the camera, every time she took a photo.193

The hidden chapel
She walked into the darkness of the church next to the Rialto Bridge. The humidity found its way straight through the clothes, right through her skin and into her bones. It was a cold autumn day and she had planned to meet with Ottavia that day.

Anna Renzi had joined her on the San Marco side of the bridge. On their walks through the city they would discuss their work and lives. What had made them start to sing? How they had found themselves in Venice etc. Renzi would normally practice in the theater, in her own residence or in the house of one a patron of the theater.194 Today they were going to a new rehearsal space, in a church.

She looked herself around. It was quiet and different there inside the church, compared to the bustling commerce right outside. They had entered an oasis of silence.

Someone was coughing at the front of the church. She listened and followed the trace of a cold.

193. The rehearsal happened at the end of the Summer 2008. The Singer and Ottavia met, and the fine line between them was completely erased. This was the line between real and unreal.
— Buon giorno, signora. I am coming to rehearse.
The lady stood up and indicated her to follow.
They walked into a small room on the right hand side. It was hard to see anything in the darkness.
The lady bent next to the wall, lifted up the seat in a wooden bench and pushed with one hand on to the wall. A secret door opened up and she observed a very steep stairway leading into an even darker place somewhere above.
They walked up the stair in silence and when they reached the last step, the lady found the light switch.
In wonder and amazement she sensed herself gasping for air.
They had arrived in a small chapel with walls all covered with frescoes. The red, blue and yellow colors came rushing out of the walls and moved straight into her reference catalogue. She had not expected a sight like this. She had not imagined such a place to be hidden behind the Rialto Bridge. And here she was, with a harpsichord at her disposal right in the middle of the room.
— Make sure your turn the lights of when you leave, the lady said and left the room.
— Grazie mille, was all she could say in response.
Alone she walked from image to image:
a wedding ceremony...
a farewell...
a woman posing in yellow, with her back towards the observer...
hands...
gestures...
spiritual ecstasy...

She took her coat off and hanged it across a chair next to a the walls.
The harpsichord was closed. She had to open the lid.
Carefully she touched the keyboard, and sound met her ears.
She could not have imagined.
She opened her score, and looked at the image of the woman

taking farewell.

A Dio, A dio...195

195. It had kindly been arranged in advance by Marco Rosa Salva, director of the Scuola di Musica Antica di Venezia, for her to access the schools rehearsal space in Chiesa di San Bartolomeo, next to the Rialto Bridge.
The angel and Ottavia

“TEATRO DEI SANTI GIOVANNI E PAOLO, CANNAREGIO, CALLE LARGA BERLENDIS
Was built around 1635 by the Grimani di Santa Formosa family and immediately reconstructed, in a nearby location in 1639. The opening was celebrated with the production of La Delia by Paolo Sacrati. The Grimani collaborated with Claudio Monteverdi (in 1639 and in 1641 Adone and Le Nozze di Enea con Lavinia were performed, from which not even a fragment has remained; in 1642 L’incoronazione di Poppea, from which a signed manuscript is conserved at Biblioteca Marciana)” 196

She had finally found a copy of Aldo Bova’s book. It had more than she could expect, with even a map indicating all the musical venues in Venice during history.

She put on her boots, wrapped the coat around her and rushed out of the hotel. In the Castello, there she would find the theater where Renzi had become Ottavia.

Up and down the bridges, swirling in between tourists covered in cameras. Her own was in her bag. She would use it in a little while. When she got to the theater. Crossing San Marco, her feet flew above the stones. The pigeons didn’t bother her this time, like they normally did. Normally she would hate them. They were everywhere. Part of Nature, yes, yes. But she just didn’t like them.

She knew her roads quite well, but was still hesitating a little. Venice was a labyrinth. It was easy to get lost. Finally she found the road of the theater. She looked at Bova and Prandi’s map. Hard to say where exactly the theater would have been located. Could it have been in the house with the gate and the garden? Perhaps the stage itself had been inside the garden. A large wall would have been located. Could it have been in the house with the gate and the garden? Perhaps the stage itself had been inside the garden. A large wall kept curious walkers away from what was hidden behind. Only the closed gate gave a glimpse of the space she was searching for. She waited a little before she decided to ring on one of the bells. Someone opened the gate from inside. She pushed on the door and it opened.

Every time she entered a space of importance to her, she felt her body shiver a little. She walked into history and her heart was beating. Now, the music of Monteverdi was her reference, background music to her thoughts and impressions. She looked around and someone called. She looked up.

‘Boun giorno Signora, I am looking for an old theater. From the seventeenth century,’ she heard herself saying. The lady looked perplexed and called for someone else in the house. Another woman. Soon this other female figure turned up in a window on the second floor. And not even a minute later she saw a third face in the top floor window. Nobody seemed to know anything about the theater. They were all tenants in flats of the condominium.

‘Un teatro? Beh!? No,… niente’

She had entered stage and looked herself around. The audience, who had found their places, were looking down at her. Only women today. The scenery was a garden.

High above she felt the eyes of an angel. Guarding her movements. It listened quietly.

The place was so silent. The sound that broke the silence was her sigh. A staccato sigh, hesitating and longing.

Taking farewell

“the most black languish has a language in staccato, the sentences […] are short, as if strained”. 197

196. “Fu costruito interno al 1635 per conto della famiglia Grimani di Santa Maria Formosa e fu subito ricostruito, a poca distanza, nel 1639. Per l’inaugurazione si mise in scena La Delia di Paolo Sacrati. I Grimani ottennero la collaborazione di CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI (nel 1639 e nel 1641 furono eseguiti Adone e La Nozze d’Enea con Lavinia, delle quali no ci è rimasto neanche un frammento; nel 1642 L’in coronazione di Poppea, il cui manoscritto autografo è conservato alla Biblioteca Marciana)”, Bova and Prandi, 1995, p. 85.

A lump in her throat made it difficult to breath. Air didn’t find its way into her body...
She had to leave again,
Leave them all, her friends.
To take farewell.
This had to be the last time. Moving. She couldn’t do it again. Travelling away. Starting all new. Finding new walks, new friends, new schools, and a new living.
Her hope had been there, hope for a job, for a stability and peace, especially after all these years when they didn’t know where to settle. 
After her move to the last place, after a long flight (twenty four hours) and a long drive (four days), she had fainted in the bathroom. Lucky enough she didn’t hurt herself badly. Only a sore left shoulder. But it was a beginning of exhaustion.
Sorrow became physical pain.

A dio...

‘Why did you not refuse to go?’ someone had asked.
She answered with silence. She had no words…
She remembered the sea. How hard they must have worked to move the ship with their oars. Their pain must have been so much worse than hers. She had been sitting on deck holding on to her knees. Tears mixed with salty water. She knew she would not be alone when she arrived. They waited for her.
The theater would be there. She would walk on stage and sing. 
How would the city be like?
She had so many questions. Right between sorrow and desire, she found wonder and joy. Wonder about herself; the way she would be reacting.
Or not reacting.
Become… become…
Or being?
Being. Becoming…
‘But you never told me that you had been rejected as well?’ said Ottavia.
She looked at the Renzi and her self, who looked at each other. And after that they had to laugh. It was too much… too much languish.
Giggling came from thier throats. A jumping, giggling, nervous laughter. At first not synchronized, then after a while they found the same frequency and three voices became one voice.

They walked out of the theater,…
laughing loud!
Report from a corset

Tightly, tightly it was strapped around her body. The corset felt like a prison. It held her back in a straight even line. Inside there was no chance to breathe the way she was used to do. At first she had borrowed a corset made for someone else who was much taller. After that experience she knew she had to find someone to make one for her. Fitted for her body.

The corset had to be based on a 17th century model. An assistant to the stage costume tailor/designer at the school agreed to work with her.

The Singer planned for an experiment. Since she had never worn a corset for longer periods of time (maximum time would have been for concerts) she would see what happened to her breathing and posture if she was wearing it every day for two full weeks. The experiment would take place in Venice during her field trip.

The result was described in her diary in the following way:

"It is a pain to get it in to this prison. I am alone in the hotel and cannot ask for assistance. Embarrassing! If I manage to let the lace be loosely tied I can get it on and tighten it to my body from the front, then I squeeze it around my body so that the final knot can be made at the top of the back. It takes me about 20 minutes every morning and it is definitely no pleasure. So what experience do I receive? At first it was just awful to breath. Lower breathing is impossible. The chest won’t move. But something gave her a positive surprise. I felt an enormous freedom around my shoulder and higher chest. Also around the hips, since the corset was cut very high. So plenty of space around the hips and below."

She had suffered from pains in her back and in her left arm and shoulder. After one week in the corset these pains were gone. She had also developed a better posture by stretching out her back, thanks to a better understanding of high and low breathing.

Strangely enough, she started to feel at ease.

198. 4 November, 2008.
Vivaldi’s putte, their fenced balcony and a glimpse of the shadows of Teatro Novissimo

In her search for more information about Teatro Novissimo in the Castello area she had been suggested to contact Signor Giuseppe Ellero, responsible for the archives at the Church of Ospedaletto with its special music room. The hospital was located right on the same spot where the theater once must have been located. The Singer had in fact walked around in the hospital trying to get a closer look, but she didn’t feel so comfortable humming on Deidamia’s mad scene while strolling through the corridors. So close but so distant, she thought when she walked out of the hospital.

The Church of the Hospital, Chiesa dell’Ospedaletto or Santa Maria dei Derelitti, located next the hospital and Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo, was famous for its singing girls and this she had not realize until she met Signor Ellero. He took her to the beautiful music room on the third floor and even more interestingly, to the choral balcony from where the girls had been performing. They were all orphans, having found a shelter in the church. There they had been trained and educated in music by the composer Antonio Vivaldi.

The girls were to be heard but not seen. Therefore they were placed behind on a fenced balcony. Standing there on the balcony that afternoon made an impression on the Singer. Heard but not seen. Beautiful young women were of course a threat, but not there voices apparently. Hiding them behind bars would surely have helped, she thought and smiled.
She looked at the chairs placed along the wall. It was as if the girls would be expected to arrive there at any time, walking in, each one of them finding her chair. A shiver passed along the Singer’s spine.

On the way down from the third floor Signor Ellero turned to her and pointed towards a place outside a window.

‘Il Teatro Novissimo. It was located right there, next to the hospital.’ He told her to open the window and take a close look.

The view was not very pretty. It looked rather messy, with a shed, perhaps used for equipment for the hospital garden. It was the place where Renzi had performed her feigned madness during the carneval 1641.

Et io – a performing self. 

“… a man is a self-performing animal – his performances are, in a way, reflexive, in performing he reveals himself to himself.”

Her notebook had been in front of her on the table and with a pen she formulated her thoughts on the white empty paper-space:

So who am I when I perform?
Where do I find myself in the acts of sighs and laughter?
When my hands are raised towards the sky?
Whose feet are standing firmly on the ground?
Who owns the lungs filling up with air?

Physically everything belonged to herself in her performance. It was impossible to leave this fact aside. But every act occurred inside a frame, where the self melted into pure being. Such a frame protected the framed object from loosing itself between all beings. In the frame the person could allow herself not to act any being in particular anymore, but she could simply just be. And it was safe. Without the frame it all bordered to real madness. It became dangerous.

The Singer had entered a game with the audience. Where I become a being speaking in the moment while at the same time observing her surrounding.

She listened to her memories and performed them simultaneously; she looked into the eyes of the listeners and heard their silent voices speaking through their bodies.

“We listen to singers while mentally echoing their words with our own inner voice; but singers engaged in a musical dialogue onstage do the same while waiting for their turn to begin their part; moreover, they listen to themselves in the act of singing.”

et io staro solinga…

When she spoke of her solitude, she was alone, while being surrounded by others. Physically she would never be alone on stage, but she was alone inside her act. She took her own decisions of when and how. In Ottavio’s words she found herself at ease. Through her languish they all cried out there solitude. Looking at her gestures everyone saw their own bodies move. And it all came through the words.

Words performed in a lamentation.
Words, longing for peace and…

Silence

Lost in word.
She had trusted and soon lost trust and now she didn’t know what to believe, but to remain in silenzio.
Silence of her own free will.

“Neutral = postulates a right to be silent – a possibility of keeping silent.”

199. I am very grateful to Signor Ellero for his kindness of showing me around in this very special place.
Act II

Finding pure voice through ornamentation, repetition, movement and improvisation

Scene I
ARIANNA

The sounding line

“Appearances were all confused; he led the eye astray
By a mazy multitude of winding ways”\(^{203}\)

She left all the music on the table in her studio and walked out, puzzled by a sound coming from the sea. Arianna had been with her for already some weeks and she was worried that she started to hear her voice for real. A seducing voice coming from the sea.

She had locked the door behind her, just to make sure nothing bothered her privacy and sanity.

She passed houses she knew since childhood, stonewalls built in a traditional manner, fencing off the properties. Frames, she thought to herself, frames for people to control themselves within. Inside they had their privacy and could do whatever they wanted, but if they would come up with the idea of walking out, behaving as they liked, someone might consider them strange, yes, even mad. And that would not be acceptable. The island had its unwritten rules.

She looked herself around. It was so empty. No human life. No activity. Only herself. With her camera, which she had taken along, just in case Arianna actually sat there on a rock somewhere.

\(^{203}\) Ovid, 1986, p. 176.

Trillo – experiencing change

She got to the point where the street became a narrow path. The softly shaped rocks started to show themselves more and more. The landscape changed into wild fields with low vegetation.

The voice continued to sound. It went on and on and on.

_... to begin with the first quarter-note then re-strike each note with the throat on the vowel à up to the final double-whole-note_\(^{204}\)

She smiled to herself. It felt a little odd to consciously follow an ornament. It gave her a feeling of walking into herself. Into a winding maze similar to the one in Crete. She noticed that her sounding smile started to sound ironic. Irony filled her face and her throat, and her whole body grew into sarcasm. It was ridiculous the whole thing. The laughter continued on an inhalation. Full control, without any doubt. Morire. Yes, death was the word she spoke and it had no real meaning to her, as the person she was. Not to her, not at all. But then each puff of sound struck her memory. The tessitura became higher and the word changed into lasciate mi - let me, let me, LET ME… She held on to the second a in lascia-, and her body responded with openness. Her jaw dropped and her spine grew out of the ground while her toes and heels lengthened and made her feet longer, providing the body with more stability. The physical beating of her vocal folds seemed to be the key to something else different from any sarcasm or irony. The sound insisted in staying on. At last there was nothing more to give, and an exhausted sigh relaxed her body into grief. Silence filled with energy and soft trembling was all that could be heard before – temi... moriitiiiiree finally passed her lips. She took a deep breath and set off again. Fueled by the previous seconds, she left her purpose behind. She had left all far behind and was inside her own sound. This time the a trembled more metallically and her body knew the beginning of laughter. Accelerating in tempo and pitch, the sound blew up into the ceiling, in order to drop fast into the lower register. Up and down. Reason was all gone. For a minute laughter reigned, just to let go for a cry and a sob to pick up the line. Up and down. Up and down. Each beat penetrated the walls of the room. She enjoyed the sound tremendously and danced into her own motion. As soon as the air was gone her whole body withdrew into itself and she bent forward holding on to her stomach. The movement slowed down. As if in pain sound kept on changing directions. Sobs of joy and sorrow were all in one. She had forgotten her ground, even if she still kept on observing. Controlling her space.

It all took her by surprise, really, and in the end she gave in to the world outside and she decided to step out, overwhelmed by the experience. Exhausted, and in wonder.

So, what did she learn?

She had studied the musical sample in Caccini’s text and theoretically understood the meaning of his description. But after physically studying the acts of the body while practicing vocally the actual movement of the ornament she came to a new understanding. Caccini had not mentioned the amount of emotions behind that one single note. Behind the essence of grace and elegant negligence a crude and revealing nature could be found. Inside the note in the score, behind an elaborated reflection of an embellishment she had seen herself transform in the shortest time. Not because of words. Neither was she throwing herself between the passions, but rather being thrown by something bigger than herself. The beating movement explained by Caccini looked simple and uncomplicated but it withheld a complexity of factors leading on to varied expressions.

“In a musical work […] there is a structure and pattern of temporal flow, pitch, contours, and intensity (loudness/softness) that is analogous to felt patterns of the flow of human experience.”

She had experienced with all herself that, which had been described by Johnson in his book of bodily experience, just because she allowed herself to be aware. This allowing was one of the keys to her vocal flow. It had again struck her mind that by ignoring the destructive patterns in her thinking her voice and her body were liberated from all tensions unconsciously part of her living. These were patterns that she normally would not have noticed. Because of a growing awareness about herself and her voice, she experienced her bodily acts differently and this at the same time had an impact in the reversed sense. The new understanding of her body caused her voice to truly engage in expression she had only rarely experienced in the past. Now she was able to allow vocal freedom to exist within her own mindful control. Embodied change would occur whenever she perceived or recalled the right internal or external object.

The red line

The voice was like the red thread of Arianna. It teased her to follow. As a fish on a fishing line, she was hooked on Arianna’s thread, and she could only follow. The line was only in her head. It was there as a mental line. This mental line gave her the idea to set it all up for real, to make an experiment on the seashore. She would create the situation of Arianna on her island. Recreate or make new.

205. Johnson, Mark, p. 238.
She packed everything in her bag: her camera, the golden shoes, the iPod with its microphone and last, her daughter’s watercolors and a painting brush. She started to film already from the beginning. It was important to see the whole walk towards the rocky shore.

She loved the rocks. For many years she had been living far away from these shores, but now she was back and the rocks were there as always. Round, soft and shaped by the ice. Nature shaped by Nature. She used to walk down there in the early spring and lay down. Sensing the shape following her back. The sun warmed her and she would feel like staying there forever, allowing her whole body to melt in to the stability of the granite.

In the summer she would do the same, and then she would feel the heat from the rock spreading through her body. Heat, accumulated during a whole day of lovely sun.

Together with a dear friend, they would come out on the rocks late at night. They would bring some sparkling white wine and some cheese, take a late night swim and then watch the sun slowly, slowly disappear into the water. Then they would find there way home in the dark.

The rocks shaped her home. She loved them, walked on them, and trusted in them.

The people on the island were sometimes like the rocks as well, hard and rough, sometimes impossible to communicate with; stubborn and weathered by salty winds from the North. She was one of them. (Though she also had Karelian blood in her veins.)

But the people on her island knew when they had to support one another. You could lean back on them and they would be there for you in hard times. They knew hard times, and perhaps the women knew it better than others. They supported each other when all men were out at sea.

The rocks would support her always. They would be there underneath her skin when she would wake up in the morning. Like they had been when Arianna woke up on Naxos.

When she woke up, realizing that things had changed. That she was left behind. Alone.

Touching – feeling – hearing

Their backs touched one another. Their eyes didn’t know what they looked like, but they could feel.
Their first meeting was based on improvisation. They had no intention to follow any theories of authenticity, often considered to be part of a historically informed performance. They didn’t have any rules. They wanted to explore the movements of lamentation, by allowing a free communication between two bodies: a Singer and a Dancer.

They started back to back. The voice whispered the first words. Slowly they followed the energy in the room. The result became a sensuous dance between two bodies reaching for life and death in their extremes.

After whispering the first word, the Singer started to sing. Also here she had decided not to sound in a specific manner. She would allow the ugly to make room for the sad and for the longing.

Arianna was in the room with them that first time. She had walked in through the door, and had joined them. The Singer wasn’t sure when, but she knew it had happened.

Arianna was in the room with them that first time. She had walked in through the door, and had joined them. The Singer wasn’t sure when, but she knew it had happened.

Teseo mio

There was tenderness towards him, even if she should have forgotten all about what had happened. It would have been the best.

But how could she? She had sensed his head against her neck. And the memory of this would be printed on her skin.

"O Teseo, O Teseo mio..."

She felt the softness from his skin next to hers. Her body melted in to his and she stood there completely still. Never wanting the moment to end. Followed his movement in any direction. Glued to him.

The Dancer stood next to her, leaning the head towards her neck. It was the first time she sensed such an intensive presence since they had started to rehearse. Their bodies had met through Arianna’s words and melody in various ways, but when his name was mentioned it seemed as if they had found Teseo’s whole being in the room. Just next to them. Touching them. Being them. With her voice she caressed his face. Her voice tangled up in his curly hair. She understood the beauty of being together, being one with another being. And she trusted. Trusted in his strength and in his body. She trusted in herself and in her breath, a breath both solid and constant. A breath that made herself grow into her own body, expanding by the warm sensation of absolute presence.

Trust was the answer to what she knew. What she had just experienced physically with another human being, the motion of that other person, had printed something on her skin and inside her soul. The other person was a Dancer. A woman she knew well, since the age of thirteen. They had sung together. Laughed and cried together and they were real friends, trusting one another.

But in the moment when Teseo came into the room with them, something different occurred. He was not there in person. Only through the music and the words. He had appeared the moment she took his name in her mouth. Teseo, Teseo mio, Oh, oh, oh, Teseo

The first T on her tongue was like an explosion. It broke out of a silence. T. There it was, flowing in to the other letters about to form a word of Love and Desire. It was the beginning of a word that signified trust and meaning. She closed her eyes and allowed her head to meet the round shape of his head. Leaning on him with all her weight.

The arm of Latona

She had been visiting Versailles in the spring of 2009. She had walked through the palace and its gardens. It was in the garden she saw a woman stretching out for something or someone invisible. She had a crown on her head and her face spoke of longing and hope. It was Latona.
This statue came to her mind when she stood there on the rocky shore. Latona’s arm had been stretched out as if calling for someone. This woman became Arianna in her memory, a woman calling with her arms. Her fingers were slightly curved and she remembered how she had learned that a perfect baroque gesture would never have any straight lines in it. The hand of Latona was a perfect sample. Latona’s hand became her own gesture for longing, for waiting, and for demanding.

Demand. How could demand have a curved posture? She would naturally stretch her body, slightly forced in her behavior and then asking straight forward for what she wanted. It would sometimes be done in fear.

The siren

“As the myth of the Sirens teaches us, song is heard as naturally feminine, just as speech is naturally masculine. Destined to substantiate themselves in the semantic, men’s voices tend to disappear in the mute labor of the mind, or thought. By modulating themselves in song, on the other hand, women’s voices come to show their authentic substance — namely, the passionate rhythms of the body from which the voice flows. In this sense the woman who sings is always a Siren, or a creature of pleasure, extraneous to the domestic order of daughter and wife. The female singing voice cannot be domesticated; it disturbs the system of reason by leading elsewhere. Potentially lethal, it pushes pleasure to the limits of what is bearable.”

She had been considering the fact that the mad scene, performed mainly by female singers, would bring the female voice out of the traditional rhetorical patterns, often referred to in historically informed performances today. Could it be true that when the female singer came on stage in Venice in 1640 performing her mad scenes, the rhetorical patterns were ignored and reason had been left behind? Creating a real mad scene, by going beyond the “limits of what is bearable”?

In Venice the female voice on stage was honored and glorified. Like in Paris. But the Pope feared female emotions and banned women from stages in Rome. What did he really fear in the female voice? The female bodily flow, the sinful, the emotive, the seductive, or what? Would the female voices turn

206. La Fontaine de Latone, by André Le Nôtre (1613–1700).
the world upside down and disrupt the power of the church? Or would the tearful singing voices touch what shouldn't be touched? A mysterious forbidden touch?

"Of the five senses, touch was the most 'immediate', at once resisting temporal stasis and having no spatial 'medium' between the body and the touchable world (be it in the form of objects, bodies, textures, or temperatures)."

The touch of the Sirens voice enchanted anyone with its immediate force, or non-force. An articulated whisper could have the same effect. This could be a danger for anyone in power.

She whispered his name,

_Teseo mio – come back to me…_

The horizon

She found the line intriguing. Something tempted her to touch it and make it into something different. The color had been similar the day when she had been with Arianna on the shore. The mist was heavy and it was hard to see the exact point where the sea met the sky. Or where the sky met the sea. Nothing disturbed the simplicity. Only small waves moved around giving the picture a feeling of life, so pure and so distant. Untouchable. She couldn't get enough of it.

She had seen a similar line when she had lived in a desert. That line had saved her then. It was the line that had reminded her at least a little of the sea. But in the desert it all seemed dead, at least to her eyes from a distance. By the sea she felt the wind in her face, and sometimes a bird would pass by and laugh at her. But for the rest it was calm. Perhaps this sight gave her the confirmation of infinity and how she was a part of it, from her distance. Because she was there, watching and guarding. Nobody could steal it from her. It was a free entertainment: watching the horizon. She allowed her fingers to draw something on the line. She could do whatever she liked. No body would tell her to stop. Her fingers moved one. Her voice followed and together they colored the horizon. Made it a room for improvisation on a continuous baseline.

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He had left, and he didn’t know that someone was watching him. That someone was standing there on the rocks looking for him already for a long time, lamenting her own situation, as he was gone. He didn't realize that she stood there watching and singing at the same time.

A girl from the island stood there on a rock crying for him.
Like fishermen wives and women had done for years and years.
Longing for their beloved.

She stretched out her arm trying to reach for him.
Calling for him.
Teseo come back, don’t leave me here behind!
If she had called those words loud, they would have called for an ambulance.
Out of her mind! they would have said.
Standing there in the cold wind, calling for someone she called Teseo? Saying she loved him!? Who could she mean? Well, something must have gone terribly wrong in her life, poor girl. Probably someone must have left her. Someone had perhaps left her for another. He had probably left in his boat. That was what she had said.
Did she say Teseo?
No, we don’t know anyone with that name here on the island. But he could well be one of those new people, who had moved out to the island recently.
From death to joy

Bacchus had arrived. He had taken her as his wife and given her comfort. Made her one of his women.

She had been wondering if this was the reason for Arianna to suddenly break out in a smile, singing:

\[ \textit{io son, io son contenta} \]

It was a strange end, and one very rarely performed. She had found the manuscript in Florence. Later on she discovered both a modern edition of that same manuscript as well as a complete translation for the whole piece on-line.

\[ \textit{I am, I am happy} \]

She looked at the audience with a smile and felt joy in all her body. She had been complaining about a man who didn't want her and she had arrived to the point when she had to let go. She had found something else. Something better. She never sang that Bacchus came for her, but if he did, this could have been the beginning her madness. A bacchic madness.

The moment she pronounced the word \textit{contenta} sorrow was gone.

It had disappeared and was never seen again.
Scene 2
ARIANE

He was just like a rock, hard and unreachable.
She would tell him so.
Why did you leave?

She had seen him the first time in Paris. His arrogance had at first put her off. His air had been so acid, contaminated with a pompous arrogance.

Then he had seen her and something in him had changed. They had met again, more than once. She learned that his arrogance was a shield he would use with strangers.

They became lovers. And it was like a dream. They would enjoy their picnics in gardens all over Paris. They would travel to the coast and eat crepes and drink cider. They would wait for the tide to go out. She was happy and in love.

He made her promises. He gave her all what she could dream of.

And now…
He had left, and he ignored her voice.

Suspension until the end
The ornaments had been written out as a guide. The only thing she had to do was to taste them. If she held them long enough in her mouth they would attach themselves to her tongue. Then she could choose what to do with them. She could hold on and never let go.

Helas!
While she was holding his face would return in her mind and she would remember. Remember all his kisses and his love. She would still hold on, because she didn’t want to lose him.

But in the end she ran out of breath and she had to let go. And gone he was, until she held on again. That time he would give her a different message. And she would hate to see him disappear.

She left every time she had to breathe in. And she stopped taking breaths.

She stopped to breathe.

Fear, nothing and physics in the air
She sat down in her seat on the plane. A man passed through the narrow corridor looking at his boarding card. He looked at the numbers and found his seat. Next to hers.

At first there was silence. She was afraid. She hated to fly, to be locked in a cabin with others high above the clouds. What if she fell down, right in the middle of the Alps?

She loved travelling, and had been flying so many times. But her fear grew worse. It was funny to think that she could have been working as an airhostess. She had passed all the interviews except the last one. They had asked “but how can you fly if you intend to sing?” Now, these words sent a message to her

211 The statue that came to signify a rock in her memory was the equestrian statue of Louis XIV by the entrance of the Louvre in Paris, next to the Pyramide.
brain telling her how well she would do if she flew and sang at the same time!
That was what everything was about. Singing and flying.

A conversation had finally opened up.

He said he had been to a scientific meeting. He was a physicist. She had replied that she had also been away for research. She had been looking for nothing in Venice. Vocal nothingness.

'NOTHING!?' he replied, turning his head towards her, looking deep into her eyes.

'Yes, NOTHING, right.'

She started to tell him about Anna Renzi and about the costume that had been made based on Renzi's portrait. She had told him that Renzi had been referred to as a symbol of nothingness.

She had felt a little strange telling him all this, and thought he might take her for crazy.

Most of the people who asked about her research would wonder what she meant with nothingness. She expected the man next to her to ask her the same question.

His eyes grew in size and he said.

'I do understand! How interesting! So we are researching the same subject, nothing. You from an artistic perspective, me from the field of physics.'

She couldn't believe her ears.

It was not to believe!

They were excited both of them, and they continued to speak all through the flight.

And when they finally arrived they continued to speak while leaving the plane.

It was not to believe. It was wondrous and amazing.

And she had forgotten all about her fear.

Just because of nothing.
Sweet tenderness

She held the score in her hand and had just started with the second verse, the ornamented verse. The fast moving dots in the score were like small shiverings. Another voice followed her into the verse. They decorated the melody together.

They didn’t share anything else, except the ornaments. Not the language and not the melody, only the string of pearls attached to a simple line.

It didn’t fit at all but at the same time she loved what the other was doing. It was all what she wished for to be added into her own song. The sweet languishing tones reflecting the loss, the kisses, and the melting-together in an embrace. The porte-de-voix sustained her longing with swelling excitement.

Her longing had brought tears to her face. She had been in a moment-of-pure.

Considering the self through the personal and the private

“True emptiness is nothing less than what reaches awareness in all of us as our own absolute self-nature. In addition, this emptiness is the point at which each and every entity that is said to exist becomes manifest as what it is in itself, in the form of its true suchness.”\textsuperscript{212}

\textsuperscript{212} The words are by Nishitani Keiji, cited in: Heisig, 2001, p. 222.
The complex structure of minerals in the rocks on the island was extreme, she had been told by a geologist. She could not understand the details but she had studied the visible patterns. They were not like anything else she could remember. In and out of each other the lines and curves mingled. They formed shapes of faces, animals, figures and abstract motions. What about if she tried to sing by following the lines?

It was not only the colors that changes and mingled. The structure was also a micro landscape, with bumps, divisions and interruptions. She would have to consider also this structure if she decided to sing the lines of the rocks.

She wondered how it would sound.

She sat there and thought of her shoes and how they would meet the surface of the landscaped rock, her golden shoes, made in Venice.

Balancing in golden high heels on slippery rocks

She always had to be alert and prepared, knowing that the unknown could happen at any time. If she kept her eyes open she knew when everything would change. But if she feared the fall her body would hurt and she would have to fight hard to come back. She knew because she had been there. But now she looked straight forward, being prepared for anything.

Gone

The shoe had been left behind. It was there on the shore longing for her/Ariane to come back.

It felt alone and abandoned.
Nobody knew were she had gone. Barefoot?
Or in another pair of shoes?
It had travelled all through Europe to reach this shore, and now what?

The moment seemed cut out of a structure and placed in a completely different environment, disassembled and confused. But it had learned that things would be fine if one stayed alert and attentive.
So it listened for anything to happen.
Listened and waited.
Act III
Performing *je-ne-sais-quoi*

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**Scene 1**

**ARMIDE**

*(1664)*

Flying above and letting go

Her shoe was hanging in the air,
as if afraid of touching the ground.
She had no intension to step down,
or to walk around like everyone else.
She felt at home
in the air.
Her voice was free.
In the sky, her troubles seemed far away
and nothing could stop her from choosing her own direction.
Being part of the air,
and one with the winds.
She opened her mouth and allowed her lungs to fill…
A pair of golden high heel shoes

She had found the shoemaking girls in a workshop next to a bridge crossing a narrow canal. Every time she had to visit the workshop she got lost. They all looked very much the same, the bridges and the canals. It was next to impossible to find the right street, and even harder to make a shortcut. Impossible.

Venice was a place made to lose oneself.

‘Mi scusi per favore, dove…?’

(‘Excuse me, but could you please tell me where…?’)

She had called to arrange for a meeting over the phone from Sweden.

The day of her first appointment had been terribly rainy. She had walked too much, got lost again, and in the end there had been no time to get back to the hotel for changing her socks and shoes. Her socks were soaking wet. It was really embarrassing.

The shop-window was filled with amazing shoes: funny ones with little bells, others in beautiful leather with strong and vivid colors.

Two young women were waiting for her: the shoemaker, owner of the workshop, and her assistant.

‘Buona sera… I am so sorry… for my wet feet…’

They smiled and said that they could see her boots were not made for rain, neither for flooding.

But they are usually very comfortable, she had replied.

The owner went to the back of the shop and returned with some paper and a tape measure. She had to measure and draw the shape of her foot in order to make a mold.

She had explained the purpose of the shoe and showed them the picture she had found of a pair of Italian 17th-century women shoes. It had been really hard to find the picture since women tended to hide away their feet under big heavy skirts when ever they were posing in front of a painter. Or else, they had dropped all shoes and posed naked. Rarely showing their shoes.

They continued to meet every two days, for trying and measuring. They had to decide the shape and the size of the heel as well as the material and color of the shoe. In the end she decided she wanted a soft, gold-colored calf leather, and a heel with the height of 85 mm. It would suite the rest of the costume created in a turquoise-colored velvet, ornamented with gold, a dress modeled after the portrait of Anna Renzi.

After two weeks, the shoe mold was ready. She had to leave Venice since
the fieldwork study had come to an end, and they had decided that the shoes would be sent to her home when finished. To the island in the North.

Three months later, the Italian yellow postal package was delivered to her post office at the petrol station.

When she came home she opened the box. The shoes were extraordinary. She took off her wool socks and tied the shoes on to her feet.

It was a pair of shoes transforming her grandmothers woven carpets into an old wooden stage-floor at the heart of Venice.

Empty chairs in *Jardin du Luxembourg*

The garden was empty and grey. She didn't remember having experienced the garden so lifeless and quiet before. It was nothing strange in this of course. Every garden in the world would be the same during a grey day at the end of the winter. But the chairs caught her attention. They had been placed and directed by someone. They were waiting chair. Chairs longing to be used, filled with people: dreaming people, angry people, anxious people longing for leaving the chairs in the garden for a better place somewhere else. Providing anyone a physical moment of rest, it was the duty of a chair.

She walked up to one of them and sat down. It was a little wet, but she didn't mind drying it off with the end of her coat.

She had bent her knees and had given in to the weight of her body to fold and find the right weight in the chair. Comfortably she leaned back and looked up in the sky. She had the best view. Except that clouds now covered up what normally should be blue.

The garden was waiting like the chairs. Waiting for meaningful discussions, or useless ones. Conversations about all what seemed important to someone and less important to someone else. There would be quarrels between husbands and wives. Children would be crying for having dropped their ice creams, or for just not wanting to leave the garden for a waiting dinner table at home.

The purpose of the chair was to wait and please without intruding or participating.

Now she looked at the chair, not as a designer, whose eyes would make a totally different story (something that in the end also was part the life of the chair). She allowed her eyes to see a place providing comfort for reflection. A place with a view. A basic physical structure in iron – of no importance at all. A place for beginning new ideas and new thoughts. A place like all other places. Of no importance at all. Just a place.
Growing wide in Switzerland

At the end of his lesson he had brought out his notebook and made her a drawing. It didn’t say much at first. She used to keep it on the wall in her kitchen. Throwing an eye at it from time to time. But lately the figure spreading its wings across the sheet told her more. It was an image of her self in moments of joy, in the air, stretching out, with a small head and large wings with plenty of air underneath them.

He was the Alexander Teacher she had been longing to meet for a long time. She had often heard his name being mentioned. He seemed to be a controversial man, someone who spoke his true mind.

Finally the day came when she had to travel via Switzerland. She decided to try to arrange for a meeting with him. She called him up and he made her an appointment for two continuous lessons.

In his studio he worked with her like the other teachers she had met over the year. He was sure of his knowledge. He spoke with a Hebrew accent. She had many memories of that accent, memories of incidents that had affected her life deeply.

Her body had been tired. She always tried to do a lot. Too much, accomplish things and finish projects. She liked it that way and that was how she liked her life to continue. But when the tiredness came, she pushed herself even harder. Tried to make her body to be long, by pushing it up. Stubborn as she was she practiced her breathing, until she felt that her whole body locked itself rather than releasing.

He told her to stop doing. She laughed inside since this she had been told by all teachers she had met. To stop controlling and to stop doing so much.

‘It will come to you without the effort.’

Impossible she thought. But she knew he was right.

At one point he did something as well. He made a fast twist to her neck and she was caught by surprise. No one had ever done this to her in a lesson. It used to be a calm experience.

Allowing was the key to Alexander Technique. Non-doing and allowing. His fast action had brought her out of control for a while. Had made her stop. Had made her forget about everything except his movement and her neck. She focused on the neck and wonder brought air to the spine.

‘Goodness me,’ she thought. What happened?

The meeting with the teacher had happened about 5 years ago. He had drawn the image she now kept on her kitchen cupboard and it reminded her about her neck. Looking at the figure, she knew that her body would allow itself to grow out through the arms, as if flying in the air, in between everything that kept on circling around her.213

In between moments: nothing and je ne sais quoi

“This in-between describes a moment of transformation, rather than a ‘something’ that transforms from one state-of-being to another, or from one position to another.”214

She was thinking about moments. Loooooong moments lasting for four years for example.

A lament was a moment of languishes. Within this moment were many moments of fear, panic, isolation, despair etc. In these moments were words and sentences speaking the moment, as well as notes sounding the moment. The moment of silence took over after the sound was gone.

It was just as if nothing had happened.

Nothing.

But something had truly happened. The one that had heard or performed

213. The meeting with Alexander Teacher Mr. Noam Renen, happened in Dec. 2007.
214. Cavalcante Scuback, see page 122, footnote 152.
a lament had been part of a movement, an emotional journey, a state of being rather than a something. They had travelled from point A to point B. Along the way much had happened. Many words had been spoken and many tears had flown, laughter had sprung through the walls of their rooms.

So when the sound finally had given in to silence, sound was still there, but not heard.

She tried to think of what happened in-between tears and laughter. And it was hard to explain. Tears did not normally shift into laughter just like that. Something triggered her to cry or to laugh. Something outside. And her crying was not a thing. It was a moment. For her moments usually overlapped gradually.

She remembered listening to a conversation from a distance. It was an Italian family talking across a kitchen table. They had been screaming and talking very loud and aggressively. In her room she had been wondering what had happened. She was not used to this kind of talking from her own home in Sweden. They must have an incredible quarrel, she thought to herself. It went on for a long time. And then it all ended. Things had calmed down and she decided to walk into the kitchen to join the others. What met her in the door was not what she had expected. They were all smiling and laughing. No trace of a major quarrel, not at all. It was as if they had the best time in their life.

This moment stayed with her. In her research she tried to understand the Italian moments of transformation in vocal expression and the scene in the kitchen seemed more or less like a mad scene. And it was as if they had the best time in their life.

It seems to me that one cannot apply oneself enough to that. "However, [the agréments] that are the most necessary and that are to be sought out the most are those that go directly to the heart and are appropriate at all times, like acquitting one's self with good grace in everything that regards life and society. It seems to me that one cannot apply oneself enough to that."216

In Lully's dialogue between the Italian and the French music, the French music sang:

‘...When the pain attacks my heart, one has not a bright-shining voice.’

On n'a pas la voix éclatante, that is, a voice lacking the sparkles and the glitter. The passions in Lully's French music were not less intense. Not at all, on the contrary. There were passions that pulled the listener into the sound. Pulled them towards something unspoken. It was a sound requiring no screaming or crying. Not in the Italian way. When ever that heart was breaking the tone silently burned of languishes. A silent languish full of charm and agrément. A languish to be adorned for its beauty. Performed to touch and to enchant, but with something added to it, something almost impossible to define. It came with a certain grace and charm. The voice should perform the passions through agrément.

Richelet's dictionnaire of 1680 defined agrément as "an agreeable manner" and "a delightful relation between a person's traits and his or her qualities."215


The words were many for describe this manner, but at the same time it was hard to understand and define the essence. It was important for her to try to define this inexplicable term so she searched for answers elsewhere. It had to do with charm and how could one define charm?

"Charme is what makes sure that tedious perfection will not be left as a dead letter: when awakened, activated, animated dead perfections become capable of arousing love, and only then are they alive... In opposition to every definite thing (res), is charme not the very operation of beauty, the poetical influx through which beauty - far from remaining exposed, passive and quiescent, like a wax statue under the gaze of the spectator - will enter in a transitive relation with the human?... Charme makes beauty not only actual but efficacious. Plotinus had a term to indicate inefficacious beauty, perfection that does not act, and that is literally as 'perfect' as the passive past principle. He called it [...] lazy beauty."\(^\text{217}\)

She continued to read the texts by Jankélévitch. He talked about the "fluid continuity in becoming". His manner to formulate the essence of charm corresponded to her own perception of what she searched to perform, something that in the end made the French expression different from the Italian. There was a fluid continuity that had to convince the audience, which in the 17th century had a special relation to the words charme and esprit. The singer looked at various French seventeenth century texts and found dialogues that never seemed to end. Gracefully they continued in to infinity. They went on and on, and the words were of greatest charm and importance, but in the end, they were like ornaments, just aiming to please. Agréments. Because in the end no thing mattered really and nobody turned around, but it all flowed on without disruption. This was all so difficult to formulate in a simple manner, and since the term nothing had become a clear statement in Italian, its French counterpart would have to be named after its indefinable je-ne-sais-quoi.

The silent pause

Ah...
Da me...
Qui sola...
Ferma...

\(^\text{217. Jankélévitch, 2003, p.x.}\)
Fury

leave my palace…

Love…

spirits fly away…

Let me morn…

Betray…

Heavens…

I am filled…

With hate and truthful revenge…

Spirits leave my palace…

Let myself…

Betray…
Scene 2
ARMIDE
(1686)

Chiaro-scuro: from simplicity to complexity and back again
light / dark
weak / strong
black / white
life / death
and so on…

The image of the score was so simple. Black on white, sharp contours lined and controlled by the printers and their setting.

But the words contained so much more, so many other details.

The cursing of a man; the urgency of power – of a regime that destroyed a weakened figure.

It was all about extremes and their opposites. They competed continuously. Vulgarity with grace, grace with revenge, revenge with fear…

For Armide, darkness was her palace. Darkness controlled her tone and her position.

In the brute moment of the rehearsal, all faults and failures were heard, her forces and her strains, and her weak moments of distrust in her own voice.

But in the darkness hope appeared. A hope of light. A light that frightened but also drew her onwards. Pulled her body out to a field of instrumental sounds. The form had invited others to join and the image changed. Her body opened up. Became a longing being. Longing for the light.

With the camera she searched her way forward. It traveled deep down into the darkness of her throat looking through the skin of the mouth from the inside. She wanted to see the vulgarity, to be in the ugly. Absorb the horror of darkness.

It was early morning hour when she left her home. The ten to four ferry. Darkness surrounded the car and she looked out through the window.

Darkness.

She was excited. At the end of the day she would travel across another sea, to another island. Venice. She was longing.

There were lights out there as well, lights telling the captains where to go. Informing about dangers. Showing the way. They were bright and clear.

Reflections sparkled in the water. Light that would soon disappear, only to return again when darkness returned

Battling with fluidity

Tears of tiredness. Tiredness to explain. Tiredness to go on with words.
She felt she couldn’t make her self more clear. Clear for an audience who waited to know all about themselves. They expected words they thought would clarify mysteries and their whereabouts. Her own learning was clear and poetic. That was her way of thinking. Did they not understand that she could not be different?

Here she stood fighting for her right to love, to hate and to revenge on stage. She would revenge on all norms around her. Tell them the truth about her work in her own rhetoric, with her own gestures. It was what they all did, the Armides around her. At least they ought to do so. Sing in their style. Following their maps.

These maps could bring valuable indications, indications clarifying the where about of ornaments and intuition. Most of the time explained in words, because no one had kept the sound of the 17th century. Only text remained.

The texts were fluid documents of meanings and opinions. Or as in poet-ics, they would perform the unspeakable in words. Gesture their directions.

In written dialogues words left each other space to fill in, to hook on to, to attach to or just listen to.

On stage she made her point. Saved it in a final document.

What would art be, if not a view of new images, and of new voices.

Repeated, but always aiming to make a difference.

Aiming for a personal point of view.

Desire

"The passion of Desire in as agitation of the soul, caused by the spirits, which disposes it to will for the future the things it represents to itself to be suitable. Thus we desire not only the presence of absent good but also the preservation of the present, and in addition the absence of evil, both what we already have and what we believe we might receive in time to come."218

218. Descartes, p. 66, Article 86. The Definition of Desire.
Hate mixed with a longing for revenge and love. Dizziness blurred her mind. And she searched for her spine, which would always make the stability return.

She was sitting on the bus looking out through the window. Nobody around her knew what happened inside her. Only she knew. Desire was driving her forwards, towards her goals – her dreams. She wanted to catch her lucky days ahead and preserve them, hold on to them and put them in a jar, so that she easily could look at them and say to her self: Look how lucky I am. I’ve got what I wanted.

But in a way she knew she did not really care. She knew that her day dreaming resulted in a feigned desire. She was in fact perfectly happy as she was. Desiring only the current moment. What else could she do?

She took out her notebook and wrote anything that came to her mind. The pen decorated the page with little flowers. She used to start like that. In the end she would have at least seven pages of words she would never read again. They had come to her and they and been printed, but would never echo live in the future. She would always keep these notebooks. Never throw them away. Their presence satisfied her. They were part of her collection. She had to have them close to her. Her notes were part of her desire and her longing, reflecting the moment of living. And the words assisted her to remember.


“Inegal: m. ale: f. unequall, uneven; different, ill-matching, unlike.”

She turned her head towards the front in the bus. While looking at the road ahead she understood why she had always loved being on the road, on her way. Being still, but always on the road, going somewhere. Like being in life itself.

Following the path of a singer

“II faut partir adorable amarante”

Her eyes were so dark. Looking at her from the middle of the painting. It was as if they knew each other from before. Their eyes knew.

In the eyes of the other she found a safe heaven. Hypnotized she had gazed.

Their eyes had met for the first time at Musée de Louvre, in one of the rooms with 17th century French art.

The painting was so tiny that she could have passed it without any notice.

The information next to the painting told her that it was most probably made by Antoine le Nain. It was called ‘La Reunion Musical’ or ‘La Reunion de La Famille’. In the middle there was the young girl in a yellow dress holding a book. She was singing.

The young girl lightened up the whole painting with her white face and bright dress, like a light in dark room.

Was this Anne? Anne Chabanceau de La Barre? A singer so loved by queen Christina that she was invited to perform at the court in the North.

The Singer had looked through the catalogues of the museum, looking for all possible information. Nowhere did she find a name of the family in the picture. But the time of the picture matched perfectly. Painted around 1640.

So, she decided it was Anne, the girl in yellow. They had looked at each other and they did not have to say anything more. The eyes of Anne became part of everything. Her eyes had looked at the Singer’s audience when she later on performed the music collected in Paris. The same eyes always observed her from a wall in her working studio.

They followed the map invisibly drawn into the scores they performed. They jumped from word to word, searching for its meaning. On every note they had a wide view of the landscapes around them. Nothing stopped them.

even if their roads were bumpy and uneven.\textsuperscript{226}

They used their voices to explain the mysteries of life. Never explaining everything at once, but always little by little.

Following her vision as an act forwards, was her choice. It was promoted out of pure desire for knowledge. She learned as she walked. The obstacles were many, but they never succeeded to disrupt her decision to go on. She didn’t ask herself what she was doing? If it was right or not? Not then. She kept on walking.

Only later did she ask herself questions. What was she doing? Where was she going?

\textit{Que dis je? O suis-je?}

Haunted by the inexplicable in her work she placed herself constantly in the corner of\textit{ wonder}. The moment of wonder was the only way for her to see and become enlightened. To see her own journey behind her and to look at her faults and errors. But her looking backwards didn’t bring her back to her journey into the future. She had to consciously tell herself to stop worrying and wondering about the past. Forwards and backwards, they were her destiny. In the present she would always ask again and again:

\textit{Que dis je? O suis-je?}

\textsuperscript{226} For nine years the Singer had followed Anne Chabanceau de La Barre. Obsessed she had collected material – texts, articles, and music – creating a concert dedicated to the 17\textsuperscript{th} century Singer. The result was a recording: \textit{Eclatante Amarante: A Portrait of the French Singer Anna Chabanceau de La Barre}. EB 2004.
Voices on a map

Que dis je? ...

O suis-je?

Helas!

She looked herself around. Heard nobody else than herself and her own words.
Her toes carefully touched the ground in front of her…
Carefully looking back.
Was she alone?
No.
Not at all.
There were voices all around, all of them singing the words of Armide.
They came from different continents, from different cultures and languages,
different rules and habits. But they all had Armide in common.

Among these singers she had hoped to find a discussion on how to adopt
the music of the 17th century. She had invited them to a meeting in Paris, to a
dialogue. But the singers never came. They were too busy singing.
Instead she had an interesting meeting with theorist from various fields on
the topic of pure voice. They had talked for four hours. An interesting discus-
sion flowered around the table, ornamenting the two words, pure voice.

In the end the dialogue was reduced to two questions that kept on ringing
inside her.

‘Pure voice? Or Purified from what?’

The statement of pure voice had become a question, questioning purity in it-
self. The fact that it became a totally different linguistic form puzzled the Singer.

“Purity is impure if it is not purifying”221

This she translated into: a pure voice would be impure if it wasn’t a purify-
ing voice.

After writing down this statement she saw the lines drawn in a new man-
ner. The French sound was purifying that which was normally vulgar and
horrible exaggerated.

But the line of Armide was nevertheless filled with harshness and hor-
ror. Would she dare to push the expression outside the limits of politeness?


Could she find a manner of crying, screaming, and accusing being fiery
(over-expressing) and savant (difficult or technical), without losing the effect
of gentleness and naturalness?

Did singing in itself stand closer to fury, than speech?

Cries, howlings are evidently closer to singing than the rational order of logos.

What about, if the rationality of logos, was limiting the Singer from ex-
pressing the passions of the music?

Limitations of logos

“It appeared last month an air with these words, which was an apology from the
French Music and not a satire against the Italian music. One wanted to show that
the French does not support repetition in the way the Italian language admits, and
doesn’t allow the same game. This specific air is the proof, possibly it is acceptable in
Italian words, but it is ridiculous in French…”222

She looked at the music in front of her, two songs by Michel de La Barre,
both in French but set in two different musical styles. She sang them to her-
self.

The Italian musical style:

“J'ay fait, J'ay fait, J'ay fait ce que j' ay pû ce que j' ay pû dans mon maleur extreme dans
mon maleur extrême extreme extreme Pour vous cacher le feu, cacher le feu, le feu qui
m’alloit consumer, qui m’alloit consumer, consumer;…

The French musical style:

“J'ay fait / ce que j' ay pû / dans mon maleur extreme / Pour vous cacher le feu / qui
m’alloit consumer,…”

222. “Il a paru le mois dernier un Air sur ses Parolles, c’etoit une Apologie de la Musique Fran-
çaise et non pas une Satire contre la Musique Italiene. On a voulu faire voir que la Langue
Française ne souffre pas le repetitions que la Langue Italiene admet, et ne fournit pas le
même feu; l’Airs en question en est la preuve, il serait, peut-estre passable, sur des Parolles It-
aliennes, il est ridicule sur des Paroles Francaise,…”. La Barre, Michel de Recueil dairs serieux
et a boire de differents authurs, imprime au mois de juin 1703, Paris, C. Ballard, 1703.06.
(Translation to English my own).
It all seemed ridiculous, indeed. She couldn’t really tell why it all seemed so strange. The French style was simple, without any extras. Just all words mentioned once right through, while the Italian style repeated itself on and on, like a machine. The two songs didn’t mean to insult one another. Those were the words of the composer, who was French. Rather, he had meant to demonstrate a proof, that the French langue was lacking the spirit of the game played by the Italian.

Figures of fury and madness in French

“When anger fills the soul, he who feels this passion has red and inflamed eyes, the pupils restless and shining, the eyebrows now lowered, now raised and contracted against each other. The forehead will appear deeply furrowed, forming wrinkles between the eyes; the nostrils will be open and enlarged, the lips full and turned out and pressed against one another with the under lip raised over the upper, leaving the corners of the mouth slightly open to form a cruel and disdainful grin.”

…and the details were telling everything about Fury. It was over-explaining something that would have been natural, but which had become vulgar and averting. By applying all the descriptive words, fury was kept inside a frame of normality. Controlled. And it would not be free to act by its own. Rather it would flower in a beam of a sentence. Who knows what would have become of fury if left on its own? A revolution. That had happened. Forever the aim was to never set down the foot, but to always be in the air, prepared for any possible impulsive action. If… it decided to take a new course, the words would be there, alerting the surrounding about what was about to happen, and…

Wonder, infinity and nothing

Silence rings in my head,
Words are no where to be found,
Yet I make words come out from inside
It is a wonder.
I cannot believe.
In black on white these words
Are visible on the screen.

And I know that behind every word
Is an infinity of others words,
Each one of them surrounded by a world,
A real world.

When I try to grasp all these worlds,
Trying to make the visible on my screen,
Make them understood,
I realize the impossible task.
Frustration at first,
Then I look at myself.
The only way to reach into infinity
Is to go on singing.
The wordless song is a prism of all the worlds
Inside of me.
The worlds might not be understood to every one, the way I see them.
But when the wordless song is heard,
New words appears,
And they spread into a void.

WONDER

They had agreed to meet after the performance. They had planned to take a walk in the garden of the Palace of the Senses. It was a beautiful garden they all loved and cared for. It was there they had found their love for Pure Sound. A sound that came with the river, which was flowing gently through the garden. The source of this river was unknown, but it was of less importance, since in this garden there was no need to know, only to sense moments of pleasure.

They came to the garden to exchange some thoughts on the Passions. Passions they knew from their own voices; passions they had learned to live with and mindfully nurture in their hearts. Their meeting would be a conclusion of what they had come to understand.

‘I stood in wonder that day’, said Belgrano, ‘when I heard the words of Pure Voice. My head spun a web of meanings around the words and every meaning appeared as an image. I truly understood that it would only be by asking that I would come closer to what I didn’t know.’

224. This text can be described as an internet dialogue between the three singers, Renzi, La Barre and Belgrano but which, as noted from page XXX, entretien also includes entertainment and performance.

‘You speak in riddle as always’, said Renzi. ‘It is not so strange as you make it all sound. You have the word and you sing it, with the understanding you have. The moment the word is uttered, it touches, if your meaning is the right one.’

‘Yes’, replied Belgrano ‘ but how will I know if I have the right meaning? There seem to me not to be a simple answer to this.’ She looked at Renzi waiting for her to answer.

‘There will be as many as you can imagine. Each one of your thoughts is a start of something new, and you must never mistrust your intuition, by which you find your own desire and intention to go forward. As someone said, “all meaning lies in intention, and if intention is altogether lacking, meaning is altogether lacking too.”’226 When your start to linger around, and question the intention behind a word to much, you lose some of your drive. In the voice, you will find the power of the word. But this will never have to stop you from repeating the word again and again and finding new intentions behind the word. Every time you say the word, it carries a meaning, a meaning that can never be wrong.’

Belgrano looked at de La Barre and saw that she was thinking, in silence. ‘I am not so sure’, she finally added. If I sing out my meaning over and over, then meaning loses it value, and splendor. The listener will become tired and so will I. I have to be aware of their presence as much as of my own.’ She looked at the others for a moment to see how they responded to her spoken thoughts. Their ears seemed to listen. ‘You might think I am less in everything compared to both of you. My voice less pungent, less forceful, less expressive, and more introvert perhaps. This might be how you perceive me. But I can tell nothing is more important to me than to express my meaning passionately. I will linger in the moment, hold on to my sound, and reflect in the pauses. All of this I will do again and again, but not for the sake of doing it again and again, for what has been expressed can not be taken back.’

‘I agree with you’, said Renzi. But still we sound different.

‘Perhaps we do, perhaps we don’t,’ La Barre answered.

‘But when does amazement catch your soul?’ asked Belgrano. ‘Because it seems to me that wonder is the birth to all new sounds.’

‘Amazement, as you call it – I would prefer to say wonder – or merveille. It is there in everything I do, continuously. It is the base of all my acts. Sometimes more and sometimes less but always there preparing a ground for every sound.’

‘Wonderful’ said Belgrano, ‘I think I can understand.’ For four years she had been marveled by all words she had heard. She had been amazed to see how her own voice had found confidence through words. Perhaps her love for the French sound was hidden in the fact that she had no wish to arrive at a conclusion. Not at all. But to go on in the midst of all the marvelous words around her. There was something superior in the French vocal expression. An enlightened marvel, created only by looking up into the sky, ignoring cruelty and disasters normally to be found everywhere on the ground. It was not that she admired this kind of marvel, but it was something in the self-absorbed narcissistic air that interested her. ‘La France’, she thought in silence.

Then Renzi could not be quiet any longer. ‘Me-ra-vi-glia’ she said. Four sounds in varied characters, different and colorful. All of them based at the front of my mouth. They are there and they speak for themselves. They are open sounds, open for improvisation. When you stayed with me in Venice we observed these clear sounds together: in the garden, in the theater, in your costume, and in the decorations. We were amazed. Fine. That was all remarkable. But then we ran from one end to the other looking for details even more meraviglioso. We found them in every leaf, in every stone, in every step and in every motion of a hand. These details were our material for building our sounds. The brick and the marble both impressed us. They sounded different in our voices. Just like love and love could sound different from one second to another.’

She had become agitated, both in her voice and in her gestures. De La Barre looked at her, and she smiled. ‘I can see we are making progress’ she said and gave Belgrano a friendly touch on her arm. ‘We have already entered our second topic I believe, or what do you think?

DESIRE

Renzi, who first had to calm herself before she could go on, realized that their dialogue would be an embodiment of the whole thesis, and she started to laugh. She was in fact always close to laughter, even in her most sorrowful moments. It was part of her character. Belgrano walked in between her friends. She felt close to them both and was happy. She trusted in them, and in all their differences.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘we have seen what desire does to a human being. The desire to express an opinion. The desire in my voice is heard by its animation and
vibration. Would it be right to say that?’ Here de La Barre spoke. ‘Vibration yes, of course, it is a means whereby we managed to touch.’ She stopped and searched for more words. But they didn’t seem to come to her. Renzi looked at her with tenderness. She raised her hand and gently caressed cheek of De La Barre. ‘It is in the movement of our hands when we reach for something. We do the same with our voices. If they remained without vibration they would be cold and dead.’ Belgrano thought of the day she had been standing with Arianna on the rocks on her island. It was so cold and icy. But this cold had touched her as well, so then how could that be? ‘Because you were there’, Renzi said, as if she had heard her thoughts. ‘You stood there with your vibration, moving in the space with your own memories. These memories moved into your being and this caused you to feel. Perhaps these were memories of cold rocks, and they caused you to feel sorrow. But if you had been ignorant of your own memories, you would not have been touched. Desire is a little like wonder. They are passions that create other passions. Without desire you will be cold. And you will never find Pure Voice.’

‘Desire is an active direction’ said de La Barre suddenly. It is a transfer zone between two states of mind or two things. And it is in this transfer zone I like to place my voice. Just like with wonder, as you so clearly stated, Renzi. Desire is a passion that has no opposite. It is a force leading us into both love and hatred, as well as into joy and sadness. So let us continue straight into the active passions since at this point I can’t see much difference between our ways of perception. What becomes crucial is when love appears. Then we react differently.’

LOVE

They had arrived at a place in the garden where a statue of LOVE had been placed. It was a woman seated on a stone. She had a face so full of tenderness. All three of them had to stop and look closer. They sat down on the lawn in front of the woman.

‘She loves someone who is far away’, said de La Barre. ‘Far away but also there inside her head, so close. Distant but close. Two opposites as usual, sensed in the same moment. I would sing her love with longing in my voice. Careful longing. Every word would be a part of a continuous longing and hoping.’

‘What about if her love had to be hidden?’ asked Renzi. ‘If her love would bring shame on her and her family, would the sound be different then? No, it would not. It would perhaps be a little softer, quieter, because someone might hear her, but on the other hand, it would not change the sound. Longing would still be there. Though a difference would be heard in the rhythm of the text. The suspensions would be more significant. The fear would be heard in the in-between silences. In every pause, the sighs would be shorter and with more accents. And this would mean a different result. There would be one or two other passions present, such as fear and sorrow.’

‘Yes, also for me the words would build the sound, but I would not hold back. In me, there would be anger and opposition, because who can forbid me to love? A rebel inside me would wake up. I would rather shut the doors to my room, than to sing with less volume. If my love is so strong, nothing can keep it way from me. On stage, I would stand up, not passively lean back in longing. I would find ways to be close to him, rather than wait. Of course fear would appear. It would sound for a second or two. The fast movement between these passions would be explosive and burning. No dreaming can get me to him faster than my real action. I move and act and without ever considering what anyone would think of my acts.’

Belgrano had been listening. She tried to understand their differences. The intensity of Love would be strong in both her friends. She thought of the music they had been exploring in her research. It stretched over almost 60 years. In these years the Italian vocal sound seemed to develop into more distinguished and calculated virtuosity, while the French who had been virtuous in ornamentation from the beginning, had developed a more conscious dramatic style. She said so to her friends and they could to some extent agree.

HATRED

Was the next passion to be touched upon. Renzi stood up and dusted off her skirt. ‘Yes, hate should be heard in every consonant. A fact nobody could ignore, of could you, de La Barre?’ De La Barre replied immediately. ‘Hate is ugly, and the ugly is something I try to avoid. If someone kills my love, then I will be angry, but I will mourn my loss more than being struck by hate. The loss will take my life away and I will imagine all that could have been; all happiness we won’t share any more. So hate will be less important in me. But look at Armide, who was a sorceress, she had every right to throw her spells and she would be expected to do so. She would not hate, but show her power and

strength. There would be an evil desire in her act rather than hatred. Belgrano couldn’t stop herself from commenting. ‘Hatred in Italian would be an evil desire in French?’ A performance of Lully’s opera Armide on-line had come to her attention and she told her friends about it. Renaud’s kiss. It was by the act of his kiss, that Armide was as if consumed by the evil desire you just described. She looked out at the audience in wonder mixed with cruel desire. Wonder forced her to react through longing, sorrow and horror. She spoke the word *haine*²²⁸, but her voice and body expressed evil amazement and shock rather than revenge. The more Belgrano recalled this interpretation, the more she saw the wondrous longing for revenge inside her. It was outstanding. She had been carried away by the beauty of Armide’s reaction and action.²²⁹

‘Yes, it is the longing and the desire that are the forces in my style’ said La Barre, ‘and all my ornaments, pronunciation, suspension, breath and so on, they are my tools. Longing and desire mixed with oppositions such as love and hatred.

Renzi looked to the ground. She was tired. She had been performing every night during the last week, and she was tired of words. She wanted to sing. Only to sing. Not to talk, but she knew that Belgrano was happy. She seemed to have understood something essential and that had been the purpose of her research.

‘You must not forget one thing just. Definitions are dangerous. They lock you up, and if you are not aware enough, you will be trapped in words, which, in the end loses their ability to sound. When the unspeakable have been defined and catalogued, you will have an archive of words, but where will the sound be?’ Renzi looked straight into her eyes. Something in her look made Belgrano realize that she spoke an important truth.

She had only recently come to love the stage with her whole self, because of a senseless curiosity for Nothingness. On stage she had found it and so was desperately trying to describe this Nothingness. Battling day and night she had searched for words. Words that she found everywhere in her books, describing the indefinable. She was exhausted, deep down into her soul.

‘You have to search elsewhere’. Renzi had seen in Belgrano’s face that she had reflected on the danger of clear definitions. ‘You have to walk around the topic. That’s the way you will find it. You will know without clear definitions. And your voice will be a sounding proof. So just let it be for now and let us turn to the next passion.

JOY

Belgrano looked up and suddenly her fears were all gone. Her troubled mind, constantly haunted by her task of defining vocal Nothingness, had found new light. She could look at joy and laugh at herself for her stubbornness, which she could be so grateful for, but at the same time, so furious with. It made her walk courageously, and eager to overcome any possible difficulty. However her stubborn character was often excessive.

Here, a good laugh was needed in the midst of all her stubbornness, tears and her fury. Renzi laughed as well, louder that both of the others. De La Barre smiled and started to hum a tune. Ornaments decorated every inch invoking joy to also be full of a desiring sound, and full of longing.

Belgrano, who never liked to repeat herself, started to feel like a parrot. Using the same words over and over. But she was not going to repeat herself in French anymore. No. Longing and desire had now to be mentioned once and for all, and after that it would be as though they were printed in the background structure. After that all other passions would caress the background structure and ornament it in their own particular way. And always with charm and an eye directed to the ears of the audience.

The Italian voice didn’t have this background of passions so profoundly integrated as the French, but rather, all passions jumping around hazardously, risking going too far, and in madness it would certainly happen.

Renzi started to hum a tune as well. It was a dance, with plenty of rhythms. The baseline was stable, but above she invented a line of division, like pink flowers ornamenting a cherry tree in spring. Renzi took Belgrano’s hand and lifted her from the ground. Her voice became stronger and louder and she sang with such passions that Belgrano felt her heart was on the verge of exploding. Around and around they turned on the lawn. Their dance didn’t stop until the last word had been sung. Both of them fell to the ground, empty and dizzy by the circling movement.

La Barre had looked at them and slowly she raised herself onto her feet. She had felt happy looking at them, clapping her hands and singing along, but now she had returned to a more serious mood. She raised her arm gracefully into the air, not a single muscle was straight. Just as Belgrano had learned how

²²⁸ ‘Hatred’ in English.
²²⁹ The performance of Armide was interpreted by Stephanie d’Oustrac; a performance by Les Arts Florissant and conducted by William Christie. I would have included this scene in my thesis, with the kind permission I received by Les Arts Florissant, but the performance on line is an illegal copy, and an authorized film will not be available until May 2011.
it should be. Slowly, slowly she moved her body around the axis of her arm, as though her arm was the center of the universe. The line of her body spoke of ‘becoming,’ of a ‘coming-into-being.’ Her body moved around as though in a state of trance, then the circular movement transformed into a search led by her arm. It was no search really, because the arm knew its direction. It followed a quiet sound, unheard by the human ear, but only by the human heart. The arm found its way to Renzi and Belgrano. La Barre did not touch them with her hand, yet they followed her, enchanted. A sorceress had stepped into her body and they were under her spell. They moved on towards the path and then de la Barre found herself again. Her arm found its normal position and she looked as though she had become herself. Her dance had made them speechless. It had been a soundless dance. Her voice had been embodied by her silent body.

SORROW

They had one more passion left. It was the passion of sorrow.

They had been moved to tears by de La Barre, and she had danced the last prelude for them, before leaving and taking farewell. Belgrano understood that something really important had finally happened in her, during their dialogue. It was as though her four years of researching pure voice truly had come to a conclusion. It would end, and she knew she had reached a point when she would be transferred into something new. She had finally understood the essence of pure voice, and she no longer needed to continue further on this quest. Instead she would make sure she remained true to its value. And that would be her next research task; maintaining the pure within her own voice. Her sorrow that the end was approaching was now mixed with her desire for what was to come.

Renzi and de La Barre were both specialists on sorrow, and they both had their extreme manners of performing this passion. ‘You might think that this is the end,’ Renzi said, ‘but it is not. We will continue, even if we will part for some time. We will cry and we will languish because that is part of our life. And for those who cannot cry, we will cry as well. That is one of our duties.’ ‘Yes,’ said La Barre, ‘I have known you for many years now and we have cried all the time. Therefore we won’t go deeper into sorrow. It has been part of every one of our acts. We know the tearful sounds of lamentation. Not least from the second Act.’

Belgrano looked at them and said, ‘Will you wait for me a little longer? I have one more thing to do before I end this project.’ ‘Of course we will. Go and finish what you have to do. We will wait for you at the gate.’

Belgrano walked back to a place she had found earlier on their walk, not that far away from the gate. It was an almond tree, standing all alone in a corner of the garden.

She took out a letter paper and a pen from her bag, and sat down under the tree.
Since I heard you mention PURE VOICE, I couldn’t think of anything else. I was touched. Touched by something I had to understand. Something I thought I knew, but that I couldn’t explain. I searched for answers and words about this ‘something’ I wasn’t sure how to define at all. Yet, I was obsessed to know everything about it.

Your words of PURE VOICE forced me into lamentation and madness. I sang and spoke in French, in Italian, and in English – far from perfect (forgive me my errors). But the words I used were the ones I know, and I had to be satisfied with them, since they explained all that I know about PURE VOICE today. My own language, Swedish, could not explain it better.

So you might wonder, ‘what did she find’? You might perhaps be as curious as I was.

Let me see how I can make it short and simple.

— I had been in moments of Pure Voice, but only sometimes. I was hoping to find it again whenever I needed to, through a definition expressed in words. I have now learned that the moment of PURE VOICE will occur only when NOTHING takes over my being; when I can let go and be aware, both at the same time; when I can see my own paradoxes in the face and accept them with all my being, without commenting; when I can sense all that is possible and all that is impossible⁰ — in me — all at the same time and say nothing.

— I have learned that the Italian ‘being’ and the French ‘becoming’ served me to literally define vocal ‘nothingness’ and ‘je-ne-sais-quoi’. To use simple words (which I know will never be enough to describe the complexity of this topic), I have understood that in lamentation and madness (or feigned madness) the Italian passions are based on fast changes and separations, while in French the passions will move in a continuous flow above longing and desire. In Italian the Self is concerned only with the Self-in-the-moment, while in French the voice will always strive to perform for the sake of the charms, may it be the charms-of-the-Self or the charms-of-the-Selves-of-the-listeners.

— The Nightingale taught me about vocal variety and madness; it showed that transformations occurred suddenly and with mindful intuition; it pointed out that the body would then respond automatically in absolute NOTHINGNESS; where no question would find no answer. It also taught me that over-vocalization is the means whereby I will arrive in a state of nothingness. Ornaments showed me that Wonder will open my mind to awareness, which in the end will give me the experience of even more detailed ornaments hidden by Art and Nature.

And all this I would never have learned unless I would have been part of and not separated from an Academy open to everyone who, in his or her specific manner, would touch on the PURE, an Academy allowing extreme opposition and absolute curiosity to be its motto.²³¹

Carissimo signore Gravina, I am so grateful for your inspiration. All that I have told you now may be of no importance to this world at all. My words have been written and illustrated through fragments: pictures and films recorded by myself (a layman without any knowledge in the art of photography or film); senseless texts, which will most probably be perceived as naïve, written in vain. But these fragments had to be assembled (this could not have been done differently at this moment) and they have changed me and my voice into something new. And with this new knowledge I will continue. My mind is already prepared for exploring the world behind the ornaments hoping to better understand how far into infinity I can reach through vocal ‘touch’. But that is another chapter.

So finally, please forgive me for having stolen your precious time.

Your most humble, affectionate and passionate servant
La Curiosissima Cantante
Elisabeth Belgrano

²³¹. The academy I refer to here is not only one but a combination of three academies: the Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts; the Academy of Music and Drama at University of Gothenburg; and the academic field of Artistic Research.
Belgrano folded the paper and put it back into her bag.

She looked at the pen in her hand and thought to herself that the pen had been one of her means of coming to understand the voice. She had to hold on to it also in the future. Always while singing.

She stood up and looked into the network of branches and flowers above her head. The scent of spring was in the air.

The beginning of something new was on its way.

She walked to the gate where her friends were waiting for her.

They opened the gate and walked out together.

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_Ah Rinaldo dove sei_


Le perfide Renaud me fuit


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Recordings


DVD

The three acts in the _music research drama_ have been recorded live in gardens and palaces, on rocky beaches with plenty of wind, in a practice room with a lot of traffic outside, etc. Technique and tools for recording have been of the most _simple_ kind: at the beginning, an iPod with a microphone was used, easily connecting to a computer, and eventually as the project developed a ZOOM Q3HD video-recorder became the main recording tool. The purpose has always been to catch the immediacy of the singer’s thoughts and inner images – first considering ‘timing’ rather than focusing on sound quality.

Films have been shot by Elisabeth Belgrano and Monica Milocco, and then edited by Elisabeth Belgrano.

All photos have been shot by Elisabeth Belgrano, unless otherwise credited.

The musician and dancer participating in Act II are Anders Ericson (theorbo) and Monica Milocco (dance/movement).

Voices from the Chorus of Other in Act III are represented by Patricia Petibon and Guillemette Laurens, as well as Les Folies Françoise directed by Patrick Cohên-Akenine.
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Page 242  Detail, Bouhours, 1709, p. 417.
Swedish summary

Denna avhandling beskriver en sångerskas konstnärliga forskningsprocess från det allra första mötet med det musikaliska manuskriptet, fram till stegen ut på scengolvet och stunden då förställningen kan börja.

Syftet med avhandlingsprojektet är att formulera, definiera, analysera och skapa en djupare förståelse av begreppet *pure voice* – den rena rösten, den klara rösten – utifrån en sångerskas praktiskt gestaltande perspektiv. Praktik och reflektion sammanfogas i en dialog med teorier rörande begreppet *Intet*, ett begrepp som livligt debatterades i akademiska kretsar i både Italien och Frankrike under 1600-talet, samtidigt som operagenren började få den form som vi idag upplever på våra operascener.


ARGMENTO – SCENARIO – PERSONAGGI

En kort inledning i brevform under titeln *Argomento* beskriver syftet med avhandlingsprojektet. Detta brev ger även en antydning om hur text- och filmmaterial kan användas av andra forskare och intresserade. Ett *Scenario* beskriver akternas handling och föllopp, medan överskriften *Personaggi* förklarar karaktärerna och personerna som gestaltas i föreställningen:

- **Nature** och **Art**, utmanar sångerskan in i dramat och låter henne hitta sig själv i deras närvaro;
- sångerskan själv blir i dramats dialog synonym med **Mind**, **Body**, och **Voice**;
- en kör av referenser, både teoretiska och praktiska uppenbaras sig i the **Chorus of Other**;
- en **dansare** infinner sig i dialog med sångerskan i andra akten och deras samtal fördujas i en studie av rörelse och improvisation.
sångerskan tolkar fyra kvinnoroller från sex olika musikdramer: Deidamia, Ottavia, Arianna/Ariane och Armide.

två sångerskor från 1600-talet, den italienska Anna Renzi, och den franska Anne Chabanceau de La Barre, samtalar i Epilogen om passionernas roll i gestaltningsprocessen. Deras tankar och reflektioner tillsammans med den nutida sångerskan Elisabeth Belgrano, formas utifrån Descartes sex grundpassioner: förundran, längtan, kärlek, hat, glädje och sorg.

PROLOG

I Prologen presenteras bakgrunden och forskningskontexten till avhandlingsprojektet, liksom de teorier som tidigare behandlats teoretiskt inom olika forskningssområden, och som i detta avhandlingsprojekt förs in i ett metodiskt och konstnärligt vokalt praktikbaserat experimenterande. Prologen inleds med en beskrivning av upplevelsen av den renässans, som en drivkraft in i ett absolut vara på scenen. Kan denna upplevelse ha att göra med 1600-talsbegreppet intet! Detta blir den primära frågeställningen som leder sångerskan vidare in i studien.

Den akademi som låg bakom många av de första operaforestillningarna i Venedig i mitten av 1600-talet ägnade mycket tid åt att formulera sig om vad intet kunde innebära. Deras beskrivning kom att belysa den kvinnliga sångerskan som en symbol för just intet, med hänvisning till hennes fallenhet för att utmycka och ornamentera. Hennes tolkningar kom även att jämföras med näktergalens förmåga att trollbinda och överraska sina åhörare.


I fransk vokal kammarmusik från 1600-talet (airs de cour och airs sérieux) finner man ofta klagosänger s.k. plainte, där extrem ornamentik blev ett verktyg för gestaltnings process av passion och känsla. Den franska musiken yttrade inte till att chockera sin publik, utan snarare till att locka den närmare sig, få den att långa och att trollbinda den vid något som aldrig skulle kunna uttals, formuleras eller namnges. När denna lockelse fördes in på den musikdramatiska scenen i Frankrike, blev gesterna större, men aldrig vulgära och utmanade som den italienska. I den franska stilen fanns ständigt en uppsving av starka passioner, alltid upplysta av charm blandad med långtan och förundran.

Observationer av de vokala experimenten som allt utgår från det musikaliska materialet i avhandlingen dokumenteras i skriftliga reflektioner. Alla tankar och texter berör den intimitet som uppstår mellan den professionella närvaron i gestaltningsningen och den personliga och ofta uttalade privata medvetenheten i all rörelse och allt agerande med hänvisning till begreppet mindfulness. Detta begrepp har behandlats i både neurovetenskap och känslolära och kan enligt denna studie även knytas till Alexanderteknik, en metod utvecklad av F.M. Alexander i början av 1900-talet för att medvetandegöra mänskliga vanor och ovanor, med syfte att medvetet hitta en balans i både kropp och själ.

Sångerskans inre bilder i tre akter

Efter prologen följer själva dramaten. De tre akterna för åskådaren rakt in i sångerskan inre bildvärld, i stunden då hennes ögon möter notbilden. Tankarna som föds i mötet med noterna, melodin, orden och dess handling synliggörs i librettots tre akter, medan den tysta verksamheten inom drar henne in i ett kaos av ord och upplevelser som utkristalliseras i Cannocchiale-delen, föreställningens teaterkikare.

FÖRSTA AKTEN

problematiseras och granskas temat att gestalta förvandling (Embodying Transformation). I

Scen 1
går sångerskan in i Deidamias vansinnescenen från operan La Finta Pazza (den Falska Galna) komponerad 1641 av Francesco Sacriti med text av Giulio Strozzi. Scenen inleds med att Nature och Art förbereder scenen för sångerskan. Deras ord spigel ett paradoxalt förhållningssätt som indirekt beskriver syftet med vansinnescenen, där motsägelser och ytterligheter möts i stunden och på så vis överraskar åhörarna och försätter dem i ett till-

**Swedish summary**

**TREDJE AKTEN**

**Scen 1**


Så förvandlas Armide till en helt fransk upplevelse i

**Scen 2.**


**EPILOG**


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Johan Öberg (ed.)
ArtMonitor, Göteborg, 2010
ISSN: 1653-9958 ISBN: 978-91-978475-1-3
This music research drama thesis explores and presents a singer's artistic research process from the first meeting with a musical score until the first steps of the performance on stage. The aim has been to define and formulate an understanding in sound as well as in words around the concept of pure voice in relation to the performance of 17th century vocal music from a 21st century singer's practice-based perspective with reference to theories on nothingness, the role of the 17th century female singer, ornamentation (over-vocalization) and the singing of the nightingale.

As a result of this study, textual reflections parallel to vocal experimentation have led to a deeper understanding of the importance of considering the concept of nothingness in relation to Italian 17th century vocal music practice, as suggested in musicology. The concept of je-ne-sais-quoi in relation to the interpretation of French 17th century vocal music, approached from the same performance methodology and perspective as has been done with the Italian vocal music, may provide a novel approach for exploring the complexity involved in the creative process of a performing artist.