DOI 10.20504/opus2019c2529

Interview with Aldo Bennici: Creation and Interpretation of Luciano Berio´s *Naturale*

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Luciano Berio was a fascinating composer that made his mark in music history with a variety of intriguing pieces. Among them is *Naturale*, a work written with Sicilian folk songs for viola, percussion and recorded voice, which is the focus of this research. To better understand the interpretation and meaning of this composition I had an interview with Maestro Aldo Bennici (1938-), violist born in Palermo-Sicily, and Artistic Director of the famous Summer Festival at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, to whom Berio composed the piece in 1985. That conversation not only clarified details never written about *Naturale* but also revealed Bennici´s great artistic vision and humanity when he puts in perspective an interpreter´s task.

PIERMARTIRI, Leonardo. Interview with Aldo Bennici: Creation and Interpretation of Luciano Berio´s *Naturale*. *Opus*, v. 25, n. 3, p. 636-647, set./dez. 2019. http://dx.doi.org/10.20504/opus2019c2529

Submitted on 18/02/2019, approved on 31/03/19.

Luciano Berio (1925-2003) and Aldo Bennici had a life-long personal friendship that flourished in the creation of several works and arrangements for the viola. Aldo Bennici was born in Palermo, Sicily in 1938 and had a brilliant career as a solo violist, having performed with several international orchestras. He also held the post of Artistic Director at distinguished musical societies in Italy, especially the prestigious Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena. Bennici is known for his incessant commitment to new music, being the dedicatee of great Italian composers such as Maderna, Sciarrino, Donatoni, Pennisi, and Berio (ACCADEMIA MUSICALE CHIGIANA, 2019). One of these works is *Naturale,* written in 1985 by Luciano Berio. This spectacular work, based on Sicilian folk songs, carries great cultural significance, however, it is not yet well-known by either audiences or the academic community. Berio composed *Naturale* using the same material as *Voci*, a concerto for viola and two orchestras composed by himself in 1984. Both pieces use Sicilian folk songs extracted from the transcriptions of Italian ethnomusicologist Alberto Favara (1863-1923). These songs collected by Favara were published in four volumes named *Corpus di Musiche Popolari Siciliane* between the years 1907 and 1959 (PIERMARTIRI, 2018: 2).

Naturale is scored for viola, percussion, and recorded voice, creating three different musical layers that, when combined, provide an unusual and compelling interaction. The viola takes the central role, alternating between passages with built-in freedom and folk material such as work songs, love songs, street cries, and lullabies, all modified and adapted by the composer. For the most part, the percussion provides the supporting background to the viola, as if simply providing commentary. As the last layer, Berio adds the recorded voice which punctuates the work with seven street vendor songs. These songs are performed by Sicilian storyteller-singer Peppino (Giuseppe) Celano, who completely seizes the listener's attention with the surprisingly raw and intense quality of his singing (PIERMARTIRI, 2018).

All these layers fit exactly as Berio himself described: "A musically significant work is always made of meaningful layers that are at once the agents and the materials of its existence. They are the actor, the director, and the script all in one…" (BERIO, 2006: 14). The viola, the recording, and the percussion are three different layers that interact in this musical journey, and their role may vary according to the circumstance. Most of the time the viola is the storyteller portraying all the characters: a sailor singing sad and happy songs, a suffering mother with a child, a procession of devout followers, happy dancers in a village, a desperate woman mourning her son, and joyous workers songs. Berio characterizes each song the viola plays by exploring different techniques. Sometimes he uses expanded techniques to enhance the mood but without affecting the transcription of the original song.

On July 2012, this author had the privilege to interview Maestro Aldo Bennici at the Artistic Director's office of the Accademia Musicale Chigiana di Siena, Italy. As Bennici is from Sicily himself and the one who introduced Berio to those Sicilian folk songs, he had a fundamental role in unveiling their performance-practice as well as the story behind the creation of *Naturale*. Bennici's testimony portrayed the expressive character of this music and the evocative imagery behind the score. He sang abundantly and meaningfully during the interview, using many gestures, as the great Italian artist that he is. Some of his statements on what motivates and how a performer should think are very compelling and awakens a reflexive mind to the act of interpretation in Berio´s music. This captivating hour-long interview was originally recorded in Italian; it has since been transcribed and translated into English by the author. I want to express immense gratitude to Maestro Bennici for the privilege of conceding this interview and sharing all

the beautiful details and nuances. I also hope to bring this knowledge to other performers and scholars, that they may fully understand and appreciate the unique beauty and power of Berio's *Naturale*.

Interview

Leonardo Piermartiri: I have found very little about the story behind the creation of *Naturale*. I would like you to talk about how your friendship with Luciano Berio resulted in the composition of new works. After that, we could talk more in detail about *Naturale*.

Aldo Bennici: Berio wrote many works for me. Back when he wrote *Naturale* (this story is very personal, but I'll tell it anyway), I was separating from my first wife and there was a heavy financial burden on me. Berio wanted to help me and he acted as a truly close friend. He thought of writing this choreography[1] for me, and in about six months of performing this piece, I was able to pay all that I owed. It is a very unimportant story but one of great reciprocal friendship and great love. Berio wrote it so that I would be well. Is that okay? So, this is the first point. Then, this piece is a derivation of *Voci*, the material is not exactly the same, but for the most part, it is. I do not remember precisely because I haven't played it for years. There are about 17 songs; I do not remember for sure, it does not matter. You should envision these songs not as a performer, but as the anti-performer. You must think like a storyteller; do you know what a storyteller is? They have a large picture and with a stick, they point and sing the story [Bennici points to an imaginary picture and sings: "…then the lady saw…"].

L. P.: Like Peppino Celano?

A. B.: Yes, like Peppino Celano. I have all the originals [recordings] of Peppino Celano. And so, the viola is also a storyteller, not a soloist. It is a completely wrong approach, you should not think: "I play, I play well, hear me." Instead, it should be: "I do not play, I am!" That's because they are characters. Then, if you would like, I'll show you. Let's see, for example, the first song [**A. B.** sings the beginning of *Sciacchitana*]. It has quarter-tones, but they are not quarter-tones that are often made in the music of Xenakis, for example, which uses the quarter-tone. Here, quarter-tones are linked to a relation of the pulse. [**A. B.** sings the beginning one more time]. The pace and rhythm are of one who sings. The *Sciacchitana* is a woman from Sciacca. [**A. B.** draws a map] This is Sicily, this one is the African side, and here's Sciacca. So, because it is on the African side, it means that there is a different projecting of the voice. So, when you take the viola, you should not try [**A. B.** sings] to play like all the violists do, but to take in account that this is a woman of the commons and her sound comes from above (from her nose). You must never think of playing it, but speaking it, the same way I'm doing it now. You should feel the touch of the bow [**A. B.** sings and moves the tip of his fingers softly on his arm], this speech may sound a little nonsense, but it is a serious one. You must not think of the bow rubbing the strings, but the bow that touches something. [**A. B.** sings] She's talking, not playing, she talks, and she must say something. These women were very humble women, as it used to be in Sicily in the old times; they went to the sea to wash the clothes. So, this is the discourse of *Sciacchitana*. You need to feel it in your touch; it is a tactile matter since of course, the viola has a physical nature.

[1] *Naturale* was originally intended to be performed along with a dancing company, nowadays it is performed mostly in a recital setting.

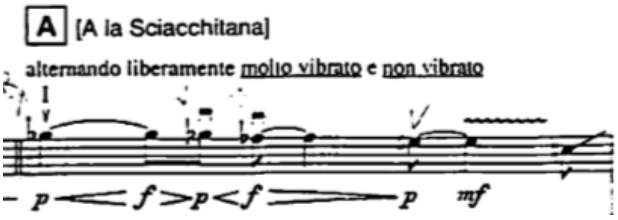


Fig. 1: Section A "*A la Sciacchitana*" (BERIO, 1985: 1).

L. P.: How do you differentiate Berio's effect of sudden changes of vibrato and quarter-tones in Section A?

A. B.: He asks for unnatural crescendos and diminuendos. The natural musical lines would be emphasized differently. In other words, if you can realize that you are not playing the viola, you have found the key to it. Forget the viola. Beware that it is a physical rapport and a loving rapport. You must talk as you talk to a person. If you do the Brahms sonata [**A. B.** sings op. 120 in E♭, 1st mov.], you speak to the universe, gorgeously, all that you might. But, if you want to speak to your wife, you must find a different tone of voice, and this is always the case in the *Sciacchitana*. From these notes that are marked vibrato, you get a straight tone and vibrate it, vibrate a lot. It is the same thing as a little emotional shock. This other one at the middle of Section A asks for *poco vibrato* e *stretto*. I can tell you this: precision is not fundamental.

L. P.: So, even if Berio in this music has made several specific points, does it matter if it is played a little differently?

A. B.: No, what matters is the tension. You must keep the tension because otherwise, they become insignificant things. The tension is what drives your musical line [**A. B.** Sings]. Especially for these glissandi, do not play them straight because they need to linger and be very intimate.

L. P.: You sing it wonderfully!

A. B.: Here at the second part of *Sciacchitana*, we have the left-hand pizzicato played together with the bow. This effect is an imitation of the voice and not a left-hand technique per se. It is as if someone speaks "ahh ahh" blocking the air in the way out of the glottis, a glottal stop (*colpo di gola*). Do you know when someone is very shy, right? He can't talk; there is something in his voice that resembles an *acciaccatura*. One day, when you broaden your studies, you will see that not only the Sicilian song—but I can tell you of many songs, from the Albanian to the Serbian—that will often use this little trait in the sound. In this other place instead, we have the quarter-tones fluctuation that Berio asks. Hold your finger in place and oscillate it, slowly, do not slide your finger. There are two sensations, one that does exactly the quarter-tone and you get an abrupt change of pitch. The second is the one that happens like a wave and the pitch changes smoothly.

L. P.: Just as the voice does.

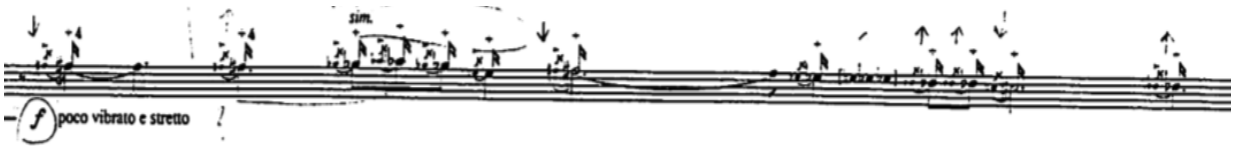


Fig. 2: Left-hand pizzicato at Section A (BERIO: 1985, 2).

A. B.: Like the sea that has waves and they come and go softly. It is a connection of language. I'll explain these parts later. It has been 15 years since I played this piece. You heard the recordings of Celano, right?

L. P.: Yes, yes.

A. B.: Celano was an *abbagnatore*. *Abbagnate* means selling things on the street. For example, the one at Section C sounds like this [**A. B.** sings the melody line of *Abbagnata I*]. The real one is much slower and sinuous [**A. B.** sings *Ohh che bel fico*]. It means: what a beautiful fig. Then, it becomes something else. Always think that you're that one character. At this moment, you just changed to another occupation. It can be a woman or a man. So, the *abbagnata* is someone selling something. [**A. B.** sings *Abbagnata I* and claps his hands strongly on the two quarter notes indicated on the score]. You can do it your own way, but the discourse must be like this [**A. B.** sings *Abbagnata I,* starts slow and then accelerates]. And, you have to learn how to make the energy come from here and not from the arms.

L. P.: You mean from the guts.

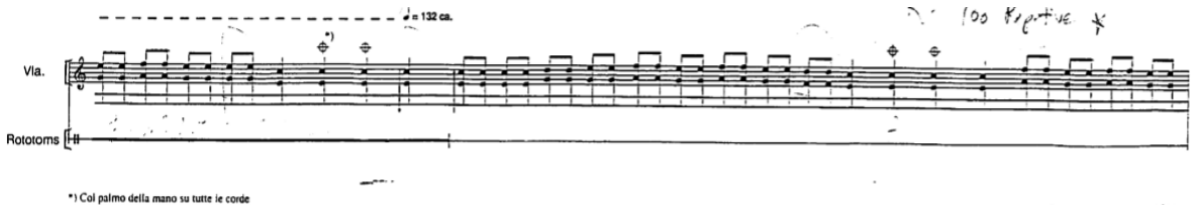


Fig. 3: *Abbagnata* at Section C (BERIO: 1985, 3).

A. B.: These quarter notes, that he indicates to hit all the strings, are not just two percussion notes on the viola, but they are always... as images of love. Like an explosion, it is a great feeling when you're in love. It is like your heart would beat like that. Because here's a dance ... the *abbagnata* is the origin, but this is no longer an *abbagnata*. The original *abbagnata* is the one that I have sung before. [**A. B.** sings] We have transformed it into a dance [**A. B.** Sings]. You must present it in a very erotic fashion. You need to convince another person with this dance and at this point, this dance becomes a dance of courtship. Think of an actor who looks at the woman and must convince her. You understand, right? You change the demeanor.

L. P.: Are the two quarter notes really that strong as you clapped?

A. B.: Try not to hit it too strong, so that your viola does not go out of tune. Here instead, we have the *Ninna Nanna* at Section E. I don't want to say something wrong because I do not remember all the details. This is an ambiguous text of poor families. It says to St. Francis of Paula to take him [the baby] at his table.[2] That has many meanings, one can say: take it because I do not know what to feed it. The song repeats three times. You'll play it this way: at the first statement do not vibrate, do not be expressive but act as a mom does when making the baby fall asleep [**A. B.** sings lullaby]. Do it like—how would you say in Italian "*perche*?" (why?). The point is that you need to build-up on it. First, you pray, then the second time, you feel that you need more, and it becomes much heavier. Note that there is a triplet here. Always Speaking! Then, she

[2] These are the lyrics of the most probable source used by Berio: Sleep, my son, sleep! ... and get some rest! When Saint Anne and Saint Joachim were sick, all the saints went to visit them (PIERMARTIRI, 2013: 48).

gets nervous a lot with this Lady [Madonna] that gives you nothing to feed the family. It is like you are begging against the situation that you cannot feed your child. That was the second statement. Then, the third one is like saying: Enough! [**A. B.** sings very heavy and marcato].

Let's see the next song? *Ladata* means laude [**A. B.** Sings]. You should not play the notes A-G♯-A with the same intention, lean more on the G♯. It should be lingering; all of this is very slow and above all don't neglect the little notes. Okay, now we have arrived at VOCE IV.[3] [**A. B.** sings the viola part with little glissandi and sudden crescendos on all notes, taking his time on every one of them]. You should play this in a courting manner like you are talking to someone. Here, you have to keep the drone on the note A very strong, and everything moves above it. There are always these first two notes that you drag their beginning [**A. B.** sings glissando tiiii taahhii]. Then, at Section H it is simpler, you should move it.

L. P.: Like a dance.

A. B.: Yes, a bit like the first dance [*Abbagnata I*], you must move it, always with very heavy accents.

L. P.: Here, at Section I, we start to see more of Berio's own motives, correct?

A. B.: Yes, we see a bit of everything. Those are different worlds. In part, they are also songs because there are fragments of them.

L. P.: Is that how he came to unify folk music with his own music?

A. B.: Consider that when you will play *Voci* with an orchestra, it is a different language even if the material is the same. That piece is a great orchestration manual. In other words, it is a very complex orchestration using magically very few elements that expand, becoming a score with two orchestras. These two ensembles are eight meters apart and at the same time create these dissonances that play a game of call. If you analyze it well, you'll see that the material is very limited but intertwined, a real model of how you build a score.

The glissando at Section I needs to be unpleasant. These glissandos need to be fast and accented (the ones that arrive at note D).

L. P.: Here, at the end of VOCE V, a new motive appears.

A. B.: This is different from a song, this motive has a tragic meaning, and there is no indication of it in the score. In Sicily, like in ancient Greece, up until the beginning of the twentieth century, they used to have the *prefiche*[4]. The *prefiche* were women who cried for a fee at funerals. For example, this is a song they would often sing: *fiiiigliu* [son], *figliu meu* [my son], *garofano mio* [my flower, clove][5]. [**A. B.** sang several times two notes, matching the two syllables of *figliu*, with a falling interval of a 4th and also a 3rd, the first note was fading away and there was almost no energy in the breath when the second note was sung]. After this the *prefiche* began to cry, then all the commotion would start. That's how you do this motive. It represents death. You will find this figure later in the score; he uses it in another way, like a lament.

[3] In the score, Berio named the seven recordings of Celano´s voice as VOCE I through VII
[4] *Prefiche* is also explained by Salomone-Marino (1981: 208).
[5] Found in Tiby (1957: no. 569).

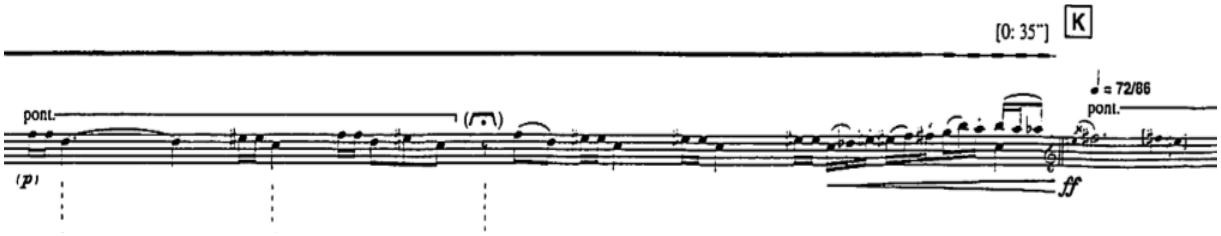


Fig. 4: End of VOCE V (BERIO, 1985: 8).

L. P.: Yes, and then also here:



Fig. 5: Mourning Motive or Lament (BERIO: 1985, 9).

A. B.: Yes, indeed, they are called *repitu,* they are mournful expressions. There's always this kind of declamation, as in ancient Greece, these women stay around the coffin and say: "You were so beautiful!" Realize that when you die you are always remembered as a better person than what you are. They could also say: "You that smelled like carnations, you had a mouth like this or like that." Then, it could get excited and become more intimate "you were so good that…" there were no limits. And in all, there is always what mothers say: "*ciatu meu"* [my breath][6], "*core meu*" [my heart] [**A. B.** sings the descending interval of a 3rd, two 16th notes followed by a quarter note found on the viola part right before Section K and also at the end of page 9]. In this rhythm, there are two notes and the pain of humanity. "You were handsome, tall, blonde haired," "you were clean," which in Sicilian means pure. Now we arrive at Section K. Again, for the quarter-tones, don't move your hands but play around the pitch with your fingers.

L. P.: This whole sequence at Section K is the cadenza that starts *Voci*, right?

A. B.: Berio wrote three cadenzas for *Voci*. I know it because all three times that I had to go there to play I did not know which one was the definitive one. It is difficult to memorize a piece like that from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.!

L. P.: What about the other ones?

A. B.: I have the originals at home.

L. P.: Was that the occasion of the premiere?

A. B.: Yes, I played the premiere in Basel. When you play this, don't approach it like you are playing Brahms with long legato lines. You must try to create your own voice (your own speech). You must talk, and not play it. At Section M instead, is a different one, I'll explain it to you [**A. B.** stands up and sings M]. This song is a call and response. It is a play between man and woman. So, you will play it like this: [sings strongly at M] this is you, man. Now, this will be her who will answer the same thing [sings the second statement starting with the note A in feminine

[6] Found in Tiby (1957: no. 569).

voice and gestures more like a courtship]. You must play the first statement like this [male, with accents]. The bow here at the accents should not be long, you really need to feel that your muscles work to make the emphasized sound: "yamm yamm". That way you will be able to portray her as the opposite. You will play her the same way but much lighter and delicate.

Mediterranean people are very theatrical; I think you got that point. Here, at Section N, we have *Tubbiana*. It is a dance for the wheat harvest, and *tubbia* means to harvest, and this one is also played on the frog. Always think that you are not alone, but that you are always two people [**A. B.** sings the little motive forte and then piano]. Even if you have the same color try changing the meaning of it. It is like you would say "why?" in different tones of voice. [**A. B.** sings Brahms Eb sonata].

Can I give you some advice since you're young? When you're at home, without awkwardness, because we usually are shy, do this: get a newspaper and read something with different emphasis. And you'll begin to pay attention; ask yourself which one is your beautiful voice? If you talk to your wife, you might not be aware of it, but you look for another tone of voice. The same is with music, you need to talk to someone and try another voice. Read a sentence [from the newspaper] and think about what word you'll give emphasis to. This is what interpretation is about. Then, try your voice, the most beautiful. I can't help you, it needs to be yours. It is difficult, but you will begin to notice the huge difference between a point and a semicolon, between two points (colon), between an accent that can be closed or may be open. You don't need to be an actor, but if you play at Section M the male statement, very strongly and accented, and then right after you need to portray the female and answer it more delicately. It has a different speech than the male. This is what you need to find on this piece.

L. P.: Otherwise…

A. B.: Otherwise, it is a series of simple songs that do not mean anything.

L. P.: You can find some recordings of *Naturale* on YouTube …

A. B.: Everybody is on YouTube. I do not have YouTube, so I do not listen to anything [laughs].

L. P.: Have you ever recorded *Naturale*?

A. B.: I did record *Naturale*. There must be a recording somewhere, but my story is a little odd. I threw them all away. My personal story is very different. I have played it 200 times, but I don't have recordings or programs or pictures, I have nothing. Freud could have given you an answer, I can give you one also, but my life is not so important. Important is what we do. What we do, either small or big, is history. Because we all take part in history, but we don't notice it. We take part in history with our little contributions. I do not care if he composed it for me or not. He wrote a duet named *Aldo* do you know it? He also transcribed the Brahms sonata to be played with the orchestra for me. He was a great friend of mine. Anyway, it doesn't matter who Bennici is, what is important is the existence of one more piece for the viola. If you tell me that many people play this on YouTube my job is finished. I contributed with my tiny grain of sand to the creation of new pieces for viola. And this, I believe, is our duty. Otherwise, if we don't think this way, we end up obscuring the beauty of what we do. Let's move on in the score!

L. P.: Here, at Section O, is the *Canto dei Pescatori di Corallo*. How do you play this left-hand pizzicato? Sometimes there is a slur, sometimes not.

A. B.: Just keep the bow on the string and pizzicato as you play. The important thing is that this should sound like shells. Here, before Section Q, we have again the mourning motive. Please remember to play it with suffering. The finger should not only move a quarter-tone, but it should have a meaning behind it. It should move like this [**A. B.** moves the finger slowly and sadly] like a sigh. You should feel it in your flesh like it is your own pain.



Fig. 6: Mourning motive before Section Q (BERIO: 1985, 12).

L. P.: Like the air in the voice that fades away, right?

A. B.: If you are able to feel it not like a violist you will be on the right path. Forget about playing the viola, it is the only way to be able to play this. When you forget it, that's then you'll sound great!

L. P.: What happens here at VOCE VII when we hear fireworks and a real machine gun, and Celano sings a story that one is shot and dies?

A. B.: This is a Luciano Berio story, the real story is that Celano speaks and says: "How beautiful the *ocufocu*." *Ocufocu* are the fireworks. But on this big frying pan, he has chickpeas, do you know what chickpeas are? In Sicily, they throw those in a pan and call it roasted curdled chickpeas. When you put them in the pan they explode and make the sound "pahhh." The same way chestnuts also explode. So, I could not convince Berio that the machine guns had nothing to do with the blows. But, consider that Berio always had in mind the student protests of 1968, those that had police intervention. Even though I told him it had nothing to do with the mafia he wanted to insert that anyway, so he put in those rounds of gunfire. It's quite a story; from machine-gun shots to chickpeas in a large frying pan is a long way. Besides, chickpeas on a pan do not kill anyone. So, where is the last one?

L. P.: The *Ninna Nanna di Carini*

A. B.: The *Ninna Nanna di Carini*, ah, it is all in harmonics.

L. P.: There are also church bells.

A. B.: Initially, there was only the viola, in the first edition. Then, as he went on, he added other things. Play this section as soft as possible. Think that you are far away as if you were whistling because you are leaving, closing the scene (very end of the piece). At this point, you've already gone through all the love and all the desperation among other things. In 25 minutes, you have made love, you have found the woman of your life, you've found Jesus, and you found whatever you want to think of. Then, you find yourself ending up with a lullaby, which can have different meanings. In this case, it may seem like closure, but the lullaby always has a perspective of the future. Think of it not as finishing the piece, but that the lullaby starts something else. Try to find your personal reading of it. For example, this is one of the tenderest things there may be [**A. B.** sings the *Ninna Nanna*]. Always play the glissandi as you are dragging the notes. I do not know if you have children, if you have, you will know that there is a different way one caresses them. Not like this [**A. B.** strokes his fingers heavily on his arm] but instead, it should be like this [**A. B.**

strokes his fingers on his arm very gently]. In this feeling there is all: there is the hug, the wanting to feel each other. That's what this section is about. Excuse me, I seem to be rhetorical about this, but here is the beauty of this composition: that is not a piece for viola. It is a piece for ... it is a minute (little, short) life, a fraction of life where there is dancing, there is love, there is death, and there is a rebirth. All condensed in about 20 minutes.

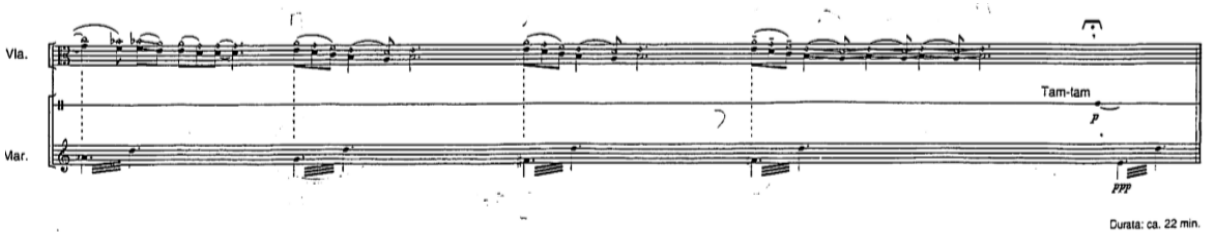


Fig. 7: End of *Naturale* (BERIO: 1985, 13).

A. B.: These outbursts that Berio writes [i.e., tremolos Section P], he used them previously in his *Sequenza VI*. These are moments in which, from a situation of confusion, come out in the end, purity, simplicity, life. It starts with violence and you find yourself in a situation where you cannot find the way. Then, you realize that the way is the simplest one, where there are simple people, and there are not such important stories. After all, the important stories are not so important.

L. P.: Yes, I understand.

A. B.: [**A. B.** sings *Sciachittana*] That's what I was telling you, there is not a bar line. Because you need to figure out which kind of tone and voice you will interpret. Where will you put the emphasis? You can spend hours until you find your voice. If you want to come back and play it for me, I will listen to it willingly. I will do it willingly because I had two wives and two great loves, which were [Bruno] Maderna and Berio. My two wives were great loves. But Maderna and Berio were...they opened up other worlds to me. So, if you want to come up with the viola, maybe give me a call and schedule a time because here it is always chaotic (because of the Summer Festival). Nowadays, many people are writing about Berio, so there is also a girl from Paris who is doing a thesis on Berio. He loved these Sicilian songs, so much that the duet called Aldo is a Sicilian song. It goes like this [**A. B.** sings the song]. They are four verses of extreme simplicity but Berio was madly in love with this song. He used to sing it all the time, in different versions. It was like a leading motto of our lives, Berio and mine. Berio was an intellectual but I'm not an intellectual, I am knowledgeable, but that is not the point. We have lived through a lot together. To other people Berio seemed to be a very tough man. Instead, I remember him as very caring, very protective, and in fact he wrote me something so I could pay off a house! One could only dream of that. So, one day, I even managed to make him sing that song on television. It was the motto of our friendship and it was present until the end of it. He died in Rome ten years ago and I was in the room when he died. I and the children and his wife sang this song to Berio. Anyway, I told a long story, and now you should come with the viola. I don't teach the viola, it is not my goal. But I would like to teach you about love.

L. P.: Thank you!

[Aldo Bennici steps out of the room for a few minutes.]

L. P.: One last question. I would like to know how the experience was playing it with the ballet.

A. B.: We have played it in many versions. With the dancers, it is more uncomfortable. I did it also alone.

L. P.: Do you approach it differently when you play with the dancers versus playing it solo?

A. B.: They are the ones that need to adapt.

Conclusion

No printed document can reproduce the experience of hearing music and the innumerable nuances transmitted by the sound. A serious performer should not only search for knowledge concerning the subject of the score which he or she is studying, but also have the experience of listening to music related to it. This meaningful conversation with Maestro Bennici along with the studying and listening to the sources of the songs made a profound impact on how I think of *Naturale* conceptually, and how I perform it. Bennici pointed out vehemently, that in this case, the approach an interpreter must have is to favor expressivity over precision of the score. The expanded techniques and its specific markings used by Berio are to be used for the sake of portraying imaginary scenes in Sicily.

I highly suggest to any performer attempting to play either *Naturale* or *Voci* the listening to original performances of Sicilian folk music, in order to get acquainted with the "way of singing" of Southern Italy.[7] Listening to Berio's music is also recommended, but one would expect that the academically trained musician is familiar with his music. The purpose of getting acquainted with Sicilian folk music is not to create a performance practice of Berio's *Naturale*, but to internalize the elements that define this music and reproduce it according to one's own "voice". This is achieved by finding deep and personal meaning and connection to the music being interpreted. This process is summarized by Bennici: "This is what you need to find on this piece. Otherwise, it is a series of simple songs that do not mean anything."

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[7] The author suggests the listening of two CD with Sicilian folk songs. First, the field recordings by Lomax and Carpitella called Italian Treasury, *Sicily*, Rounder Records, 2000. The second suggestion comprises the six recordings from the Ethnomusicological Archives of the *Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia* in the CD *Voci*, ECM, 2001.

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