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Un re in ascolto: Luciano Berio and Italo Calvino's Collaboration as a Memory of the Future

(*Notes From the Field*)[1]

Laura Chiesa

Invited by composer Luciano Berio to write a libretto, Calvino took as his starting point the entry "Ascolto" by Roland Barthes and Roland Havas in the *Enciclopedia Einaudi*, which individuates three types of listening that also form listening's stratification (Barthes and Havas 1977). My specific access to the Berio-Calvino collaboration is through the notion of expanded music and extended voice that Francesco Galante and Nicola Sani explore in their panoramic *Musica espansa. Percorsi elettroacustici di fine millennio* (2000, Music Expanded. Electroacoustic Journeys of the End of the Millennium). Galante and Sani demonstrate electronic music's radical impact on music from the second half of the twentieth century to today, as well its interrelations with other artistic and cultural disciplines. I am interested in how such a notion of musical expansion is pertinent to reading Calvino's texts, including Calvino's first libretto, published as "Per *Un re in ascolto* di Berio: libretto originale 1979" (1994c), and his short story "Un re in ascolto," and how this eventually gives a singular twist to defining his collaboration with Berio in the context of notions such as "intermediality" or "inter-arts," those mobile territories in which the collaboration can also be critically located. If an opera for the late twentieth century was the desired outcome of this collaboration, at the risk of falling into a daydream of spying on the Berio-Calvino dialogues, what I try to capture beyond a collaborative "work" is also the moving parts of the collaboration. As this special issue of *California Italian Studies* is particularly interested in revisiting the comparative aesthetics of Calvino's Norton Lectures, here I discuss how he tuned his late fiction by listening to music (but also to the expansive fields related to hearing), as well as what listening to his writings tells us about the musical suggestions of his poetics. I also try to explain why it's no wonder that in 1993 Berio imported the last words of the arias Calvino wrote for *Un re in ascolto* for the title of his own Norton lectures: *Un ricordo al futuro,* translated into English as *Remembering the Future*.

While the title "Un re in ascolto" (or "A King Listens") displays its relatedness through its return (in the first libretto Calvino wrote, in the opera Berio composed, and in Calvino's short story),[2] it also points to the divergences that emerge between the components of this *duo*. Instead of defining and individuating precise causes and effects, the concept of expansion allows me to

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[1] These notes are part of a work-in-progress devoted to the interarts and to collaborative artistic works from the 1970s to today.

[2] For a chronology of the various phases of the collaboration, see the editorial note by Claudio Milanini, "Materiali per *Un re in ascolto* di Berio," in Calvino, *Romanzi e racconti*, ed. Mario Barenghi and Bruno Falcetto. Vol. 3. Milano: Mondadori, 1994, 1292–95. As Milanini points out, although Calvino was credited as author of the libretto printed for the Salzburg production and also in later versions of the libretto, Berio largely rewrote the libretto himself, using only fragments and sections of the text originally written by Calvino. The short story "Un re in ascolto" was published posthumously in the collection *Sotto il sole giaguaro* (Milan: Garzanti, 1986). A shorter version of the story was published in *la Repubblica* on August 12–23, 1984, with a brief introduction by Calvino himself, shortly after the premiere of Berio's opera or "azione musicale in due parti," at the Salzburg music festival on August 7, to which Calvino refers in his introduction. See the editorial note in Calvino, *Romanzi e racconti*, Vol. 3, 1218–19.

capture moments and slices of what develops within each installment of the collaboration, as well as the friction that emerges at different stages. Moreover, as it largely involved music and therefore time, I am particularly attentive to the relations established between space and sound, between stage and its outside, between listening and composing within architectural spaces and constructing through music, sound, or voice. Exploring the different expanding (and contracting) moving parts and imaginary auditory scenarios also implies the possibility of capturing the tension between experience and thought, words and music, reason and resonance, through a particular expanded, resonant spectrum that the Italian language lets circulate among the verbs *sentire*, *capire*, *intendere*, and finally, *ascoltare*. In sum, I use the notion of expansion as a hinge point for accessing the significance of this exceptional collaboration. In these notes, after briefly referring to the first libretto Calvino wrote in 1979, I consider the text "Per *Un Re in Ascolto* di Berio: Trattamento 1980"—a later, pluri-dimensional proposal by Calvino—as an entry point into Berio's musical action, namely, compositions that created a montage of Calvino's arias, mashed up with excerpts of other texts. My notes seek to connect Berio's musical poetics relative to acoustic spaces—as constructed through live electronics, instrumental music, and voice—and his take on Calvino's musicality; I then plunge into Calvino's short story "Un re in ascolto." I end with a brief incursion into Berio's later conception of the spatialization of sounds (as in the Tempo Reale music research center in Florence) that unexpectedly connects with Calvino's poetics and expands it.

Calvino's first libretto has several elements of a fairytale: a King—sovereign, but also a prisoner of his own aural devices of surveillance, or perhaps of his own mind—is confined to his palace. He only breaks free upon hearing the voice of a woman, for whom he goes searching in the dark night. But through fiction this *favola dell'ascolto* also unfolds, performs, and at times even tests Barthes' and Havas' encyclopedia essay, "Ascolto."

In the libretto, the ear is the prime organ and support through which the story unfolds; from the start, and for a significant portion of the libretto, architecture allows the act of listening to occur within a designed, expanded interior space. It is a paradoxical space, because it results in an extremely enlarged ear. The first act begins to transport readers, listeners, and spectators to a tangled space designated through the invented, oxymoronic term "Palazzo-Orecchio" ("Palace-Ear"). Following the plot outlined by Echo—a chorus-like character who stands onstage but on the side of the main action ("potrebbe chiamarsi anche 'Lo spazio' o 'La notte'") (Calvino 1994c, 730)—Calvino animates sonorous acoustic spaces and acousmatic voices.[3] Architectures bounce back spies' brisk dialogues and seemingly coded yet undecipherable noises. Voices of revolt that encourage the destruction of the palace's structures alternate with the voice of an uncanny subterranean prisoner (or double). At times a multispecies ambience prevails, revealing distinct soundscapes and zooming out in a panoramic way, perhaps also panacoustic. When the entire storyline seems plunged into the darkness, the libretto ends with a sonic leap. In the last segment of the libretto, "L'alba," which displaces us from the darkness of the night to plunge us into a modern ordinary day, the only voices heard are the King's first and then Echo's. The King seems to open up again to the senses, while Echo reverberates through the sounds of the cityscape. It could simply be that he is waking from a nightmare or a sleepless night; yet the distance, up to this

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[3] The term "acousmatic" refers to a sound or voice heard without an immediately identifiable, visible origin. In Greek *akousmatikoi* (ἀκουσματικοί) referred to Pythagoras' pupils being required to listen to him from behind a screen, in order better to concentrate. In French the term was first used by composer Pierre Schaffer in the 1960s to refer to the disorienting experience of listening to *musique concrète*, and then by composer Michel Chion to refer to offscreen sound in cinema. See Kane 2014 and Pettman 2017.

point in the libretto, between the intimacy and obsessive focalization on hearing and listening and the multifarious soundscape of the libretto's end could not be more striking—as if pointing at acousmatic and sonic spaces asking to be heard and listened to.

<center>***</center>

> E tu: – Formidabile. Il teatro, il luogo dell'ascolto, potrebbe rappresentare attivamente l'atto di ascoltare, contenere l'ascolto in tutte le sue forme…
> [Io] – "L'udito sembra essenzialmente connesso – io sto continuando a leggere Barthes – alla valutazione spazio-temporale... Dal punto di vista antropologico l'ascolto è il senso stesso dello spazio e del tempo colto attraverso i gradi di lontananza, e i ritmi... l'appropriazione dello spazio è sonora."
> (Italo Calvino 1995b, 136)

In the quote above, we witness Calvino's focus on the auditory expansion (and contraction) of space (and time) through different rhythms and distances. The relationality between space and sound is key for Calvino, and theater is the place to perform the act of listening, with its potential to represent listening's multifarious forms.

I will now hone in on the musical action of and around Berio's *Un re in ascolto*, directing attention to the expansion of women's voices through a portion of the "Audizioni" as well as an aria for Prospero's universe, a dreamed theater and "ear-theater" that musicologist Massimo Mila defines as a "centro cosmico" (1995, 109). While relying on existing musicological scholarship that has demonstrated how musical processes are *in primis* responsible for the narrativity of the opera *Un re in ascolto*, my focus in this part is on the specific spatial dimensionality that takes shape among words, music, and voice in *Un re in ascolto*.[4] To begin, let us briefly consider how traditional opera and musical action differed for Berio.

In a conversation published in 1986, Berio explains in simple terms to Umberto Eco how, in his musical poetics, a musical action (*azione musicale*) detaches itself from the classical construction of the opera (*opera lirica*), transforming the very consistency of the genre: "io non credo alla fabbricazione oggi di opere liriche, di storie da raccontare cantando [...] Fra un'azione musicale e un'opera lirica ci sono delle differenze sostanziali. L'opera lirica è sorretta da un tipo di narrativa 'aristotelica,' che tende a essere prioritaria sullo sviluppo musicale. In un'azione musicale è invece il processo musicale che tiene il timone della 'storia'" (Berio and Eco 1995, 54). For Berio, collaborating with writers like Calvino allows the text and music's autonomy to emerge. Specifically, for *Un re in ascolto*: "l'idea (l'ascolto) era di Italo ma il testo è solo in parte suo. Il perché è presto detto. Non riuscivo a metter mano a un testo che a parer mio echeggiava ancora— sia pure ironicamente—il libretto tradizionale, e che tutto sommato, non sviluppava qualcosa di rappresentabile" (56–57). Berio would not use the first libretto as such. Nevertheless, his selection of the verb "echeggiare" accompanied by "ironicamente" seems to be in tune with what I hint at in my introduction: in the original libretto, there are structural resonances within the storyline that point toward listening to, resounding, and repeating a voice, a word, a sentence, a sound. Calvino introduced this sonically-oriented structure alongside a dual-level fable: that of listening and that of a king.

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[4] For the crucial role of space in Berio's theatrical productions, see Ferrari 2012.

As documented in the Meridiani Mondadori edition, in 1980 Calvino drafted an outline for a new proposal for the libretto of *Un re in ascolto*, called by the editors "Per *Un re in ascolto di Berio*: Trattamento 1980" (Calvino 1994b, 755–57), and wrote five arias ("Arie di Prospero," as well as the chorus "Coro dei congiurati") (Calvino 1994b, 757–61). What I want to highlight about this proposal is the spatial pluri-dimensionality that the scaffolding-like outline sustains, an "echeggiare" that, I would suggest, even if it is less marked, is already present in the first libretto. From the "Trattamento 1980" to the musical action, the stage acquires a complex dimensionality, which, unsurprisingly, Berio refers expressly to as *Traumtheater*—dream theatre (2013c, 271). Calvino substituted a more complex and markedly multi-layered spatiotemporal situation in lieu of the expected fable, which he achieved by scaffolding three acts that unfold on three levels: level A, which happens in the mind of an opera director; level B, in which an opera unfolds on the stage; and level C, in which several different events occur as if behind the stage. As the Meridiani curators highlight, level B retrieves the storyline elaborated in the libretto. In this multidimensional structure, one can foresee the potential for musical action to take place on the stage through mobile scenarios, bringing to mind the use of multi-screen projections akin to expanded cinematic practices that have become more widespread in recent decades. Hence, aiming to lend my ear to the sonic specificity of the Berio-Calvino collaboration, in this part, I seek to find out if or how such mobile expansive scenarios can indeed be "constructed" through sound and voice.

For Berio, listening "implica un numero infinito di correlazioni e di interpretazioni, sia che si tratti dei suoni e dei rumori della natura, sia del lavoro, della musica e del dialogo. L'ascolto come sintomo, come selezione e come collocazione di suoni nello spazio, nel tempo e nella nostra coscienza, implica sempre e comunque un universo di codici diversi che interagiscono in un gioco di specchi" (Berio 213c, 270). Approaching listening through this nonspecialist perspective, Berio sees this ordinary complexity mirrored in Barthes' and Havas' intersubjective relation between "I am listening" and "listen to me." Thus, for Berio, "Ascolto" was not "dramatizable," although, with his "attrazione sorniona per il linguaggio dei libretti d'opera [...] [Calvino] si lanciò comunque nella disperata impresa di generare nessi narrativi" (270). Certainly, the duality of the first libretto, moving in a fluid zone between a narrated storyline and listening scenarios, makes it even more amenable to being sifted through and transformed by the musical process. Hence, such fluid, expanding zones conflict with Berio's later characterization of the Italian writer who "non riusciva a pacificarsi che un testo letterario assimilato a un processo musicale di una certa complessità diventasse *un'altra cosa*" (271). For Berio, such a duality indeed resides in the spatial dimensionality that expands and morphs throughout their collaboration. In the interview, Berio himself explains succinctly how a text mutates when transformed by music, when it is bound or constrained by musical processes.

As Berio contends, to break apart traditional nineteenth-century opera and give a "lungo addio" to it, individual characters in the musical action are transformed into situation-processes, and the libretto is an assemblage of cut-ups "frasi frantumate e rimescolate" (Calvino 1994a, 1292) from what Calvino wrote, immersed into a fractured *Tempest*—notably one of Shakespeare's most musical plays (Mila 1995)—mixed up with splinters of a condensed *Singspiel* version of the play written by the German poet Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter's *Die Geisterinsel* (1791), as well as excerpts from W. H. Auden's "*The Sea and the Mirror": a Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest*, and, finally, some dialogic moments that mimic Berio and Calvino in the midst of (or perhaps having ended) their collaboration.

These few intertextual cues result in a resonance that offers room for maneuvering into mutable instances of the "original" theatrical play. Different genres of writing circulate in a

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postmodern mood around the musical action, a mobile coalescence of words and music, which we might begin to unpack through a dialogue signed by Berio, written alongside *Un re in ascolto*, but not directly incorporated into it. The "Dialogo tra me e te" is between two anonymous voices (a You and an I), and the boundary between a split-self and two individuals becomes blurred. From the dialogue we learn about the disjunctive ways in which stage, text, and music relate—rather than simply only uniting—and it gives us a sense of how separated entities are made more or less predominant through the dramatic–musical situations (Berio 1997).

In terms of the scaffolding of musical action, Berio's libretto changes Calvino's *Trattamento* into two acts: in the first, an isolated and solipsistic Prospero searches in his mind and on the stage for *another theater*; in the second act, Prospero dies. In comparison with the first libretto, instead of a king and a prisoner, we are presented with a fainting Prospero and a hazy director; instead of Arminia, we are offered Soprano 1, Mezzosoprano, and Soprano 2 (and last a Protagonista), who each perform three different "Audizioni" that extend along the musical action. But there are also further characters: Friday (not even a Caliban), a mime (not a loyal deft sidekick), and rather than a crowd, several clown-like performers who rehash a theatrical piece, as well as music theater professionals (from a pianist to a tailor). Of the fable-like palace of the first libretto remain only contemporary shadows of a splintered theatrical house (housing therefore a metatheatrical end-of-life dimension), and the multidimensionality of the *Trattamento* slowly merges into one stage. In composing the musical action, Berio thus deployed specific relations elaborated also according to a musical logic—what he calls "reasons" that resonate within the musical realm: "c'erano comunque delle ragioni musicali sulle quali avevo fondato un codice rappresentativo ed espressivo al quale dovevo attenermi perché era già inscritto, come una sinopia, nell''affresco musicale.' Mi premeva definire ed articolare diversi caratteri musicali strutturalmente paralleli e, spesso, non comunicanti fra loro" (Berio and Eco 1995, 57). I understand these reasons as producing a polyphony that subtends a spatially differential dimensionality.

The *Trattamento*'s three spatio-temporal dimensions translate into a musical score that parallels Barthes' and Havas' three types of listening, while also affirming Berio's coexisting three forms of musical behavior. Berio specifies that the second form, the "Audizioni," have a real "sviluppo musicale durante il quale gli elementi si trasformano generandone di nuovi [...] La prima è circolare e quasi immobile [...] Una terza forma infine è data dagli eventi apparentemente casuali e anomali" (57). According to musicologist and composer Laura Cosso, the score "moves on three levels of musical perception," developing what she calls a multiplication of the levels of ambiguity. Cosso explains that the "Audizioni" invite an analytic listening, "focalizzato sui procedimenti di elaborazione musicale, sui processi di transformazione che coinvolgono cellule ritmico-melodiche ben evidenziate" (Cosso 1995, 121).

In comparison with Calvino's first libretto, the "Audizioni" assume an intense yet extended vocal role in which it is no longer a matter of finding the unique voice already heard. Indeed, it is only in his very last words that Prospero refers to a specific voice (a voice hidden among other voices or perhaps only dreamed of). Besides pertaining to the rehearsal level, then, to what do these "Audizioni" point and in which way? Each time they appear, they have a disruptive force that demands interrogation. Indeed, several musicologists and critics have claimed that *Un re in ascolto* was an experiment that aimed to musically deconstruct opera from within. For Danielle Cohen-Levinas, Berio structured "the form of the opera around a series of auditions" (2013, 276; my translation). What I want to emphasize about these "Audizioni" is twofold: first, because the "Audizioni" happen within the rehearsal dimension, they assume a particular theatrical "reason," a performative movement between reason and resonance. The "Audizioni's" words are fragments

from Auden's text; in his original, Auden aimed to give to the Shakespearean characters the ability to express their singularity and autonomy beyond a totalizing, universal resolution. Hence, in *Un re in ascolto*, these characters contain another double twist: if they are ciphers—and thus not even characters anymore (as they have just operatic voice ranges as names)—they nevertheless all embody women's voices, and a polyphony of them. Therefore, my second point is that, by giving ample and recurring space to the "Audizioni," *Un re in ascolto* introduces in the palimpsestic layering of an ancient operatic past a new powerful position: the dimension of women's voices reclaiming their autonomy, resisting a reduction to being a "proiezione dell'universo interiore di Prospero" (Cosso 1995, 123). Through these rebellious voices, *Un re in ascolto* echoes its contemporaneity. It echoes feminist movements of its time, not only in experimental theater but also in the streets—a feminist revolt against the patriarchal silencing that was at once global and also specifically Italian. Hence, the disembodied and anonymous nature of these voices remains, asking us whether, and up to what point such a proposal is radical and affirmative as feminist in 1970s terms.

For the first "Audizione," Soprano I enters the stage as a rehearsal has just ended; she appears on the scene with a disruptive potential. Yet, ambiguity resides in her performance: is her voice addressing Prospero or just performing the "Audizione" (quoting fragments—as all "Audizioni" do—from Auden)? Or both? For Brady, the ambiguity of the performance suggests that one must listen via the filter of a prism "through which the voice is diffracted into its multivalent possibilities, inhabiting each fully, depending on the listening perspective of the 'receiver'" (Brady 2017, 140).

Il tutto di te è parziale, Prospero,
il tuo bisogno d'amare
non s'incontrerà
mai con me.
Io sono io
Per scelta, adesso
Son solo me stessa.
La mia lingua tace
il mio linguaggio è mio.
Addio.

(Berio and Calvino 1983, 12)

In this musical action, it is clear that Prospero and the director do not seem to be paying attention. The brisk ending with "Farewell" is echoed by the director with a frank tone and by Prospero with a professorial, pedantic, and patriarchal tone. As if requesting correction, Soprano I echoes back again. With the second audition by a mezzo-soprano shorter than the first, the possessive adjective ("my tongue," "my language") returns, but as a contrasting address to Prospero; immersed in a pelagic dreamscape, as in Auden, the recurrent "mine" is referred to as a compass that permits one to navigate.

In the second act, as everyone circulates around the dying Prospero, Soprano I erupts with two short vocal incursions during the extremely long Concertato. Soprano I sings "Io non so chi canta e chi ascolta" (40), as if echoing a fainting king from Calvino's first libretto. This is ambiguous: are we moving toward Barthes' and Havas' third type of listening or toward the end

of opera? A short time after she repeats these words, adding "forse è già venuta la fine…" (42), a reiteration that occurs at one of the rare moments when spatial stage directions are given in the libretto: the moment when the separation between the stage and Prospero's room gradually disappears.

During a third Audizione toward the end of the opera, Soprano II briefly takes the stage, and now her consciousness is her own. Hence, Prospero never exchanges words with the characters performing the "Audizioni," not even when Protagonista arrives very late on the stage embodying "so many contradictory roles. She is both Prospero's fantastic creation and an agent sent to dispel his illusion" (Schwartz 2003). Addressing Prospero, Protagonista insists on claiming that her "*persona*"—i.e. her will, her compass, her voice, her theater, her chant—belongs to her. Her words to Prospero end up relating extreme depth and music: "il tuo canto è in fondo al mare, più in fondo di quanto sia mai sceso lo scandaglio" (Berio and Calvino 1983, 54). Besides, Protagonista says, what more can be stated about Prospero's musical space and reach? What more can we understand about Prospero's universe wherein these generic opera characters reclaim their autonomy?

Prospero's arias open and close the musical action, presenting us with a character who occupies an imaginary quasi-mental island—an island to which we do not have any solid reference, as we did for the King's palace, and he searches for another theater. Moreover, as the storyline progresses, the director dissolves, leaving Prospero in total solitude. In the interview with Eco, Berio says that Calvino's five arias—each one a kind of *monodramma*—describe Prospero's interiority, and are inscribed with a circular, almost immobile, form of musical behavior: Prospero sings the same melodic modules time and again. And in "Dialogo tra me e te," Berio notes: "chi si sente smarrito può sempre aggrapparsi a Prospero, alla sua linearità, può seguire solo lui e 'morire' con lui senza guardarsi intorno" (1997, 6). But do his words suggest immobility or mobility? Do they expand or contract, suggesting alternate configurations of words, scene, and music?

Whereas only in the final moments of Calvino's first libretto the audience was immersed into what seemed to be a dream, interrupted suddenly by an ordinary sunrise, a dream-like atmosphere pervades this entire work. Prospero has dreamed of another theater—*un altro teatro*—and he does not remember the dream as it has left in him "quel vuoto da cui vengono i suoni e che ora tace" (Berio and Calvino 1983, 2). The oxymoronic architectures have dissolved: there is no palace, no signs of spies and spying, and one can imagine that the set has become an emptied-out papier-mâché island flowing between Prospero's mind and the backstage. It is only with the second aria that the ear is mentioned and indeed thematized; herein, Prospero claims to be at a point where the sounds "s'irradiano per raggiungere […] il grande porto del teatro orecchio" (26), searching for something that only in Calvino's version of the second aria "risuona nello spazio" (Calvino 1994b, 759). But as Prospero listens to the "orecchio teatro" (Berio and Calvino 1983, 26) where the sounds return, the sounds that his ear gathers are generated through the process of listening. Placed in this extremely fluid and aerial realm marked by a resounding expansion in space, Prospero's ear is indeed a "cosmic center," and Prospero's parts are the ones that privilege the first level of musical perception—a global listening, one operating among ample layers alluding to an expanded temporality (Cosso 1995, 123–24).

In the final moments of the last of his arias, Prospero sings about a voice hidden among the voices in the silence. He knows the voice is somewhere "nel profondo, nel fondale di tela, nel giardino di notte, nel bosco, nel lago, nel riflesso dell'acqua" (Berio and Calvino 1983, 56). It is as if the voice has expanded and cannot be localized, out of reach of a global listening. It is perhaps a soundscape beyond the human, or perhaps in different places at once. While articulating

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oxymoronic associations (such as the illuminated darkness), Prospero dies while vocalizing a promise: "il buio nella voce il ricordo in penombra un ricordo al futuro" (ibid.). That is how the musical action *Un re in ascolto* ends. The contrast between the long night and the short sunrise of Calvino's first libretto that brings with it a final scene tinted with ordinary sounds and visions has not been retained in the musical action in the same way, and the earthly soundscape is final and abysmal. Yet, even if differentiated musically, earthly soundscapes and atmospheres expand across the stage.

In imitation of Calvino's and Berio's divergent yet collaborative project, I would like to step outside this stage with a leap toward what Berio affirms in relation to the theatrical staging of music: it is "un luogo che si può anche ignorare ma che si potrebbe tentare di trasformare dall'interno, con criteri organici e costruttivi, così come si trasformano i palazzi, i musei, e le officine. Sono fermamente convinto che saranno ragioni musicali e non spettacolari a determinare una prima trasformazione di quello spazio 'lirico'" (Berio and Eco 1995, 55). Berio thus elucidates his position that transformations of operatic space (*spazio lirico*) do not happen because of transformations or changes of the places for it, or simply through different architectures, but because of a potential for reimagining theatrical spaces by designing them through music, through musical reasons, and through resonances—the very trait that Calvino too captured, suggested, and echoed in his first libretto.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

> *Un re in ascolto* era originariamente un mio racconto; dopo la *première* dell'opera ho pubblicato questo racconto sulla "Repubblica". Quel personaggio è tutto concentrato nell'udito e forse c'è un rapporto con Palomar, in questo ritorno a un primato della percezione. Il re in ascolto è uno che ricostruisce tutto il mondo attraverso i suoni, i suoni per quello che significano per lui. Ma alla fine riesce a identificarsi in un mondo in cui i suoni esistono indipendentemente da lui in cui la sua voce è come la voce di un altro, fa parte del mondo. Il punto di arrivo è una specie di fusione panica con il mondo e con gli altri. (Calvino 2002, 616)

In order to continue to dig among resonances and expanding connections and consider alternate paths that sprang from the collaboration, I will now further explore Berio's approach to staging music in his *Un ricordo al futuro* and how it may intersect with Calvino's musicality. This allows me to finally plunge into the singular setting of the short story "Un re in ascolto" to highlight how it moves toward alternative auditory paths that reverberate with flashes and fragments of how the coming auditory soundscape was being reshaped. A rapid fugitive incursion into Berio's later experimentation with live electronics will connect me back to the first version of the libretto Calvino wrote.

Touching upon some lines from Berio's lectures, *Un ricordo al futuro*, I seek to detect moments when Berio's musical poetics merge with Calvino's. While the title of the Norton lectures delivered at Harvard in 1993–1994 derives from Prospero's last words of the musical action from *Un re in ascolto*— "un ricordo al futuro"—it is puzzling that Berio says nothing about the musical action as such; the composer's only remark is that his lectures' title derives from Calvino's words. Is this a resonant, percussive homage to Calvino offered here precisely because it is almost silent? Or is it one that the composer imports from Calvino's words because it effectively traverses his own musical trajectory over the years? These two possibilities coexist in my reading.

While these lectures move across the composer's singular musical life, they are obviously not a hefty summa or theory—Berio is not aiming to offer "una visione unitaria del fare e del pensare musicale" (Berio 2006, 5). Nevertheless, he intends to share musical experiences that question us and invite us "a una costruttiva revisione o, addirittura, a una sospensione del nostro rapporto col passato e a una riscoperta sulle tracce di percorsi futuri" (5). To give coherence to such a double-edge general consideration, the composer adds that this is not an invitation to "silenzio dei sensi o a collocare l'esperienza musicale in un fuggevole gioco di specchi ermeneutici" (5). From the start, the lectures tackle an active tension inherent to the use of words in the discussion of music.

In searching for another of the rare references to Calvino, one may find an allusion that resounds with the opening remark of the composer's first lecture concerning the split between mirrors and experience. The connection is in a lecture—intriguingly called "Vedere la musica"— in which Berio elaborates on the relation between seeing and hearing in opera and offers the example of the musical action *La vera storia* (whose libretto was also written by Calvino, before *Un re*). Dwelling on the feasibility of still staging musical theater and its "countless difficulties" that can turn it into a "crumbling stage," Berio recalls Bertolt Brecht's epic theater and the "kind of critical rationalism" he imposed on the stage. From the German critic, Berio takes up the point that works for the theater, with or without music, "devono mantenere viva la tendenza a uscire da se stessi, a parlare con un 'fuori'" (2006, 86–87). Berio's answer to this quest is exemplified in *La vera storia,* for which he felt "a tratti idealmente vicino a Brecht ma soprattutto a Italo Calvino, autore del testo" (879). For the argument I am making here, it will suffice to add that one of the main kernels of *La vera storia* is that "la Prima e la Seconda Parte de *La vera storia* espongono e sviluppano in maniera diversa due face dello stesso discorso" (88). Berio suggests that instead of deciding where the true story *lies*—an English verb which, in its homonymic dual usage means both laying down and telling a fib, will become friendly to my interpretation—there is a third part, "forse piú vera e forse simile a quelle città invisibili e a quei giardini di Calvino che affacciano le loro terrazze 'solo sul lago della nostra mente'" (89). Most likely, Berio has in mind here the city of Valdrada from *Invisible Cities.* My reading proposes the possibility that Berio shares with Calvino the tension produced between imagination and experience in *Invisible Cities*' prose poems. My hypothesis is corroborated when, a few lines later, Berio concludes with the hope about the possibility of a future for the musical theater that "con o senza palcoscenico, con o senza storie, può continuare a essere, anche oggi – ed è la mia speranza – una terrazza sul mondo" (89).

Berio's lectures let his reflections about experience, words, space, instrumental, electronic and vocal music and listening circulate, merge, and intertwine. In addition, there is an encompassing yet light—to use a Calvinian term from *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (1988)—attention to the potentiality of integrating instrumental and electronic music, announcing alternative ways of imagining and perceiving space and listening on the stage. Berio states:

> Esecutori che interagiscono con suoni preregistrati (comunque prodotti e gestiti dalle macchine) e la spazializzazione del suono, sono modi convenzionali, pur sempre aperti a nuovi sviluppi, di abitare e drammatizzare lo spazio, di suscitare un dialogo fra quello che si ascolta e quello che si vede o si potrebbe o si vorrebbe vedere, dal momento che nell'ascolto di qualsiasi suono intenzionalmente musicale è insopprimibile la tendenza a cercare collegamenti con un'azione umana. (2006, 91)

Drawing a transhistorical line (a "un ricordo al futuro") from Monteverdi's *Orpheus* to his own *Circles* (composed at the time he was starting to explore the "territorio del teatro musicale"), Berio revisits ways of inhabiting the space of the stage—"teatro per le orecchie" (92). *Circles,* based on e. e. cummings' poems, features three female voices, a harp, and two percussionists. Berio highlights not only how the harp and the percussions "espandono dunque musicalmente e acusticamente i tre poemi di e. e. cummings" (92), but also that "la partitura stessa diventa un'entità polivalente evocata, realizzata e tradotta in comportamenti visualmente e musicalmente diversificati" (93). Berio ends this lecture by affirming that musical theater produces thought "se va oltre [*expands*] le tavole del suo palcoscenico." And he goes on, "non lo fa con un prolungamento virtuale e piscologico della scenografia ma col pensiero. Non propone miracoli; impone invece un lavoro lucido, appassionante e tendenzialmente aperto" (94).

This insistence on potential meanings of the experience of listening certainly compares to Calvino's declared intentions in writing the short stories of the five senses, of which "Un re in ascolto" is part. But before plunging into the short story, let's pause on the musicality of Calvino according to Berio. In the short piece "La musicalità di Calvino," Berio explains what caused a "final missed convergence" in their collaboration. Although they shared research interests, they investigated them from different premises and directions. Calvino loved songs in general, but he was then diffident towards vocal music whose "diversi livelli di realtà del testo e della musica sono certamente più ricchi e complessi e la loro compenetrazione piú varia, organica e addirittura inestricabile. Testo e musica perdono la propria autonomia per riunirsi in una dimensione significativa di grande spessore espressivo" (Berio 2013b, 329). Calvino's non-musicality results in his resistance to the interpenetration of different musical levels, not simply because he does not know music; yet to Berio, Calvino's musicality is immensely marked and marking. His prose—and here we get a clear link between music and architecture in Calvino's writing—is among one of the

> più musicali nella letteratura di questo secolo, anche in virtù di quella moltitudine, di quella polifonia di livelli espressivi che lui aveva difficoltà a percepire nell'esperienza musicale. Il suo percorso creativo, con la mobilità di tutti i suoi livelli di realtà, è infatti idealmente paragonabile a una architettura musicale: come una costruzione di frammenti interamente partecipi di un processo musicale in continua trasformazione. (330)

Commenting on Calvino's fiction as if listening to music, Berio compares his labyrinthic narrative trajectory, his poetic and conceptual universe to sublimations of musical forms: *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* has "ellissi debussiane" and *Palomar* has "rapporti ternari bachiani delle Variazioni Goldberg" (330).

If Berio hints at their divergences, he has also composed such a "missed convergence" into the words and music of *Un re in ascolto* through the dialogues featuring the writer-composer exchanges—Duetto II and Duetto III—in which, though blurred and resonating, the delimitation between an "I" and a "you" do still exist.[5] The first notable divergence between the short story and the opera is that in Calvino there is no sign of the dialogic (even if blurred and expanded)

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[5] I have already referenced the letters written by Calvino to the "Dialogue between you and me;" in the musical action, there are two Duettos: Duetto II is sung by Director and Prospero and as an echoing parody of this one in Duetto III sung by Friday and Mime. "Duo (Imaginary Theater)" is a preparatory study for the musical action, it was primed in 1982 and was transmitted by Rai Radio, winning the First Prize of the XXXIV Premio Italia.

"confusion" between the writer and the composer. And certainly, without the dialogue, we miss the "dynamic element of the libretto" (Ritrovato 2007, 122): there is no "I" and only a voice that, addressing a totally silent King—a "you" perhaps—as if translating into words not only what he hears in the present, but also echoes or dim memories. This uncanny voice does not seem to come from a veritable human; not a narrative voice or a voiceover, it seems like the internal voice of the King, split from his body.

What remains in the short story is the isolated King in his palace; the potentially transformative effect of the woman's voice has faded, becoming minimal. No trace remains of the polyphony of voices reclaiming autonomy as in the musical action, and the revolt in the city and the prisoner return—now indeed imagined as a plurality of prisoners in the underground. But the fable-like tone and the dialogic rhythm of the first libretto are gone, as well as the complexity of levels that was announced with the *Trattamento*. Echo is no longer there to define the space, and indeed, any aural sense of spatiality or expanse seems to have been curtailed; the iconic robust postmodern ear of the first libretto so enlarged to become a palace, although not completely dematerialized, does not showcase its substantial presence from the start.

Espionage takes a vital role at the point that the short story becomes, for Peter Szendy, more than a direct object of study, but one of the main secret agents of his ingenious interpretation of the interpenetration of listening and espionage. In the opening pages of *All Ears: The Aesthetics of Espionage*, Szendy asks if listening is, first of all, a question of spies and espionage: "Wouldn't there be, then, from the very beginning, a basic structural affinity between listening and espionage? And if, going beyond mere topicality, every listener is perhaps primarily and above all a spy, isn't it in this immemorial collusion that we should search for the powers of listening both resisting and siding with power?" (2016, 27). This is not the only occurrence in which, more or less explicitly, the collaboration between Berio and Calvino resounds in Szendy's texts. He too is captured by the expanded fairytale to which Berio and Calvino have given form, relating the collaboration to a vaster history—one that follows in the footsteps of Monteverdi's *Orpheus*. Calvino's short story defines what Szendy calls an *echotectonics*: an architecture of echoes whose function is auditory surveillance. Borrowing the term from Athanasius Kircher's *Musurgia Universalis*, Szendy places it within a long history of espionage wherein Jeremy Bentham's panopticon results in a *panacoustic* apparatus. Following Szendy, Sander Van Maas has drawn our attention to the short story's allegorical account of aural sovereignty that portrays a solipsistic act of listening (2018).

From the access points to the short story that Szendy and Van Mass have provided, I follow a path of further interpretation, and one that is somewhat more Calvino-centric. To do so, I propose that we take a detour to glance at the significant comparatist Italian context in which Calvino was ensconced and perhaps also responding to. This context leads us back to the friction Calvino's fiction produced between reason and resonance, experience and thought; to my knowledge, the scholarship has not considered such a context in comparison to all that has been studied concerning Barthes.

On the cusp of the '70s, Italian philosopher Aldo Giorgio Gargani introduced his influential collection of essays *Crisi della ragione* (1979) that evinces "l'impraticabilità di un modello di razionalità dal momento in cui esso risulta insufficiente a coprire nuovi territori della conoscenza o mostra di essere divenuto un repertorio di immagini fittizie o ornamentali rispetto agli effettivi meccanismi di costruzione del nostro sapere e rispetto alle energie sociali e intellettuali che non hanno ancora trovato il terreno della propria codificazione" (5). For Gargani, the crisis of rationality, more than being the "dominant discursive figure," "resounds" in a collection in which each of the essays moves beyond the classical rationality and inert cultural practices toward

"problemi in movimento, al di là di un ordine precostituito" (49). The book includes the essay "Spie, radici di un paradigma indiziario" by cultural historian Carlo Ginzburg who presents an epistemological paradigm different from quantifiable and generalizing science. In his review of Ginzburg's essay published in *la Repubblica*, Calvino – who highlights that the essay is part of the volume *Crisi della ragione* is particularly captivated by Ginzburg's argument demonstrating how a practical and attentive way of cataloging that seeks to capture unicity is transformed into a method—a method that then tends to pervert itself into a capillary social control. The roots of the conjectural model (*sapere indiziario*)—because concrete and transmissible through practical and concrete experience—distance themselves from a rational paradigm; hence, one of the elements that Calvino underlines is that an aberration [*pervertimento*] occurs for which this model "fa presto a diventare 'poliziesco' non solo nei romanzi di Conan Doyle, che lo spiare tracce di verità nascosta fa presto a diventare controllo spionistico" (Calvino 1995a, 2036). Calvino's penchant for the moments when a critical stance infringes and merges with poetical imagination comes across in the review, in particular when he relates the conjectural model to the image, not of one ear but of collections of different ears from the anatomical tables by Giovanni Morelli drawn to recognize great painters' styles (and that galvanized a young Sigmund Freud), to the tables arranged by criminal anthropologist Alphonse Bertillon.

Calvino's specific attention to the study of the ear's unicity in reviewing Ginzburg's essay pushes me to ask: why does Calvino not imagine an alternate story for "Un re in ascolto" in which, similar to *Invisible Cities*, we have a multiplicity of ears? A fiction in which variations in ways of hearing and listening to music and, more broadly, sounds—variations springing from interspersion of the morphological as much as the psychic levels—intertwine so as to give us what Calvino calls a "galassia di orecchie" (Calvino 1995a, 2031) instead of just one solipsistic variation? What is clear is that he ended up signing not a big opera, but a short story and only one. Following the hypothesis formulated by Calvino himself, one might imagine a short story in which "un uomo incontra per la strada una donna con la quale non riesce a parlare perché si è messa agli orecchi una cuffia di 'walk-man'" (Calvino 1994a, 1294). What kind of opera, or musical composition could this have been?

The Walkman, commercialized precisely in 1979, was becoming a new way of experiencing private and collective spaces: had Calvino seen or tried one of them? Or had he read newspaper tribunes demonizing the new gadget, such as the peculiar piece "Prosthesis" by Michel Guyard, which appeared in the newspaper *Le Monde* in 1980, professing that the person wearing Walkman headphones manifests the desire "of hearing only one voice: the one in the tape, to the exclusion to any other […] The Walkman inspires a little pity: what kind of unhappiness must one suffer to feel such a need for isolation, not in silence—which would be a way of finding oneself—but by furnishing this solitude with a reassuring noise, even a deafening music!" (Guyard 1980). This novel stage of sound reproducibility reframed interspersions of bodily perceptions and implemented alternate synergies between outside and inside, private and public, creating a spectrum spanning from soundscape to echo-chamber, soliciting ordinary and avant-garde practices, spaces, and temporalities. These questions have been addressed in the field of sound studies from Shuhei Hosokawa's "The Walkman Effect" (1984) to Michael Bull's *Sound Moves: iPod Culture and Urban Experience* (2007) and Jonathan Sterne's *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (2012); and certainly, these questions have also permeated the musical field as well as the literary field, expanding or altering their internal boundaries.

Of course, there is no mention of a Walkman or its proxies in the short story "Un re in ascolto," but I would say only apparently. No space is imagined to be staged: everything indeed seems

crammed around the isolated King, and an anonymous but apparently omniscient voice reminds him of his own constrained bodily sensations, mental impressions and processes, and memories in precise details. All is set so that the King is totally immobile: "Insomma, tutto è stato predisposto per evitarti qualsiasi spostamento. Non avresti nulla da guadagnare, a muoverti, e tutto da perdere. Se t'alzi, se t'allontani anche di pochi passi, se perdi di vista il trono anche per un attimo, chi ti garantisce che quando torni non ci trovi qualcun altro seduto sopra? Magari uno che ti somiglia, uguale identico." His obsessive will to hear defines the days by the succession of the sounds— "atrii, gradinate, logge, corridoi del palazzo hanno soffitti alti, a volta" where sounds "echeggiano, rimbombano, si propagano" (Calvino 1994d, 152). Thus the "palace-ear" with its Baroque architecture returns. But the staging assumes another mode of fictionalizing, almost immaterial in comparison with the first libretto. Espionage returns and sovereignty now merges anachronistically with extreme contemporary means of control: electronic machines and screens continuously produce new data and capillary control:

> Uno stuolo d'operatori immette nelle memorie nuovi dati, sorveglia complicate tabulazioni sul video, estrae dalle stampatrici nuovi rapporti che forse sono sempre lo stesso rapporto ripetuto ogni giorno con minime varianti riguardanti la pioggia o il bel tempo. Con minime varianti le stesse stampatrici sfornano le circolari segrete dei congiurati, gli ordini di servizio degli ammutinamenti, i piani dettagliati della tua deposizione e messa a morte. (Calvino 1994d, 154)

The restless data's control parallels the incessant voice—which, I would argue, is a *ricordo al futuro*—which appears as if plugged into the King's mind like a voice from a voice assistant or an immersive audio game, or perhaps an acoustic hologram, listened to through headphones, or even one of the apps available these days that offer personal mental health care and motivation. It is, in any case, not a friendly voice, to say the least.

The interspersions of mind, bodily sensations, and the outside transform their delimiting boundaries. Expansions and contractions give rhythm to the sonorous construction: "Il palazzo è una costruzione sonora che ora si dilata ora si contrae, si stringe come un groviglio di catene. Puoi percorrerlo guidato dagli echi, localizzando scricchiolii, stridori, imprecazioni, inseguendo respiri, fruscii, borbottii, gorgogli. Il palazzo è il corpo del re. Il tuo corpo ti manda messaggi misteriosi, che tu accogli con timore, con ansia" (156).

With pressing encouragement—in the end, proving to be ineffective—the voice suggests that the King circulate outside: "Non fissarti sui rumori del palazzo, se non vuoi restarci chiuso dentro come una trappola. *Esci! scappa! spazia!* Fuori del palazzo s'estende la città, la capitale del regno, del tuo regno!" (162, my emphasis). The city expands outside "screziata strepitante dalle mille voci!" (162). To mimic Calvino's novel written in these years: what if, on one winter's night, a King had stepped out into the mobile *poet-i-city*? Into a cityscape that, with an avant-garde surreal tone, "moves," vibrates with its multiple and jammed sources of sounds "un brusio di voci," "un ronzio di ruote," where "i dischi ruotano nei grammofoni, la puntina gratta un vecchio disco, la musica va e viene, a strappi, oscilla, giù nel solco rombante delle vie, o sale alta col vento che fa girare le ventole dei camini. La città è una ruota che ha per perno il luogo in cui tu stai immobile, ascoltando" (ibid.). Such a potentiality remains inactive in the short story, unheard, if you like; instead, the voice suggests a sense of doubt: "Ora ti domandi cosa voleva dire per te ascoltare una musica per il solo piacere d'entrare nel disegno delle note" (164), and it is at this point that a woman's voice is evoked, "sei tornato a sentire questo canto che ora ti arriva distintamente in ogni

nota e timbro e velatura, dalla città che era stata abbandonata da ogni musica" (162). But is he dreaming or actually hearing the voice?

Is Calvino reaching out to the extreme new vocality proposed by Cathie Berberian and Berio, a vocality that we see activated in Berio's musical action at the moment that Brady notes as the composition letting the singularity of the feminist vocal kaleidoscopic and reclamatory resonances emerge? Following this moment, the part that Adriana Cavarero—who, with her *A più voci*, made the short story well-known beyond the Italian literary context—comments upon begins by quoting the Calvino story: "[E]ppure, tu vuoi che sia proprio il tuo orecchio a percepire quella voce, dunque quel che t'attira non è solo un ricordo o una fantasticheria ma la vibrazione d'una gola di carne" (Cavarero 2003, 10; Calvino 1994d, 165). Cavarero contrasts the alive, corporeal unicity of this voice that distracts the King from surveillance as well as from any kind of courtesan and fake voices. Capturing the double-edged poeticity, Cavarero underlines how Calvino mines the misogynist stereotype of the seductive female and corporeal singing voice, which classically takes an inferior, or secondary position in relation to the spiritual realm. In addition, Cavarero suggests that "Un re in ascolto" opens a new unexpected horizon out of a woman's singing voice: the truth of the vocalic differs from the universal abstract one posited by reason. Moreover, Calvino fictionalized "una verità – del resto, assai familiare all'esperienza quotidiana del vivere – che afferma semplicemente l'unicità e la relazionalità degli essere umani" (Cavarero 2003 11). But to return to the short story's storyline, nothing is presently clear in the abysm of the King's mind: is there space for the voice of the other? For an outside? The King is convinced that the city is just an extension of himself and perhaps "la parte di te che si proietta nello spazio dei suoni ora corre per le vie tra le pattuglie del coprifuoco. La vita delle voci è stata un sogno, forse è durata solo pochi secondi" (Calvino 1994d, 167).

This acousmatic challenge reverberates in the last pages of "Un re in ascolto." As doubt becomes paramount for the King, "non c'è più un palazzo attorno a te […] Dove sei? Sei ancora vivo? Sei scappato agli attentatori [...]? [...] La notte è esplosa, rovesciata dentro se stessa" (Calvino 1994d,169–70). Even if more contained in comparison with Calvino's libretto version, the expansion of sounds in the landscape returns: "Lo spazio si dilata nel silenzio sonoro della notte, in cui gli eventi sono punti di fragore improvviso che s'accendono e si spengono: lo schianto d'un ramo che si spezza, lo squittio di un ghiro quando nella tana entra una serpe, due gatti in amore che s'azzuffano, una frana di sassi sotto il tuo passo di fuggiasco" (170). The prisoner (and double) returns too, although it does not seem plausible that the voice singing with the woman relates to the King: "Ora certamente lei l'ha raggiunto, senti le loro voci, le vostre voci, che si stanno allontanando insieme. È inutile che cerchi di seguirle: stanno diventando un sussurro, un bisbiglio, svaniscono. Se alzi gli occhi vedrai un chiarore." (173). The last words of the short story are almost identical to how the Calvino's first libretto ends, though Echo and then the King are not the ones who utter them as was the case in Calvino's first libretto, but rather the uncanny disembodied voice.

How can we interpret this tension, this extreme separation between the abysm of the King's ear and the outside? Can its indeterminacy be an invitation to a multiplicity of ways of expanding and contracting the sonorous space and not just a will to capillary control? Is the short story only marking a moment that lasted only a few instants (followed by all its resonances), the moment when someone or something was heard or dreamt (a noise, a sound, a note, a voice)? If so, it is an instant that diffracts, expanding and contracting. In this way, this space for indeterminacy results in a memory of the future prone to make room for ways of articulating the inside and the outside through singular and also non-binary *flaneurs.se*'s remapping of such expanding fields. The few

possibilities we can refer to include the now-classic Alvin Lucier's "I am sitting in my room," but also audio-literature, urban poetry and prose, audio walk, and audio urban intervention (for example, Case degli Artisti 2021 and Cardilli and Lombardi 2020), or other alternative singular interspersions of the aural-scape like the ones Naomi Waltham-Smith proposes with her book *Mapping (Post)colonial Paris by Ear* as well as with her experimental fieldwork (Waltham-Smith 2022, 29). Or, alternatively, the way composer Christopher Cerrone temporarily reinvests one of the spaces of modernity *par excellence:* the train station (in Los Angeles), where spectators walk along among musicians, conducted by wireless headphones, dancers, and singers listening to the opera adaptation of *Invisible Cities*… just to mention a few (Christopher Cerrone, n.d.).

In lieu of a conclusion, I want to direct attention once again to the instantiation of the expanding fields that I see as relating Berio and Calvino and their collaboration; this gives another reason and resonance for indicating Calvino's words and poetics in Berio's works for the construction of mutable sonorous architectures (and let's not forget that Berio compares Calvino's later fiction to "musical architecture"). Moreover, to capture correspondences between them, Berio's *Ricordo al futuro* is constellated by moments when the acoustic spaces are experimented with and thought of as mutating, if expressly constructed. It suffices to quote a few passages: the comparison between musical experience and a huge building constructed over the centuries cannot be known objectively as such, but "we might wonder through a few rooms, trying to grasp the content and function of each of them (the Art nova room, the Baroque room […]) Berio 2006, 2). But also examples given about performing spaces and spatializing sounds (115) or the "vocal-instrumental bilingualism" considered as an "intense dialogue" between the musical, the phonetic–acoustic and the spatial dimensions (118); and finally, the necessity for a composer to "construct a sound architecture" (128).

To follow up on these pivotal yet broad points that Berio makes in relation to composing and listening to music, there is something more specific that can be said about the works Berio wrote after *Un re in ascolto*: the musical actions *Ofanìm* (1988)*, Outis* (1995), and *Cronaca del luogo,* as well as *Altra voce*, a chamber composition for mezzo-soprano, alto flute, and live electronics (1999). These works all belong to a step in the composer's musical trajectory aptly defined by Francesco Giomi, Damiano Meacci, and Kilian Schwoon who posit that, for Berio, the possibilities offered by new technologies concerning the "physical movement of sound" are multiple. For example, "the trajectories followed by sound events through space, continuous modulation on harmonic and dynamic levels, and various types of proliferations of sound layers. But what truly interests Berio are not the situations in themselves, but rather the relationships that are established between such a physical-acoustic sound mobility and the effective mobility of the musical thought" (2003, 30). In tune with this commentary and with my argument, I want to rehearse precisely what Berio wrote about his musical poetics and thought at the crossroad of acoustic and electronic music in a text published for the presentation of *Ofanìm:*

> Oggi, un pensiero musicale capace di identificarsi con le nuove tecnologie, può adattarsi creativamente a qualsiasi spazio reale, musicalmente "legittimo" o no, e può esplorare spazi virtuali e crearne altri acusticamente illusori. L'immagine della musica come architettura sonora sta perdendo il suo *status* metaforico: diventa un fatto reale e quantificabile in tutti i suoi aspetti, come lo era una cattedrale, come lo è un ponte, un palazzo (o anche la loro riproduzione olografica). Ma si tratta, pur sempre, di una architettura elastica, capace cioè di adattarsi, a diverse situazioni ambientali. (1988, 3–4)

At this time, Berio was a key agent in the creation of *Tempo Reale,* a new research center in Florence devoted to live electronic music, as its first director from 1987 to 1990.[6] With his involvement since the 1950s in experimentation between instrumental music and its others, while not taken blindly by the digital, Berio recognized the possibilities it afforded to music.[7] To Berio, the computer was "un mezzo che permette al compositore di gestire l'insieme e l'interazione dei suoi strumenti (acustici e digitali), di penetrare con grandissima precisione nei processi acustico-musicali e di estendere le possibilità espressive degli strumenti e della voce" (Berio 2013a, 233). For the composer, new technologies and traditional instrumental and vocal means were complementary in the sense that extending their possibilities and expanding their "research horizons" meant exploring different territories; among these territories—and here a remark from Berio is extremely interesting to note—there is one "quasi una terra di nessuno—che merita di essere esplorato: riguarda l'ascolto" (233). New technologies have the potential to offer alternatives to "situazioni di ascolto collettivo più o meno standardizzate (sala di concerto, teatro, auditorio ecc.);" the center *Tempo Reale,* concludes Berio,

> è particolarmente impegnato nella definizione e nella realizzazione di spazi acustici flessibili, inediti e, per così dire, virtuali. Ma si propone anche di occupare musicalmente—cioè conquistare alla musica—spazi reali non concepiti originariamente per esecuzioni musicali: piazze, strade, chiostri, palazzi, vallate ecc. La spazializzazione del suono costituisce l'aspetto forse più nuovo e stimolante di questa ricerca. (234)

Therefore, the center *Tempo Reale* is aimed at imagining an expansion of the singular dimensionalities that music could assume and experiment with. This music is sonic architecture—an elastic one, though, suggests Berio.

Francesco Giomi—composer, sound projectionist, current director of *Tempo Reale*, and a former collaborator of Berio's—has devoted two extensive studies to sound spatialization in *Outis, Ofanìm,* and *Cronaca del luogo*. Out of an episode (interestingly enough called "The Field") of this last one, Berio wrote a chamber music composition, *Altra voce*, that "is an important example of how Berio operates through the spatialization on the degrees of affinity among different sonorities, extending even further those stratifications mechanisms that already operate within the vocal-instrumental writing" (Giomi 2016, 290).

In this composition, the connections between vocal, acoustic, and electronic music receive an additional spin, creating new bridges among them: what Giomi defines as mutable yet continual "fluid sonorous architecture" (2016, 87). But I must emphasize that the "altra voce" is also part of what I certainly have no intention of defining as the "original" libretto, "Per *Un re in ascolto* di Berio: libretto originale 1979" (1994c). Hence, to quote that libretto is to elicit a memory of the future: "La notte. Le voci. La notte è fatta di distanze che ora sembrano annullarsi ora s'espandono. A distanze immense una voce riconosce una voce, l'insegue, la perde. Ogni passante attraversa la

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[6] For a general fitting definition of what live electronic music meant for Berio see Francesco Giomi, "*Di voce e di vento*: il live electronics nel teatro musicale di Luciano Berio," *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio Vol II*, ed. Giordano Ferrari (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016), 269−70.

[7] In the format of a tribute more than a musicological study, and as an assemblage of well-selected "quotations taken from essays or interviews to cover the entire arc of Berio's production," Andrea Cremaschi e Francesco Giomi have shown the changing yet enduring relationship of the composer with music technology. See: Cremaschi and Giomi, "'Parrrole': Berio's Words on Music Technology," *Computer music journal* 28, no. 1 [2004], 1).

sua notte, porta la sua notte con sé. Le voci si inseguono. Ponti invisibili, allacciano una voce all'altra voce" (Calvino 1994c, 743).

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