Transcribing: between listening, memory, and invention

Bracci, G.

TRANSCRIBING: BETWEEN LISTENING, MEMORY, AND INVENTION

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Giuliano Bracci

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Promotor
Prof. dr. Marcel Cobussen

Co-promotores

Dr. Paul Craenen	Royal Conservatoire The Hague
Stefano Gervasoni	CNSMDP Paris

Promotiecommissie

Prof. dr. Henk Borgdorff	
Prof. dr. Dinko Fabris	
Prof. Isabel Mundry	Zurich University of Arts
Dr. Daan Janssens	Royal Conservatory Ghent

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Introduction

In 2005, having just completed a degree in philosophy with a thesis on Giordano Bruno, the sixteenth-century heretical philosopher who claimed that the universe was infinite and without a center, I decided to take a more serious approach to my composition studies at the conservatory. Reading Luigi Nono's late writings, I was surprised to discover that we shared a love for Giordano Bruno, and that Nono associated Bruno's ideas about the infinite with his own conception of the infinite possibilities of listening to a single sound. According to Nono (Nono 2018), listening has the potential to put us in contact with infinite *others*, with "other thoughts, other noises, other sonorities, other ideas" that we did not previously know, and that we could not have imagined before. In this sense, listening could be an act of discovery, but as Nono warns us, it is a difficult task, the easier way being "to find ourselves in others":

> Instead of listening to silence, instead of listening to others, we hope to listen to ourselves once more. It is a repetition that becomes academic, conservative, reactionary. […] We love convenience, repetition, myths. We always like to listen to the same thing, with those small differences that allow us to show off our intelligence. Listening to music. It is very difficult. (Nono 2018, 367)

Reflecting on Bruno's infinite worlds, and thinking that composing could be a way to learn this "difficult" art of listening to the infinite possibilities of sound, I came across a small book about the art of transcription: *Arrangements-Derangements*, edited by Peter Szendy (Szendy 2000a). In Szendy's introduction, I found two ideas that have become the roots of my doctoral research: Transcriptions are not mere repetitions of musical works, not different ways to say the same thing, but written traces of acts of listening. They are not (only) repetitions, but *relations* to musical works, critical and active forms of listening that have been written down (Szendy 2000b, 11).

The idea of transcribing as a way of writing down one's own experience of listening resonated with Nono's words and brought me to write my first transcription, *Une petite fleur bleue*, after Girolamo Frescobaldi. *Une petite fleur bleue* is the oldest piece of mine that is still performed, and, listening to it now, I can somehow recognize myself – or, said another way, I do recognize some features of the sound typical of my later works as well. Did my plan of "listening to the other" work out? Also, who was the "other" I was listening to? Frescobaldi? Or, as Nono warned, was I comfortably listening to myself instead of awakening the

ear? Was I repeating myself (even if it was then one of the first times), or Frescobaldi's music? And, if that was a repetition, why did it feel more like a discovery?

This tangle of repetition and discovery, of listening and invention, is what I have been exploring in recent years, both in and through my own compositional practice.

Transcribing

My research topic is about the practice of rewriting music, a practice that is usually called *transcribing* or *arranging*.[1] I will use these two terms interchangeably, namely as a transformation of a musical work, an adaptation usually made for a medium different than that of the original.[2]

My main research question is: What happens when a composer transcribes a musical work? Subsequent questions are: What happens to the piece which is transcribed? And what happens to the transcriber?

Bird's-eye (over)view

The practice of transcribing goes through the whole of Western music history. It does not have one single meaning, as it is a transversal and polyhedral practice that responds to several different needs in different ages and contexts. The history of transcribing has not been written, and as I will show later, the mere definition presents a few issues, depending on the ontological perspective from which one wishes to consider the matter. Before narrowing the field of my research and defining the sides of the practice that I am going to investigate, I will briefly trace an overview of transcribing across Western music history. To do so, I will make use of two relevant lemmas from Grove Music Online, Malcolm Boyd's "Arrangement" (Boyd 2001) and Peter Burkholder's "Borrowing" (Burkholder 2001), as well as of the second of Luciano Berio's Charles Eliot Norton lectures, "Translating Music" (Berio 2006a).

The simplest form of transcription is copying a musical text by hand, and for centuries, this practice has been the means that allowed music to be transmitted

[1] The term "arrangement" is common in an English-speaking context, and it mostly points to the practical and functional aspects of the practice. I prefer the term "transcription" instead, because – as is especially evident in Italian and other Latin languages – it contains the word "script," which points to the act of writing. "Transcribing" is therefore a form of writing that undergoes a process of traversal or crossing, changing from one condition to another. Furthermore, the prefix "trans-" allows the word "transcription" to resonate with words like "translation," "tradition," and the Italian *tradimento* (betrayal). Both "tradition" (*tradizione* in Italian) and *tradimento* are derived from the Latin *tradere*, which means both "to pass on" and "to betray."

[2] I will use the term "original" throughout this thesis to refer to the pre-existent musical work that is then transcribed, and without any implication of the term's more standard sense as a stable and static autonomous entity.

through time. Copying was a common practice in monasteries and courts of the late medieval period, and several manuscripts have survived, some very handsomely penned and decorated. A distinguished example of a scribe is the many-sided figure of Petrus Alamire (ca. 1470-1536), who was also a composer, a diplomat, and a spy. He worked in Mechelen and Brussels at the courts of Margaret of Austria, regent of the Netherlands, her successor Mary of Hungary, and Emperor Charles V. His workshop produced music manuscripts that contain a significant amount of Franco-Flemish polyphony, including several works by Pierre de La Rue, Josquin Desprez, Heinreich Isaac, Jakob Obrecht, Jean Mouton, and Antoine de Févin, among others.

During the Middle Ages, secular melodies were transcribed with liturgic goals in mind, bringing them into a different context. Already in the fourteenth century, as instrumental music began to develop a certain autonomy, there were transcriptions of polyphonic vocal works into intabulations for lute or keyboard. Vocal pieces by composers such as Francesco Landini and Guillaume de Machaut were transcribed for solo polyphonic instruments, and in many cases, the upper voices were elaborated with ornamentation that would fit the new instrumental context. In the sixteenth century, the practice of transcribing vocal music for instruments increased and expanded throughout Europe thanks to the invention of printing and a wider dissemination of instruments among amateurs, and it continued to do so for at least two centuries. Among these published collections of intabulations, we also find a specific form of transcription that anticipated, and probably influenced, the monodic style of the end of the century: polyphonic vocal music transcribed for voice and one polyphonic instrument, such as a keyboard or a plucked instrument, transformed into solo songs with accompaniment. A clear example of this practice is Franciscus Bossinensis's two volumes of *Tenori e contrabassi intabulati col sopran in canto figurato*, published by Ottaviano Petrucci in Venice in 1509 and 1511, respectively. Here, the top voice is left to the singer, while the tenor and bass parts are transcribed for lute, and the alto part is usually omitted (Pelagalli 1997). Bossinensis's books are the first known to present a solo voice part (in mensural notation) separated by the other voices of the composition transcribed in the accompaniment for the lute (in tablature). This "mixed" score format was implemented by Petrucci, who was fully aware of the innovative nature of this format (Fabris 2005, 479-480; Fabris 2018, 78).

Transcribing can also be a tool of stylistic appropriation, and, as Berio underlines, "copying, the simplest form of transcription, was an important learning experience," since, he continues, quoting Walter Benjamin, "the power of a text is different when it is read from when it is copied out" (Berio 2006a, 35). Looking for Benjamin's original sentence, I found an interesting reflection that shed light on the practice of copying texts: "Only the copied text thus commands the soul of him who is occupied with it, whereas the mere reader never discovers the new aspects of his inner self that are opened by the text, that

road cut through the interior jungle forever closing behind it: because the reader follows the movement of his mind in the free flight of daydreaming, whereas the copier submits it to command" (Benjamin 1996, 448). The act of transcribing – even if it only consists of straight copying – allows a deeper relation to a text, as it obliges the transcriber to travel more accurately through the original. The slowness inherent in writing – in contrast to the relative quickness of simply reading – gives access to a temporal dimension that leads to a qualitatively different contact with and involvement in a text.

If we now make a step forward in time from Bossinensis towards the eighteenth century, we can find a young Johann Sebastian Bach, who transcribed for solo harpsichord a large number of concerti by Italian composers including Antonio Vivaldi and Alessandro and Benedetto Marcello, driven by the wish to absorb their instrumental styles (Bietti 2018, 45). In the Baroque, the interest in instrumental music largely increased, and features such as musical roles and hierarchies became relatively stable. A certain homogeneity of instrumental techniques combined with a highly codified notation fostered the practice of transcribing instrumental music from one medium to another. Composers such as Bach were indeed constantly transcribing their own as well as their colleagues' music. Burkholder observes that this practice of reuse or reworking of entire pieces has seemed most foreign to later centuries because of the gradual acceptance of nineteenth-century ideas about originality and plagiarism (Burkholder 2001, § 9). Relevant examples from the end of the eighteenth century are found in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's transcriptions: He transcribed fugues by Georg Friedrich Händel and J. S. Bach for string trio and string quartet, and he reorchestrated *Messiah* and other works by Handel in order to "bring them closer to the current taste for performances […], inaugurating a tradition of Bach arrangements and Handel reorchestrations that continued for a century and a half" (Burkholder 2001, § 10).

In the nineteenth century, piano transcriptions flourished in the market of sheet music for amateurs, and "innumerable transcriptions brought the orchestral and chamber repertory into the homes of domestic pianists (or piano duettists), but more interesting are those with which the traveling virtuoso dazzled and delighted his audiences" (Boyd 2001, § 4). A key figure of that time is the composer and piano virtuoso Franz Liszt, a considerable proportion of whose piano music, according to musicologist Donald Jay Grout, "consists of transcriptions or arrangements – fantasies on operatic airs, transcriptions of Schubert's songs and Berlioz's and Beethoven's symphonies, Bach's organ fugues, excerpts from Wagner's music dramas, and the like." He continues, writing that "the usefulness these pieces had in their day should not be underrated. They made important music known to many people who had little or no opportunity to become acquainted with the original works; furthermore, Liszt's transference of orchestral idioms to the piano demonstrated new

possibilities for that instrument" (Grout 1980, 582). While Liszt made important contributions to the evolution of piano technique through transcribing, his transcriptions also fulfilled the functions of diffusion and transmission of the original works.

This role of transmission was taken into the twentieth century by the radio and the gramophone, which "largely replaced the piano transcription as a disseminator of the chamber, orchestral and operatic repertory" (Boyd 2001, § 4). Interestingly, Szendy polemizes with Boyd's "wrong reading" of transcriptions in the Romantic era as a means of transmission and communication of the original works, and then as their substitutes (Szendy 2008, 38). Szendy recognizes a critical necessity, not (only) a practical one, in the transcriptions made by composers such as Liszt and Schumann. He claims that it is precisely in starting from this Romantic heritage that it is possible for us to conceive of transcriptions as active and critical relationships with musical works (Szendy 2008, 65). I will write in depth later about Szendy's perspective, as his ideas are a crucial point of departure for my understanding of the practice of transcribing. For the moment, it is important to point out that in the nineteenth century, we clearly find a new historical awareness among musicians that allowed a confrontation with musical heritage and tradition: Both the idea of "the foundation of a musical Museum" (Goehr 1992, 205) and "the canonization of dead composers and the formation of a musical repertoire of transcendent masterpieces" were the result, "both sought and achieved," of a Romantic conception of music (Goehr 1992, 247).
In the twentieth century, the practice of transcription became emancipated from, but also lost, the many practical functions that it previously had; it gained, however, an autonomous artistic dimension (Laterza 2017, 3). When transcribing loses the practical aim of adapting and replacing an original so that it can still be performed and listened to,[3] the interest shifts to *how* the original is transformed by the transcriber instead of remaining focused on the original. That is, a gap emerges between the transcription and the original, a gap that could be simultaneously aesthetic, technical, linguistic, and historical, produced by the transcriber's creative process.

Before narrowing the field of my research and delving into the specific practice of transcribing that I am interested in, and since I will deal with more recent and

[3] The practical aim of allowing a piece to be performed (and heard live) by a formation different from the original one survives in pedagogical contexts. Another context is highlighted in the research of the musician Michael Drapkin. Drapkin's reductions for chamber orchestra of several orchestral works of the classical canon aim to combat the marginalization of classical music in the US (Drapkin 2024). In such a context, transcribers usually strive to minimize the gap between the original and the transcription, erasing their traces and making their intervention (and musical language) as invisible as possible. In contrast, my research focuses on exploring the gap between original and transcription.

contemporary transcriptions throughout this thesis, I will conclude this overview by just mentioning three influential transcriptions from the first part of the twentieth century, created by three of the leading composers of their times: Maurice Ravel's orchestration (1922) of Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* for piano; Anton Webern's orchestration (1935) of J. S. Bach's six-part "Ricercar a 6" from the *Musikalisches Opfer* (1747), which I will discuss extensively in chapter 2 of this thesis; and Igor Stravinsky's *Monumentum pro Gesualdo* (1960), an instrumental version of three madrigals by Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa.

Avoiding strict definitions

As can be concluded from the previous section, rewriting existing music is a practice that has a long and varied history in Western (art) music, and it is a compositional attitude that has different meanings in different ages and within different aesthetical theories. In this sense, it is difficult to trace the borders of this practice using a univocal definition and absolute criteria. I prefer to avoid a strict and normative definition of what a transcription is; instead, I will look at it as a plurality of practices and compositional approaches that have similarities and *family resemblances.*

"Family resemblances" is an expression that Ludwig Wittgenstein introduces in his *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1953, § 65–71) as a shorthand for a particular feature of the way we can use some words to challenge the assumption that they have to be defined by rigidly limited concepts (Fox 2014, 56). A concept may be described as a "complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" and it may be extended "as in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres" (Wittgenstein 1953, § 67).

Likewise, I will proceed in my investigation starting not from a rigid definition, but instead experimenting with different approaches through my own artistic practice. I will reflect on which possible relations to a work of the past – and thus to musical heritage and tradition in general – are embodied within ways of rewriting a musical work from the past. I argue that such an approach will elucidate the particular perspective of the transcriber at work who establishes a new relationship with a pre-existing musical work. This approach will lead to new insights into an existing practice and a particular understanding of it, rather than contributing to a taxonomy.

Nevertheless, it is useful to narrow the field of my research as clearly as possible. I am interested in the practice of transcribing not when it is an automatic or exclusively practical procedure (as, for example, is the case of piano reductions in the preparation of vocal scores, or of reductions that aim for an orchestral

work to be performed live by a smaller formation without the intention of altering the original), but when the original is filtered through the imagination of the transcriber: When this happens, transcriptions can tell us something about the original work, the transcriber, and their relation. In this sense, I look at transcribing as a creative practice (mainly) performed by transcribers who are also, and mostly, composers, authors of their own music. In this dissertation, I will mostly refer to these composer-transcribers simply as transcribers, without implying with this word any diminutive sense in terms of creativity or artistic value.

Usually, and especially if following a model that considers the original work as a fixed entity to be preserved – a model supported by music philosophers such as Stephen Davies (Davies 2003) and Paul Thom (Thom 2007) – a transcription that is not respectful enough of the original and appears to be too creative, telling us too much about its transcriber, can be considered a new and distinct musical work. I will come back to this matter later, as it is very much entangled with the ontology of musical works and thus of transcriptions. As will become clearer throughout this thesis, I look at transcriptions as *traces* of the relationships that transcribers establish with original works. What I am interested in is not defining what a transcription (or an original) is as a musical object, but exploring and understanding the practice of transcribing from within. From an ontological perspective, a relationship is not conceivable as an object or a fixed entity, as it is a practice and a performance. Regarding transcriptions as traces of a practice will allow me to avoid the (false) problem of looking at them as static entities whose borders are very problematic to define, and to focus instead on what really matters: the dynamic happening of a relationship, a happening that modifies both the original and the transcriber.

As a further limitation, I will only consider transcriptions that arise from an exclusive relation to an existing musical work: i.e., transcriptions that are explicitly designed as such, that are completely derived from an original, and that relate to the original in their totality. Following this path, I will also exclude music that relates to a multiplicity of other works, or that only uses portions of them, as in collages or quotations, though this perspective does not imply any qualitative judgment on those practices per se. I will therefore investigate – by experimenting through my own artistic practice with different approaches to different original musical works – what can happen with the peculiar relationship between transcription and original.

Rewriting music today

Nowadays, thanks to recordings and technological innovations, the relation to the musical past has changed radically as the repertoire has become more accessible and people are able to experience music through domestic and mobile listening (Hosokawa 1984, 165–80; Sterne 2003; Ashby 2010). This vast and constant accessibility has made repertoires from different ages and places

fundamentally contemporary. The musicologist Marilena Laterza writes that the past "[has] started to walk on its own legs, becoming a freely accessible, autonomously available, reviviscent entity" (Laterza 2017, 3). She also observes that, in this context, instead of freely choosing to confront the past themselves, composers today have been forced, each in their own way, to redefine their role towards a secular tradition; consequently, the practice of transcribing has been able to mirror these positionings, and to express cultural and aesthetical needs.

Furthermore, the advent of new technologies has greatly increased the role of postproduction – a term commonly used in media and music productions to refer to all the procedures that take place after the raw material has been recorded – in the arts, and this has also had a strong influence on composers' approach to pre-existing works (Rutherford-Johnson 2017, 256–59). For example, composers such as Marko Nikodijevic and Bernhard Lang have made extensive use of digital technology and have based several of their instrumental works on pieces by other composers. In works such as the haunting *cvetić, kućica … /la lugubre gondola* (2013) for orchestra, after Liszt's famous piano piece, Nikodijevic stretches and compresses other composers' works through algorithmic and fractal computations. This approach produces a melancholic and distorted feeling of a simultaneous involvement with and distance from the music of the past, which, as with a hallucination, appears to be recognizably present, yet is at the same time an illusion, a reflection of something absent.
Lang, in his cycles *Monadologie* (2007-) and *Differenz/Wiederholung* (1998-), influenced by the ideas of the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, chooses very different and well-known existing pieces, processing them algorithmically to produce long, self-generative sequences. He then selects and orchestrates smaller parts of these sequences. In Lang's music, there is a clear shift of focus from the material to the process: In his case, "the fact that so much of the source material is well known matters strangely little because of the minimal impact it has on the final piece," and the mood of the "original is quickly subsumed by Lang's processes and their dizzying, machine-like results" (Rutherford-Johnson 2017, 259).
Another example of the use of a postproduction strategy in composing is Daniela Fantechi's *et ego – tape version* (2018). This fixed-media piece is derived from processed recordings of Fantechi's earlier work for guitar and electronics, *et ego* (2017), played back through one or two transducers placed on the soundboard of a guitar. A transducer is a device that transforms an electrical signal into a mechanical one, sending physical vibrations to the resonant body to which it is attached, so that "the whole body of the guitar – the soundboard and the strings – becomes the resonant space through which the piece is propagated" (Fantechi 2022). The original *et ego* for guitar and electronics is itself based on another musical work, namely Gesualdo's "Tristis est anima mea" from the *Tenebrae Responsoria* (1611). In the tape version, we hear through the body of the guitar the presence (and the absence) of a previous piece, which in turn

evokes distant memories, developing a texture of highly reverberated, "frozen" sounds reminiscent of Gesualdo's vocal music.

The art critic Nicolas Bourriaud refers to postproduction as a way of creating artworks on the basis of already existing works, noting that "since the early nineties, an ever-increasing number of artworks have been created on the basis of pre-existing works; more and more artists interpret, reproduce, re-exhibit, or use works made by others or available cultural products. This art of postproduction seems to respond to the proliferating chaos of global culture in the information age" (Bourriaud 2002, 13). Interestingly, Bourriaud, who is not talking about music here, describes a way of creating works of art on the basis of already existing works, and in this respect, his way of looking at postproduction can be helpful for understanding the practice of transcribing in the context of contemporary art practices and aesthetics. Indeed, postproduction in today's modern media age plays a larger and larger creative role. Bourriaud's description, which does not exclude non-technological forms of postproduction, sounds very close to Grove Music Online's definition of *arrangement* (Boyd 2001): "the reworking of a musical composition." Further, "the word *arrangement* may be applied to any piece of music based on or incorporating pre-existing material." According to this definition, we may certainly apply the term arrangement to postproduction practices such as sampling, remixing, and DJ-ing.

Moreover, in her *This is not a remix*, Margie Borschke describes the remix as "a technical process and a compositional form," and, especially relevant for the current context, "a new arrangement, an alternative mix of a composition." Interestingly, she also specifies that "the prefix *re* (in Latin 'again' or 'back') signifies a remix's reflexive relationship with its source material. It signifies a return, or a repetition of sorts. It is recursive" (Borschke 2017, 33).
We might therefore listen to transcriptions as postproductions, and we might listen to remixes as arrangements. In doing so, all of these concepts resonate with each other, and their borders become unclear, but this entanglement may help in understanding the significance of the practice of transcription among contemporary composers, while relating it to a wider picture.

Transcribing as a form of listening

Transcribing is an activity that presupposes a pre-existing musical work. This presence might be more or less explicit and emerges in different ways. Szendy, in his meditation on listening and on the role of the listener throughout the centuries, attributes to transcriptions exactly the meaning of critical, active relationships with works (Szendy 2008, especially chapter 2). He also writes – and this is a seminal idea that deserves an in-depth reflection – that "what arrangers are signing is above all a listening. *Their* hearing of a work. They may even be the only listeners in the history of music to *write down* their listenings"

(Szendy 2008, 36). Szendy's expression "writing down their listenings" may suggest the act of "fixing" the result of a preceding hearing activity. However, as I will discuss, transcribing is an experimental process where the transcriber's auditory imagination is at work through various activities. From this perspective, writing is itself a form of auditory imagination, rather than merely the fixing of a previous listening experience. Listening is never crystallized and remains "unfinished" even after the writing process is completed, as each listening experience will inevitably be different.

Transcribing establishes relationships with musical works, and it is one of the possible forms of listening enacted by a transcriber. If on the one hand these possible relationships to a musical work – that is, the infinite number of ways of listening to a musical work through transcribing it – are precisely the subject of my research, on the other hand, I do not claim any right to know how the audience *should* listen. The awareness of the fact that a transcription is a *transcription* is not a prerequisite of a good or a proper musical experience (enjoyment, understanding) for an audience, even if it affects and makes the listening experience of the same piece different: It is the listening experience that gives music sense, and if something such as musical meaning exists, it is supplied by the listener. In other words, musical meaning is not in the composer's (or in the transcriber's) intentions, but in the way that the listener engages with the music, "not something concealed within the music as an expressive message but something the ear creates with the help of the music" (Craenen 2014, 248). Furthermore, from my perspective, the transcriber – and I would extend this definition to the composer in general – is in the first place a listener. As the composer Fabien Levy writes, a composer "has to be, despite his lack of distance, his own first and best listener" (Lévy 2013, 205). This perspective strongly resonates with Barthes's ideas expressed in his famous essay "The Death of the Author," in which he writes that the explanation of a work is not to be sought in the man or woman who produced it, since a text does not release "a single theological meaning (the 'message of the Author-God')" but is a "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Barthes 1977a, 146). Barthes continues, suggesting that there is a place where this multiplicity is collected, namely, in the reader – or in our context, the listener – and that "the reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (Barthes 1977a, 148).

Nevertheless, the awareness of listening to a musical work (a transcription) that relates to another musical work (the original) certainly has a relevant impact on how we listen, and this awareness has the potential to articulate the listening experience differently: It might create a triangulation between the listener, the transcriber, and the transcribed piece. It might draw our attention to the *relation* that the transcriber establishes with a musical work. In this sense, Rutherford-

Johnson, writing about postproduction, describes "a fundamental shift in creative priority" – and, I would add, in what an audience is possibly listening to – "from what is made to what is done *to* what is made" (Rutherford-Johnson 2017, 257).

Szendy's perspective on transcribing as a form of listening is revealing, but he does not give us a detailed description of the actual activities of a transcriber who is listening. Reflecting on his idea, and on the practice of writing and rewriting music, I find that what he calls listening might in fact refer to a number of different practices. Listening is not simply a receptive activity, but a truly performative and creative act. In this context, it produces traces, it produces new works. Along this line of thought, David Lewin describes musical perception as an embodied action that manifests itself in a number of creative responses such as performing and composing. And referring to music making as a mode of musical perception, he paraphrases Harold Bloom's assertions about the meaning of a poem, saying that "a poem can only be perceived in the making of another poem, a poem not itself" (Lewin 1986, 381).[4] This idea opens the space to think of transcription as a manifestation of musical perception, as a performative and creative response to a musical work,[5] as a trace of an activity that involves both perception and imagination, a trace that is audible in itself.

If a transcription is the transformation of a musical work, according to Szendy, the composer's listening is an activity that perceives and reimagines, able to transform and to make musical choices. The music philosopher Marcel Cobussen, reflecting on the role that imagination plays in the experience of listening to music, writes that "listening not only encompasses the aural perception of a reality, the outside world, but also a creative interplay with that perception in the mind" (Cobussen 2019, 126). He calls this process "imagining-through-listening," and this expression describes the ability of hearing double, "of thinking about the oscillations of different listenings that inhabit our inner ear."

[4] Bloom's original assertion is: "The meaning of a poem can only be a poem, but another poem, a poem not itself." It is very interesting to notice in this perspective the consonance of Bloom's thought with Wittgenstein's sentence on understanding, on which I will reflect later in chapter 1 (Wittgenstein 1953, § 531; Bloom 1973, 70). Berio also draws on this idea when he writes that "the most meaningful analysis of a symphony is another symphony" (Berio 2006c, 125).

[5] An active and operative attitude towards music is also central in Roland Barthes's idea of a *musica practica*: "[…] one must put oneself in the position or, better, in the activity of an operator, who knows how to displace, assemble, combine, fit together; in a word (if it is not too worn out), who knows how to structure (very different from constructing or reconstructing in the classic sense). Just as the reading of the modern text consists not in receiving, in knowing or in feeling that text, but in writing it anew, in crossing its writing with a fresh inscription, so too reading this Beethoven is *to operate* his music, to draw it (it is willing to be drawn) into an unknown *praxis*" (Barthes 1977b, 153).

In the last pages of his book *Composing under the Skin*, the composer Paul Craenen focuses on the corporality of the composing subject, giving a concrete description of the multiple activities that result in what we call composing, and that, in this context, I could also apply to the activity of transcribing:

> Filming the composing body thus provides us with an image of a body with changing identities. It is a body that alternates between the positions of a planner, improviser, listener, performer, technician, or official manager of the composer's thinking. It makes predictions, develops them, listens to them, and then tries to capture the object of its enthusiasm in writing. To succeed in this, the composing body uses notation techniques; it *measures* and *projects* the inner movements of its musical imagination. (Craenen 2014, 244)

I believe that composing and transcribing are not very different in light of these reflections about musical imagination and the creative entanglement of listening and imagination. What does make transcribing different is the (more or less) explicit presence of another musical work to deal with.

Transcriptions as relations to musical works and Derrida

Once more, in my research I am interested in looking at the practice of transcribing as a form of listening, and more precisely, as creating a new relation to an already existing musical work, a relation that, as I have illustrated above, establishes itself in a composer's musical imagination: The *other work* is transformed; it is reimagined, reinvented, rewritten.

In order to consider in a more articulated way the issue of the relation to the *other*, I will refer to two essays of the philosopher Jacques Derrida, as they can provide me with the tools to better frame the topic and at the same time to put it in a wider perspective: "At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am" (Derrida 2007a) and "Psyche: Invention of the Other" (Derrida 2007b).

In the first essay, dedicated to his friend, the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, Derrida presents the idea that paying tribute to someone does not necessarily imply that one should imitate the person to whom that tribute is paid. Derrida almost inverts the whole idea: Truly honoring something or someone means that one should do injustice to them. I will read and extrapolate a few passages, keeping in mind the context of my research: a composer transcribes a musical work, they listen to the other, and enter into a relationship with this other. I also bear in mind the polarity expressed by Nono between listening to the other and listening to the same – that is, to ourselves.

First of all, for Derrida, the relation with the other implies the ever-threatening risk of "betrayal" or of "contamination." This risk cannot be eluded since it is "always threatening." Besides, contamination is not an "accidental evil" or a risk but "a fate that must be assumed" (Derrida 2007a, 167 and 185).

Just as Nono was asking how it is possible to listen to the other and not to ourselves, Derrida asks himself how the "wholly other," which is "incommensurably heterogeneous to the […] discourse of the same" could be inscribed within the language of the same, "within its syntax and lexicon, under its law" (Derrida 2007a, 150). He answers that "it is less a matter of exceeding this language than of dealing otherwise with its own possibilities […] so that the fault, the one that consists in inscribing the wholly other in the empire of the same, alters the same enough" (Derrida 2007a, 150).
Derrida invites us to consider the relation to the other – to another musical work in my case – in an ethical perspective that puts responsibility at the center of listening, reading, and writing practices. The language of the same, which is a language that lets us listen to, and repeat, only ourselves, is "foreign or allergic to the Other" (Derrida 2007a, 155). Nevertheless, it is the language that we have, and we then have to prepare an opening into it for the other to come. This language, and our listening, can be open to the other: It can be altered and contaminated, revealing the presence of an other, another musical work, even as a "fault" or an absence. This approach requires openness and availability for listening and for being transformed by this experience.[6] This openness to the other is for Derrida an ethical openness, a responsibility that always hides the possibility (and the freedom) of betrayal (Derrida 2007a, 158).

From this perspective, I am interested in a practice of transcribing that does not consider the original as a thing to be used and integrated within a transcriber's language, but as the other that has to be listened to. I look at this practice as a relation with the other, as a practice that, at the risk of betrayal, contaminates the language of the other with that of the transcriber:

> Another language comes to disturb the first one. It doesn't inhabit it, but haunts it. Another text, the text of the other, without ever appearing in its original language, arrives in silence with a more or less regular cadence to dislocate the language of translation, to convert the version, turn it inside out, bend it to the very thing it pretends to import. It [*Elle*] disassimilates it. (Derrida 2007a, 152)

The ethics of transcribing will first of all transform the original musical work. But Derrida's thoughts might reach further: Considering the practice of transcribing in this light, what gets transformed is not, or not only, the original, but rather musical language itself: concurrently, the transcriber's musical language is transformed by the opening to the other, by listening to it. This ethical perspective brings us very far from the (normative) question about what

[6] About a possible connection between listening and ethics, see the first chapter of Cobussen and Nielsen's *Music and Ethics* where the authors argue that "a hospitable, caring attitude creates a space between music and listener where ethics can happen" (Cobussen and Nielsen 2012, 10).

a transcription is, and it shifts the focus to what could happen within the relationship that defines the practice of transcribing. Transcriptions become objects that are ontologically problematic and ethically ambiguous, as they are events or performances, and not solid and present beings.

In a passage of the same essay, I found ideas that were very helpful for me to frame the relation between the original, that in this context is the other, and the transcriber's listening, their musical invention:

> Your reading is thus no longer a simple reading that deciphers the sense of what is already found in the text; it has a limitless (ethical) initiative. It [*Elle*] obligates itself freely starting from the text of the Other, which today one might say, wrongly, it *produces* or *invents*. [...] And even if you don't read *as one must* [comme il faut], as EL says one must read, still, beyond the dominant interpretation (that of domination) that is one with the philosophy of grammar and the grammar of philosophy, the Relation of dislocation *will have taken place,* there is nothing you can do about it any longer, and without knowing it, you will have read what will have made only possible, starting from the Other, what is happening: "at this very moment." (Derrida 2007a, 161)

Listening (reading) is not a simple listening that only deciphers. It is not about listening only to what is already in the original (in the text): Listening produces or invents the text of the other. And even if we do not listen "as one must," the relationship "will have taken place," and this very listening will have made possible what is happening, "starting from the other."

A composer, while transcribing, (re)invents the original. They allow it to say things that the original maybe never said but that are nevertheless present in the musical text and have been made possible by the fact that this new relationship transpired. When speaking about their own works, both Luciano Berio and Dieter Schnebel point out the potential of transcriptions to let unsaid things emerge. In the second of his Charles Eliot Norton lectures, Berio states that a transcription can "make explicit the virtualities that are contained in the original, as if one were dealing with a natural, pre-existing structure, and sought to extract inherent forms and hidden patterns" (Berio 2006b, 36).[7] Schnebel, talking about his project *Re-Visionen I*, seven rearrangements of classical works, describes transcription as "an attempt to tap into the potential of the past, to carve out its perhaps still undiscovered possibilities" (Schnebel 1998, 12). In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze presents the vivid image of works of art immersed in their own virtuality, defining the virtual writing as "opposed not to the real but to the

[7] Here I quote, and translate, Berio from the Italian version. The English version does not use the term "virtualities," simply skipping that part of the sentence, surprisingly.

actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual." In this sense, "the virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object – as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension" (Deleuze 1994, 208–9). Transcribing has the potential to make hidden aspects of an original work audible, to actualize some of its virtualities. Considering these ideas on virtuality from the perspective of the transcriber's language, transcribing can also make musical works from the past virtually present in contemporary music, allowing the past works to (re-)appear, repeated but different, like ghosts. I will come back to this idea, when discussing my own experiences of transcribing.

Let us now look in more detail at what Derrida means by "inventing" through a passage in "Psyche: Invention of the Other," where, again, Nono's words about listening seem to resonate:

> Our current lassitude results from the invention of the same and the possible, from the invention that is always possible. It is not against this possible invention but beyond it that we are trying to reinvent invention itself, another invention, or rather an invention of the other that would come, through the economy of the same, indeed, while miming or repeating it ('*Par le mot* par . . .'), to offer a place for the other, to let the other come. I am careful to say 'let it come,' because if the other is precisely what is not invented, the initiative or deconstructive inventiveness can consist only in opening, in uncloseting, destabilizing foreclusionary structures so as to allow for the passage toward the other. But one does not make the other come, one lets it come by preparing for its coming. (Derrida 2007b, 44–45)

It is important to underline that there is an invention of the same, beyond which (and not against which) it is possible to invent the other. But since the other is "precisely what is not invented," then the invention consists in an "opening" that allows its passage. Derrida insists on calling it invention "because one gets ready for it, one makes this step destined to let the other come, *come in*" (Derrida 2007b, 39). Here Derrida tells us that writing means to leave room for the other, and that invention, and then listening, are precisely this availability to contamination. Very interestingly, "Psyche: Invention of the Other" ends in the form of a dialogue and with an invitation to polyphony:

> "What do you mean by that? That the other will have been only an invention, the invention of the other?"
> "No, that the other is what is never inventable and will never have waited for your invention. The call of the other is a call to come, and that happens only in multiple voices."

The other is not assimilated to the language of the transcriber, it rather "disassimilates it." The other is not "only an invention." Transcribing means creating room so that the other can come and resonate, and this can happen only "in multiple voices."

Derrida's ideas have helped me to reframe the practice of transcribing, and to shed a new light on the questions that I ask in my research while listening, transcribing, and reflecting on them. What happens to the original work? What happens to my musical invention? What kind of relation am I establishing with the other work? Am *I* doing that, or can I only prepare myself and an audience for the other to come?

Paying respect

A central topic in the discussions around transcriptions is the fidelity to the original, the respect for it. I have argued that, following Derrida, this topic can be addressed in a completely different way: Transcribing means to run the "always threatening risk of betrayal," and, even more, "[i]t would then be necessary that beyond any possible restitution my gesture operates without debt, in absolute ingratitude. The trap is that I then pay homage, the only possible homage" (Derrida 2007a, 146). In this way, the question of how to pay respect to the original is still a central (ethical) matter, but a very different one. To truly pay respect means to operate in "absolute ingratitude," not imitating, but letting one's language be contaminated by the other. The original appears transformed in the transcription, but what happens simultaneously is that the language of the transcriber transforms and is contaminated by the relation with the other.

Contamination is an important concept here. The other (the original) contaminates the transcriber's language and is itself contaminated by this contact. In his book *Profanations*, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben writes that contamination is a form of profanation, "a touch that disenchants and returns to use what the sacred had separated and petrified" (Agamben 2007, 83–84). He continues by stating that the impossibility of using, of dwelling, of experiencing, has its emblematic place in the museum. The practice of transcribing, betraying the originals, contaminating and being contaminated by them, could then serve to take them out of what Lydia Goehr calls "the imaginary museum of musical works" (Goehr 1992), returning them to a new dimension of use.

The ethical relation to a musical work is further explored by Bruce Ellis Benson. He claims that the moral obligation of being faithful to the work (and to its composer) comes from the ideal of the musical work as an autonomous entity that needs respect and fidelity to be preserved. In contrast to this ideal, he proposes the idea of "being in dialogue" with musical works, dialogue as a creative and performative practice. This approach also frees the transcriber from the dichotomy between being faithful and unfaithful, and it renders irrelevant the question of where a transcription stops being a transcription and becomes a different, independent, original piece (Benson 2003, 10). It shifts the focus to a

dialogue that, as Derrida writes, happens "only in multiple voices." The attempt to both allow the presence of and engage in dialogue with these other voices – other ideas, other works, other languages – has a central role in my experience with the practice of transcribing, which will be the focus of later chapters in this thesis.

Heritage

The practice of transcribing – understood as engaging with an existing musical work – can be a powerful tool to explore possible relations to the past and to musical cultural heritage. The topic of the relation to the past, both as individuals and as a community, is vast. Looking at and reflecting on this relation through a specific artistic practice and concrete musical experiences can provide an original perspective and relevant insights.

A strong image describing the complex relationship that Europe has with its own past and tradition is provided by Agamben in the last chapter of his *The Man Without Content*: "The interruption of tradition, which is for us now a *fait accompli*, opens an era in which no link is possible between old and new, if not the infinite accumulation of the old in a sort of monstrous archive or the alienation effected by the very means that is supposed to help with the transmission of the old." He clarifies that this "breaking of tradition does not at all mean the loss or devaluation of the past," but that, quite the opposite, "the past has lost its transmissibility, and so long as no new way has been found to enter into a relation with it, it can only be the object of accumulation from now on" (Agamben 1999, 107-108). According to Agamben, we witness the "monstrous" accumulation of our cultural heritage, and, at the same time, the impossibility of an active and living relation to it. As mentioned earlier, this impossibility – that is, an impossibility of "free use" – "has its emblematic place in the Museum" (Agamben 2007, 83). Precisely this "growing museification of culture" is an evident sign of the crisis that Europe is experiencing with its own past (Agamben 2017, 10). Agamben claims as a peculiarity the fact that Europeans "can gain access to their truth only by means of a confrontation with the past, only by settling accounts with their history." And, he continues, "if art has today become for us an eminent figure – perhaps *the* eminent figure – of this past, then the question that we must never stop posing is: what is the place of art in the present?" (Agamben 2017, 9-10). Agamben's urgent question resonates with the topic of my research: If musical works are eminent figures of our musical past, and they are treated as entities to be preserved in a museum, how can we return them to free use, in order to establish that active and living relation to them? How can we "disenchant" what the sacred has separated and petrified? Agamben suggests that "the passage from the sacred to the profane can […] also come about by means of an entirely inappropriate use (or, rather, reuse) of the sacred: namely, play" (Agamben 2007, 74–75).

I see the practice of transcribing as one of the possible games that can be played to make use – even an "entirely inappropriate" one – of musical works from the past. Transcriptions are noteworthy because, when listening to them, we listen to the transcribers' active relation to musical works, as transcriptions are the traces of their listenings (Szendy 2008). The matter of the relation to an original musical work is an ethical one, as it implies the relation to the other. It is precisely in this sense that Cobussen writes about ethicality in the contact between music and listener: "Through attentive listening, with an attitude that at least endeavours to encounter music with respect, with openness, with responsiveness, a listener can meet an otherness without reducing it to the order of the same" (Cobussen and Nielsen 2012, 33). In other words, a transcriber can enter into a dialogue (Benson 2003) with a musical work in order to open a space that allows the other to come and contaminate their language (Derrida 2007a), so that the other – the original – could in turn be contaminated and then exit from the separate sphere of the sacred, becoming liberated from the condition of museification (Agamben 2007).

In my research, I have experimented with various ways of engaging with musical works from the Western repertoire. My selection of these works as well as examples from other composers' and performers' work referenced in the thesis did not aim for exhaustiveness. Instead, I engaged with a repertoire I felt invited to respond to. I will argue that the practice of transcribing not only transforms and reveals unheard aspects of a musical work but also reveals much about the transcriber. My choice of repertoire for this research was guided by my desire to have my musical language and imagination influenced and contaminated by specific works. These are works that I both recognized and actively chose as part of my musical heritage. I recognized their potential to unfold for me as a composer, and they are works I resonated with and wished to share. But did I choose them, or was I invited and chosen by the musical works? Is musical heritage something one can (re)invent, or is it more about recognizing it? Engaging with the (musical) past is an active choice, but it is also impossible not to relate to the past. I chose to engage with it, and at the same time, I felt invited to do so. It was calling me as much as I was calling it.
My choices of repertoire were personal, driven by a desire to engage deeply with the main tradition that shaped my background and studies in Italy and the Netherlands. My artistic involvement and situatedness as a musician were conditions enabling deep engagement, as is the case in any artistic practice. Furthermore, although I dealt with music strongly connected to my own musical language, my research aims to provide insights and theoretical tools for thinking about the practice of transcribing in new ways, and to contribute to others imagining new steps to undertake, following their own musical and cultural attitudes and interests.

Contribution

Music is a form of thought in its own right, and it provides a specific form of knowledge. In this thesis, transcriptions – both mine and those of other transcribers – are integral to reflection. In the presentation of this research, I have situated my particular approach to transcribing within a broader discourse, engaging with the works, reflections, and ideas of composers, performers, artistic researchers, musicologists, philosophers, poets, and writers.

Transcribing has a long history and it remains pervasive in contemporary music. This practice, deeply intertwined with composers' stances on the musical past and their cultural heritage, is a relevant subject. Creative engagements with the past are evident not only in transcribing but also in a variety of musical practices such as sampling, collage, and quotation. Moreover, there are numerous ways for composers to let the past resonate in the present without using an existing musical work as a point of departure, e.g. by using specific techniques, or by being inspired by musical forms or genres, or by another composer's oeuvre. The topic of musical influence, whether technical, poetic, conscious, or unconscious, is vast. Within this broad landscape, transcribing presents a distinctive approach to engaging with the musical past, offering a focused investigation. As a transcriber, the engagement with a single and concrete pre-existing musical work indeed allows for framing and exploring this relationship in a clear, experimental setting. Furthermore, the explicit presence of the original work allows for a detailed comparison with the transcription.

I experimented with different transcribing strategies, documenting each step of the process. My investigation, grounded in my situatedness as a practitioner, revealed deeper insights not obtainable through any other form of inquiry. In my research, transcribing served as a means to reflect on themes such as otherness and the relationship between self and other. Additionally, through my artistic practice, I have been able to address fundamental questions, such as what constitutes a musical work and what defines it as original. Furthermore, transcribing, from its peculiar theoretical and practical perspective, questions topics such as the relationship between listening and musical invention, originality, tradition, fidelity, and the role of repertoire and its museification. As a composer and artistic researcher, it is my aim to provide a deeper understanding of this practice and relevant insights for a broader, more articulated context. These insights could have significant implications for discourses on contemporary music, musical cultural policies, and critical aspects of classical music education. The results of my research may contribute to the ongoing debate on the practice of transcribing and, more broadly, to the discourse on the relationship with musical tradition and heritage.

In the thesis, I have explored an expanded set of research questions: What happens when a composer transcribes a musical work? What happens when a transcriber enters into dialogue with another musical work? What happens

within these relationships that renders transcriptions written traces of listening? What happens to the original musical works? How are they adapted and transformed? How are they listened to? But also: What happens to the transcriber? What happens to their language, and how is it transformed? Which questions, reflections, ideas, and musical issues arise while transcribing?
While my artistic practice is inevitably personal, others should be able to benefit from and build upon the knowledge and insights generated by my research, including its theoretical framework, to explore new paths and perspectives.

This thesis is divided into five chapters, each dealing with one specific experience of transcribing that I had between 2005 and 2022, with the exception of chapter 2, which is dedicated to Webern's *Fuga Ricercata* (1935), his orchestration of J. S. Bach's "Ricercar a 6" from the *Musikalisches Opfer* (1747). Each chapter outlines a further stage in the progression of my research and presents a different approach to transcribing, along with various issues and strategies for engaging with a musical work. Additionally, each chapter offers reflections and remarks that consider and develop concepts and ideas from the literature and other transcriptions that I have studied.
It might seem that the relationship between my transcriptions and the originals becomes progressively looser as my artistic freedom expands. However, as I will argue, what happens is actually quite the opposite: A deeper relation corresponds to a greater transformation, both for the musical work and for the transcriber. By transcribing in "absolute ingratitude," and in assuming the "risk of betrayal," I prepared a space for the original musical works to contaminate and transform my language as a transcriber.

Chapter 1 is dedicated to *Une petite fleur bleue* (2005), a short transcription for string quartet of one of the pieces from Girolamo Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* (1635) for organ. There, I begin my reflections on transcribing as a learning tool and a form of understanding, and I consider the questions of what constitutes an original and what it means to pay respect to it. I also reflect on the role of slowness in the quality of the relationship with a musical work, both for the transcriber and the other listeners (i.e., the performers and the audience). Furthermore, I discuss my idea of creating a sound layer through which to listen to the original work. I do this particularly in relation to Dieter Schnebel's *Schubert-Phantasie* (1978), and to the idea that transcribing has the ability of staging the mediation of an original work.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to Anton Webern's *Fuga Ricercata* (1935), his orchestration of J. S. Bach's "Ricercar a 6" from the *Musikalisches Opfer* (1747), which was a reference for my work at the time. I discuss Webern's work as a model in showing how transcribing transforms an original work, actualizing some of its virtualities, and I reflect in particular on the idea of looking at the polyphonic

texture of a piece as a net of individual points that could be connected in new ways, thereby actualizing new constellations.

Chapter 3 deals with the desire for a more intimate relation with the original and, simultaneously, a wider artistic freedom. It presents *Hortense* (2013), a string trio that is a transcription of Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa's madrigal for five voices "Languisce al fin." The presence of a poetic text in Gesualdo's madrigal plays a central role in my process of creating an instrumental transcription, becoming a map through which I navigate Gesualdo's music. In this chapter, I delve into themes such as intimacy with the original work, the ability of transcriptions to account for the (inevitably) mediated perception of an original piece, and the possibility of embracing Webern's legacy regarding transcribing. I connect these themes to concrete musical choices, both technical and aesthetic, by discussing my own work and examining the work of other composer-transcribers such as Stefano Gervasoni, Stefano Scodanibbio, Richard Barrett, and Salvatore Sciarrino. Furthermore, I consider musicologist Marilena Laterza's use of the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's ideas to present transcriptions as "incarnated acts of interpretation."

Chapter 4 is about my work *Una notte* (2016) for voice and orchestra, and its relation to Franz Schubert's Lied "Der Doppelgänger" (1828). With *Una notte*, I explore more radical possibilities in the utilization of a poetic text within a musical work to shape its transcription. The theme of the double and the unsettling encounter with another self is central to Schubert's Lied, and in this chapter, I reflect on how a transcription can serve as a double of an original work, revealing and actualizing some of its unexpressed virtualities.
In order to reflect on my practice and put it in a wider context, I discuss Hans Zender's *Schuberts "Winterreise"* and especially his ideas about how it could be considered a "composed interpretation." Furthermore, I examine the work of performers and artistic researchers Heloisa Amaral and Lucia D'Errico, who have explored innovative performance practices for Western notated art music, challenging the boundaries of freedom for classically trained musicians. The chapter concludes with an examination of Fabio Nieder's transcription of the same Schubert Lied, offering a noteworthy example of a distinct approach by another composer.

Chapter 5 presents *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* (2018) for string quartet. In this transcription, I return to the music of the Renaissance, dissecting the work *Nymphes des bois, or La déploration sur la mort de Johan Ockeghem* (1497), by Josquin Desprez. In this chapter, I synthesize the results of my research by using the findings and insights from my previous transcriptions while also delving deeper into the theme of the relationship between otherness and double that emerged in the previous chapter. Considering an essay by Sigmund Freud, and writings by Jorge Luis Borges, Ovid, Heinrich Heine, and Emily Dickinson, I reflect on

the other as something both intimate and foreign, always already virtually present within the self rather than opposed to it. I reflect on my transcribing process, describing how Raymond Queneau's novel *The Blue Flowers*, with its alternating chapter structure wherein the main characters dream of each other, served as a blueprint for my engagement with Josquin's music, leading me to view dreaming as a model for the relationship with the other, and also leading to a gradual blurring of the boundary between transcribing and composing. This chapter concludes with the examination of two more transcriptions of the same work by Josquin undertaken by Daan Janssens and Stefano Gervasoni.

Methodology

My research is an investigation into and through the practice of transcribing music, in order to expand the knowledge and understanding of this creative practice. I have carried out this research through my own artistic practice of transcribing, reflecting on which possible relations to a work of the past – and therefore to musical heritage and tradition in general – are embodied within specific ways of listening and reinventing music. My research methodology involved three main activities intended as distinct moments of the same process that influence each other in a constant feedback loop: First, my involvement as a composer in experimenting with the practice of transcribing existing musical works; second, a study of the existing literature by musicians, artistic researchers, musicologists, philosophers, and writers; and finally, a reflection on specific works, on different approaches among composers, and on my own artistic experiments.

I use different styles of language and media to articulate my thoughts and ideas, and to present the specific knowledge embodied in the artistic processes that are the object of my research. While an academic language serves my reflections and conclusions, I sometimes need a more intimate and subjective tone when considering my own artistic process, in order to avoid an unachievable claim of neutral objectivity. Scores and recordings of my artistic experiments are a relevant part of my research output and have been integrated into the discourse of my dissertation, being themselves research questions or conclusions in their own right.

Chapter 1
Une petite fleur bleue
Listening through a Sound Veil

> *The Duke of Auge appeared at the summit of the keep of his castle, there to consider, be it ever so little, the historical situation. It was somewhat confused. A few odd remnants of the past were still lying around here and there, rather messily. … A layer of mud still covered the earth, but he could already see, blossoming here and there, some little blue flowers.*
>
> Raymond Queneau, *The Blue Flowers*

In 2005, I wrote *Une petite fleur bleue*, a transcription for string quartet of a piece from Girolamo Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* (1635) for organ. For me, this was a decisive step as a composer in search of my own voice. It may seem paradoxical, but at that time, through the work of rewriting someone else's music, I was able to understand my own position with more clarity: By transcribing, by establishing a relation to another work, I was forced to make my role clear in that relation. This relation materialized in practical compositional choices that can be recognized in my later works which are not based on the practice of transcribing. Audio example 1 presents *Une petite fleur bleue* in its entirety.

Audio 1. Bracci, *Une petite fleur bleue,* performed by the Freon Ensemble: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Une-petite-fleur-bleue-G.Bracci.mp3
Complete score in pdf:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Bracci_Une-petite-fleur-bleue.pdf

At that time, as I wrote in my extensive program notes (Bracci 2007b), my primary goal in writing *Une petite fleur bleue* was to get closer to Frescobaldi's music – to listen, imagine, and rethink every note of it, and to be influenced as a composer by this reflective process. I considered transcribing as a tool of knowledge. The act of rewriting every note of a score, even in the simple act of copying it without any changes, is a way of reading it with deeper and more active attention, a fact made obvious by it being a common learning tool for centuries. Transcribing obliges one to read every note and every mark slowly, and this slowness – as I already discussed in the introduction, commenting on Luciano Berio's and Walter Benjamin's thoughts on copying (Berio 2006a, 35; Benjamin 1996, 448) – allows a qualitatively different contact with the text. One looks at every note from a composer's perspective – i.e., considering, reading, writing, imagining, and listening to it – not only as something that is as it is, but

as something that could also have been different, as something that is the consequence of a musical choice.

Writing in his *Philosophical Investigations* about what it means to understand a sentence, Ludwig Wittgenstein makes an insightful parallel with understanding a musical theme or a poem:

> We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.)
> In the one case the thought in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions. (Understanding a poem.) (Wittgenstein 1953, § 531)

Transcribing can be a tool to bring a score that has been fixed and completed – and that apparently cannot be otherwise – to a preceding state where the composer's musical choices were still open and could have been different. Transcribing then allows transcribers to find themselves in someone else's compositional workshop. I decided to write *Une petite fleur bleue* while I was studying Frescobaldi's music. Trying to have access to his workshop – moving cautiously because of my reverence for his oeuvre – was for me an attempt to understand his way of composing from a closer perspective. Transcribing can give access to a point of view that shows – using Gilles Deleuze's image that I referred to in the introduction – a musical work immersed in its own virtuality, looking at the same time at what the work is and what in it is still unexpressed, not yet actualized but nevertheless virtually present.

Furthermore, transcribing gives rise to the question of what "the original" is; and yet, it is also the very action of transcribing that defines what the original is, which is not a foregone conclusion. Is the original the score? Is it the first performance? Is it a recording of a performance, or even the memory that one has of a performance? Or is it something else? Apparently solid, the concept of "original" seems to be constantly moving… What the original is becomes the choice of the transcriber. A musical work becomes an original in the moment in which it is considered as such: Transcribing is a practice that, through transforming a pre-existing musical work, defines (and creates) it as an original. In this sense, ontologically, the copy precedes the original, as a child precedes its parents as such. Reflecting on the relation between original and repetition, at the end of a chapter dedicated to mimetic relations from his *Mimesis: On Appearing and Being*, the philosopher Samuel IJsseling argues that it is only through a copy that something becomes to be regarded as an original:

> Now, the fact is that what is called an original act or event only becomes original in and through the doubling, or repetition of this reality, act or event – that is to say, in and through mimesis, which makes the origin into an origin and at the same time implies a withdrawal of the origin. The origin as such is never given; it only appears afterwards, in the doubling, in other words, in the withdrawal. (IJsseling 1997, 29-30)

The point of departure of my transcribing process was studying the Frescobaldi score that was available to me at the time, without any implication that it was more original or more correct than others that I could have possibly studied. My work started by listening with my inner ear to Frescobaldi's work, meaning here a complex of activities such as performing it – i.e., reading it at the piano – and imagining it while reading it silently or while performing it, and then thinking about it after having read it, and transcribing it, and again imagining how to transcribe it while reading it… Transcribing implies all of these activities, and it is a way to get closer to a musical work, to establish a closer relation to it. To understand this complex entanglement of listening and imagining, it is useful to consider David Lewin's description of musical perception as an active imaginative practice, an embodied action that manifests itself in a number of creative responses such as performing or composing (Lewin 1986). Furthermore, Harold Bloom's idea that the meaning of a poem can only be another poem (Bloom 1973, 70) resonates with Wittgenstein's reflection on understanding, quoted above. Rewriting a musical work is a means to analyze how it is and to imagine how it could be otherwise.

Paying respect

I was not thinking about my transcription as a different way to say the same thing, but as creating a relation to another musical work. I wanted *Une petite fleur bleue* to allow the audience to listen to Frescobaldi's work, and, at the same time, to listen to my intervention, to the way in which I transformed it. I wanted to make both the source – the original – and its transformation audible. I operated on the boundary between transcriptions that repeat something without saying much about the transcriber, and re-compositions that, starting from existing works, transform them until they have become something different and unrecognizable.

Ethically, I wanted to pay respect to Frescobaldi, and aesthetically, I wanted to preserve it somehow and not make it entirely unrecognizable. *Une petite fleur bleue* is also an homage to Anton Webern, as I was inspired by his orchestration of J. S. Bach's six-voice "Ricercar a 6" from the *Musikalisches Opfer*. In the next chapter, I will expand on my considerations of Webern's work, and on the reflections, insights, and tools that have been especially relevant for my own practice. Webern's work was an inspiring model because of the explicit and strong presence of his interventions – he disaggregated and fragmented the single voices of Bach's "Ricercar a 6," redistributing them among the orchestra,

respecting the "notes" (including pitch and duration) of the original, which are all present in his orchestration. But does the respect to the notes coincide with paying respect to a musical work? My reflections on what paying respect means evolved alongside my research project, and today I would say that the wish to make an homage both limited and framed my freedom in transcribing Frescobaldi's work. In *Une petite fleur bleue*, my respect had as a musical outcome the faithfulness to the notes, without removals or additions, and my intervention – and my freedom – concerned the tempo, the timbre, the instrumentation, and the fragmentation of the single voices of the original. As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Jacques Derrida writes about the ever-threatening risk of betrayal that is implied in the relation with the other (Derrida 2007a, 167 and 185). I tried to avoid or at least minimize this risk, and in doing so – by respecting every note – I limited my capacity to transform the original. This limitation gave rise, anyway, to a challenging space for my artistic freedom. This approach originated from three principles: ethically, from my idea at that time of what respecting an original work meant; aesthetically, from my aim to keep the original work distinguishable from my intervention; and technically, from my understanding of my transcription as a layer through which to engage with the original work.

Transcribing Frescobaldi

I will now retrace the path of *Une petite fleur bleue*, commenting and reflecting upon it. First, I chose the piece from Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* that I wanted to transcribe, and I determined the instrumental lineup that I wanted to use. The presence of a drone in the alto voice for the entire duration of the "Cristo, Alio modo" (shown in figure 1) attracted me: It was an invitation to transcribe one single note, working only on its timbral dimension. In this sense, Webern's orchestration and the idea of a *Klangfarbenmelodie*[1] were important references and sources of inspiration.

[1] The term *Klangfarbenmelodie* was "coined by Schoenberg in his *Harmonielehre* (1911) to refer to the possibility of a succession of tone-colours related to one another in a way analogous to a relationship between the pitches in a melody. By this he implied that the timbral transformation of a single pitch could be perceived as equivalent to a melodic succession, that is, that one could invoke tone-colour as a structural element in composition" (Rushton 2001). Beyond the Second Viennese School, the concept of *Klangfarbenmelodie* was very influential among postwar European composers developing electronic music (e.g., Karlheinz Stockhausen), and it anticipated the relevance of timbre as a central element in contemporary music.

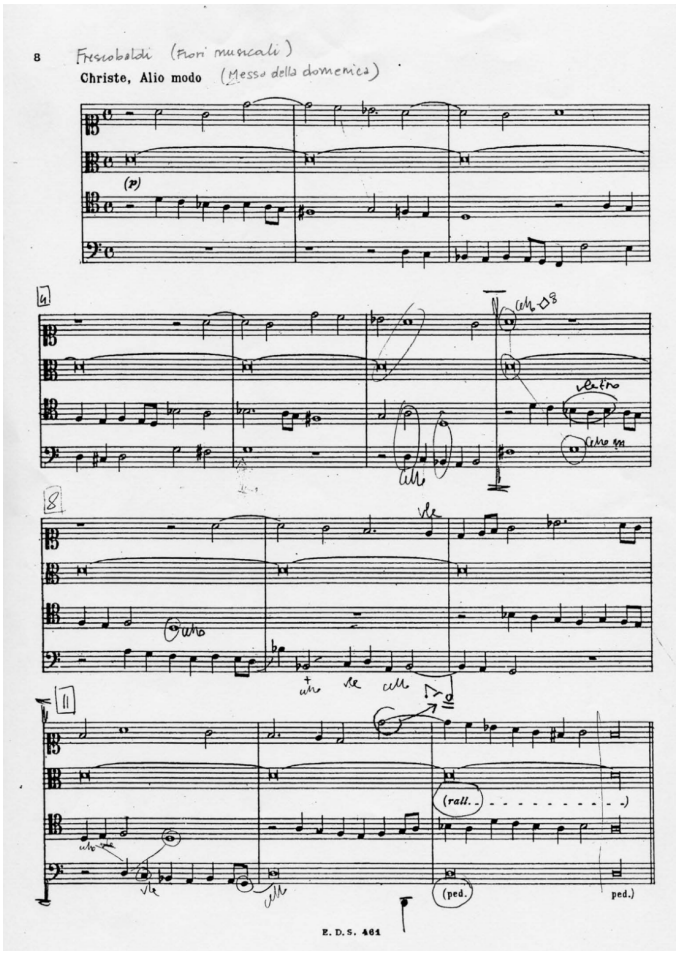


Figure 1. Frescobaldi, "Christe, Alio modo" (*Fiori Musicali*)

Slowness

In transcribing, my intervention mainly focused on the timbral dimension as distinguished from the notes of the original. This choice fixed some aspects of the original, making it recognizable, and it also gave rise to a distinct sound layer on top of Frescobaldi's piece. In order to make this rather articulated layer audible, the tempo of my transcription is much slower than that of the original. This choice had a precise aesthetic reason: I wanted a tempo slow enough to make room for articulating – and thus for perceiving – the constant changes of the sound, but at the same time, not so slow as to lose the continuity of the linear melodic connection between one note and the other. I wanted these two elements – i.e., the melodic linear continuity of the original and my intervention on the timbral dimension – to be perceivable at the same time, thereby enabling the listener to move their attention from one to the other, to perceive their relation.

The slowness of the tempo allows the listener's attention to focus on the sound itself, and on its changes. Slowness – as I mentioned above when discussing

copying a text – also allows a qualitatively different relation with a musical text while transcribing. Both the slowness of the musical tempo and the slowness of (re)writing relate to an intensification of the listening attention: These two kinds of slowness are not disconnected, but the one reflects the other. Paul Craenen, reflecting on the corporality of the composing body, writes about how the relation between these two slownesses – the one of the music and the one of the writing process – is well expressed by Morton Feldman, who in an interview described his way of writing in ink and composing at the piano as a method to find sources of aural resistance to keep the composer's imagination awake (Craenen 2014, 246). In this interview, Feldman states: "One of the reasons I work at the piano is because it slows me down and you can hear the time element much more, the acoustical reality … And I'm very into acoustical reality. For me there is no such thing as a compositional reality" (Feldman in Zimmermann 1976, 6). Craenen emphasizes how the slowness of Feldman's later music "reflects a labour that already embodies this slowness" (Craenen 2014, 246).
The slowness of my transcription aimed to create a space where the listener's attention could focus on the timbre without losing the original's linear melodic connections. But who exactly is this listener? In the first place, I refer to myself as a listener-transcriber, and in this sense, the slowness of the tempo reflected my slow and intensive listening to Frescobaldi's original; but further, through transcribing, my aim was to make my listening experience somehow available to other listeners (i.e., the performers and the audience).

String quartet

My choice of writing for string quartet had two reasons: First, to have an ensemble with a homogenous timbre, which would be an obstacle to an easy imitation of Webern's procedures. Webern fragmented the single voices of Bach's original among different instruments of the orchestra, obtaining a change of the sound within the same voice, and by doing so, he highlighted the relations among different motives. It would have been different had Webern written for an ensemble of instruments from the same family, a situation I specifically chose here in order to find a different solution, to be forced to make use of different timbral possibilities of a string quartet by using different playing techniques. The second reason for choosing a string quartet was my desire to write for a formation that has always been important for experimentation and encounters with musical tradition and heritage. The string quartet has a history that crosses more than two centuries, from the ideal balance of Viennese Classicism and the extreme experience of the late works by Ludwig van Beethoven, through the experimentation on form by composers such as Claude Debussy and Béla Bartók, to the more recent masterpieces in the genre by György Ligeti, Luigi Nono, and Helmuth Lachenmann.

A layer made of sound

In order to create a distinct timbral layer, I did not change any of the notes of the original, but, following Webern's example, I considered every single note independently from the voice to which it belonged in the original. The presence of all the notes without rhythmic changes made the original lines perceptible throughout the whole piece, even if I did not respect the individuality of the four voices. Also, all the harmonic and rhythmic relations stayed intact. In this respect, I also followed Webern's example: From his work, I was inspired to look at the single notes of the polyphonic texture of Frescobaldi's *fiore* as if they were stars among which I had to draw new constellations.[2] We can look at the single stars in the sky as individual points, or we can connect them in our imagination to see and recognize the constellations that we already know. But we can also connect them in new ways, and when doing so, imagine new constellations. I looked at the individual voices as a net of individual points that I could connect and reconnect in different ways. These new linear connections – these new motives crossing the individual voices – are virtually present in the polyphonic texture of the original already, and the transcriber can imagine them, actualize them, and make them audible.

Since every note of the original is played respecting its rhythmical position and its octave (with the exception of the final bar), my freedom was restrained (and functional) to the creation of an extra layer made of timbre: Next to the drone, present in the whole piece and going through a constant timbral transformation, I had the choice of letting each note be played by one or more instruments, of determining each note's duration, of spreading the original voices throughout the quartet, and of constructing a sound world through a variety of performing techniques such as harmonics, *arco*, *pizzicato*, *tremoli*, *jeté*, *sul tasto*, and *sul ponte* passages.

The rules that a composer follows while writing, whether set in advance, unconscious, or made up "as we go along" (Wittgenstein 1953, § 83), are the result of musical – technical, ethical, and aesthetic – aims, personal but always also intertwined with already internalized cultural values. I did not make a set of rules to follow before starting to compose, but the rules or compositional behaviors that I recognized in my transcribing gave rise to a specific musical outcome. My musical choices were artistic responses – based on today's language – to the possibilities that I perceived while transcribing Frescobaldi's original work.

As an example of the constant timbral transformation of the drone on D that is present in the alto voice for the whole piece, let us follow it for the first two bars of my transcription.

[2] See also the paragraph "Insights and tools" of chapter 3, on Webern's *Fuga Ricercata.*

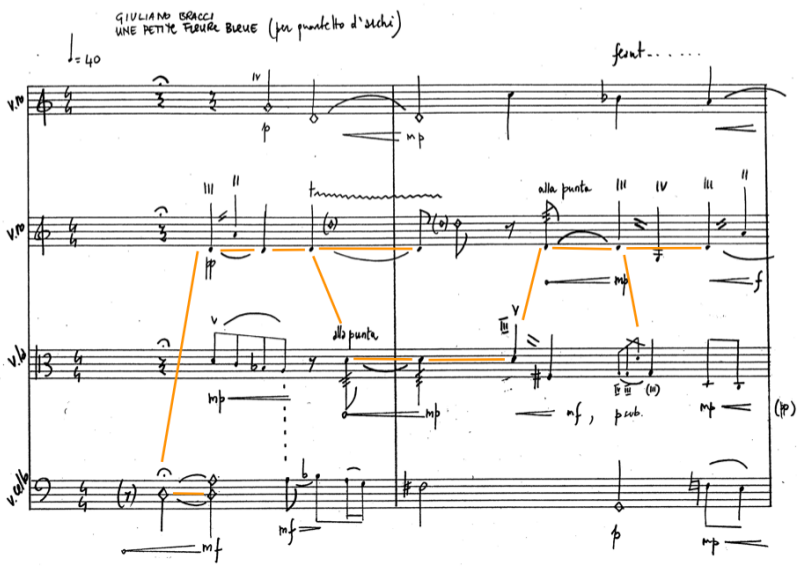


Figure 2. Bracci, *Une petite fleur bleue*, bars 1-2
Note: My transcription is notated in half tempo: ½ = ¼.

In figure 2, I have highlighted the drone with a yellow line. The four instruments of the string quartet are all involved in playing the drone, and thus constantly transforming its timbre. At the beginning, it is a harmonic in the cello line; then the second violin plays it, changing between three performing techniques (as a tremolo on two strings with a fifth, *ordinario*, and then as a tremolo on the same string with its own octave harmonic – in this score, I have notated the tremoli as trills when performed on the same string, and as tremoli when performed on different strings). At the end of the first bar, the viola takes the D from the second violin and plays it as a tremolo *alla punta*. This sound is taken up by the second violin in the second bar and then transformed to a tremolo among open strings.

The other three voices of the original go through the same kind of transformations. Timbral elements and instrumental gestures are superimposed upon the notes of Frescobaldi's music, inhabiting the polyphonic dimension of the piece. Through transcribing, I fragmented the individual voices of the original, distributing them across the string quartet and giving rise to motives that cross these voices. Looking more closely at these elements, we can find many examples in the first bar of *Une petite fleur bleue*, shown in figures 3 and 4, and performed in audio example 2.

Audio 2. Bracci, *Une petite fleur bleue*, bar 1, performed by the Freon Ensemble:
https://giulianobracci.com/phd_examples/ch01/01c_Fleur_Bar1.mp3

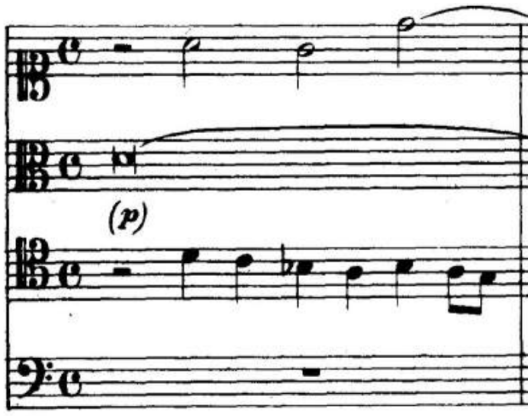


Figure 3. Frescobaldi, "Christe alio modo" (*Fiori Musicali*), bar 1

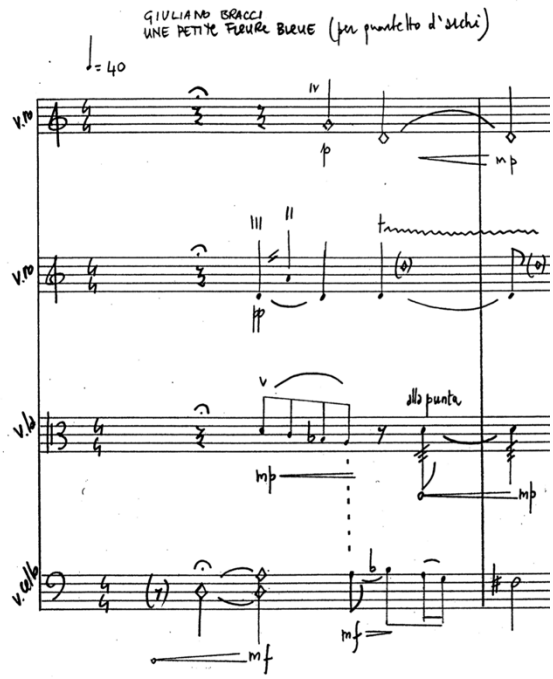


Figure 4. Bracci, *Une petite fleur bleue*, bar 1

On the first beat, the cello plays the D (taken from the alto voice in the original) as a *fermata*. On the second beat of the original, the tenor and soprano enter. In my transcription, this open fifth (D-A) is played by the cello (through harmonics), the second violin (with a tremolo), and the viola, which also plays the first four notes of the tenor.

On the third beat, the second violin stops playing the A of the soprano, keeping only the D of the alto. The first violin takes the soprano line, playing it with harmonics.

The cello stops playing the open fifth (alto-soprano) and takes over the line of the tenor from the viola. On the fourth beat, the viola plays the drone on D as a tremolo, *dal niente*. The second violin has an octave tremolo between the open

string and a harmonic. Here the line of the tenor, which is the most recognizable for its rhythmic articulation, is not fragmented but simply divided between two instruments, whereas the other notes of the original are played and doubled by the other strings so that different timbres are superimposed: harmonics, open strings, and distinct kinds of tremoli.

Harmonic density and instrumental gestures

The freedom in choosing the duration of the single notes allowed me to let some sounds overlap with the subsequent notes, creating moments of greater harmonic density. This happens in bar 4, for example. In Frescobaldi's original, shown in figure 5, the lines of the bass and tenor proceed by thirds (D-F, C♯-E, D-F). In my transcription, shown in figure 6 and performed in audio example 3, the viola and cello begin in the same way, but when the C♯ arrives, the cello plays a double string (C♯-D). This produces a little cluster C♯-D-E which lasts only for an eighth note. On the second beat, the cello takes over the tenor line, and the viola the bass.

This clustering happens again later in the same bar. On the third beat of Frescobaldi's original, the bass and tenor proceed by thirds again (G-B♭, F♯-A). In my transcription, these notes are prolonged to the fourth beat: Both viola and cello play double stops. This produces a cluster (F♯-G and A-B). Both of these cluster examples can be heard in audio example 3.

Audio 3. Bracci, *Une petite fleur bleue*, bars 4-6, performed by the Freon Ensemble:
https://giulianobracci.com/phd_examples/ch01/02c_Fleur_bar4-6.mp3

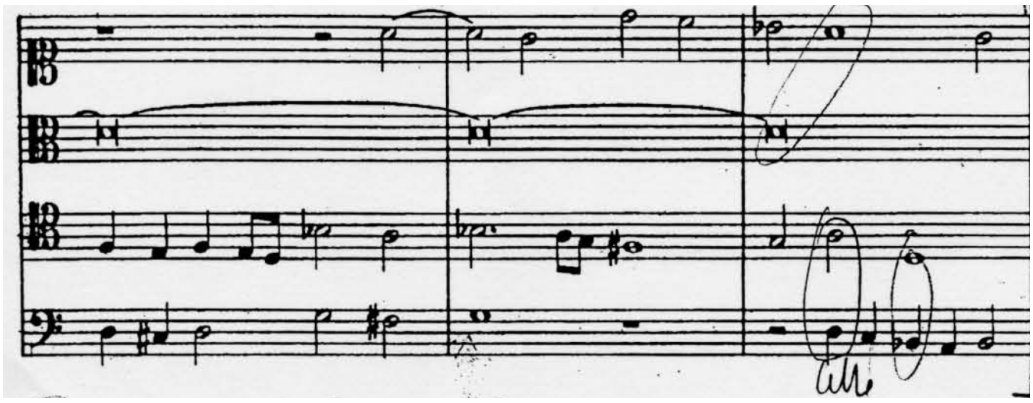


Figure 5. Frescobaldi, "Christe, Alio modo" *(Fiori Musicali)*, bars 4-6

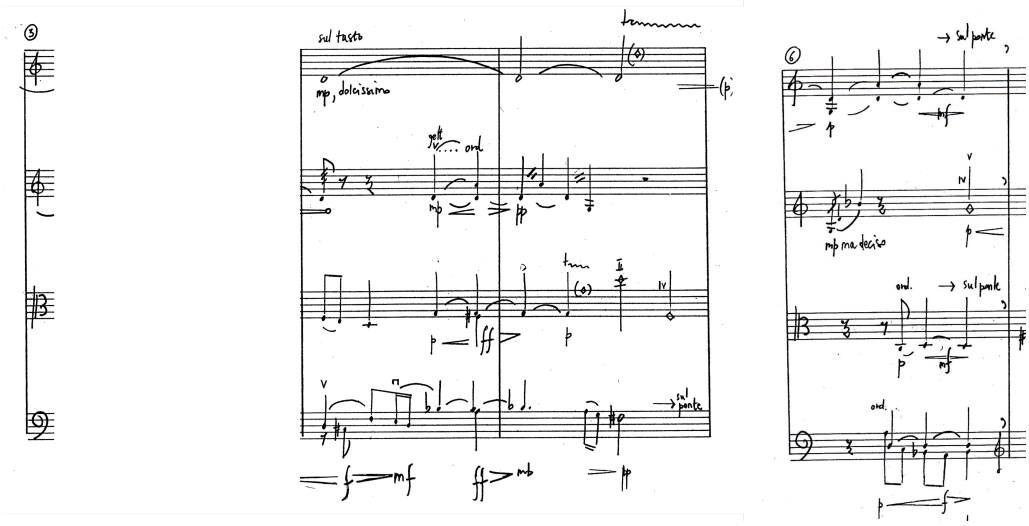


Figure 6. Bracci, *Une petite fleur bleue*, bars 4-6

Another important feature of my work is the isolation of simple, individual instrumental gestures, which are integrated into the texture determined by Frescobaldi's work. Two examples of this approach, mostly related to the use of open strings and natural harmonics, are in the violins' parts in bars 4-6: The first violin plays a long D (the drone) on an open string, which in bar 5 becomes an octave tremolo, and then in bar 6 a passage of double open strings (G-D, then D-A, then D alone). In these same bars, the second violin plays a *jeté* on the D string that becomes first an *ordinario* double open string and then a tremolo between open strings (D-A, and then G-D). Some of these gestures, or instrumental behaviors, are idiomatic, and they sound archaic and primitive: Open strings, open fifths, and natural harmonics are deeply related to the physicality of string instruments and convey a distinctive character to the music. These gestures are indeed not neutral, but bring with themselves a historicity that is connected to instrumental practice, conveying the memory of earlier music.

Another example of instrumental gestures is on the first beat of bar 6, where the second violin plays a B♭ on three different strings, preceded by two grace notes (G-D) that synthesize the three voices of the original and at the same time constitute a gesture with its own identity. Webern used this kind of gesture with the notes of multiple voices in his *Fuga Ricercata* (see, for example, the solo viola in bar 180, which I will discuss at the end of the paragraph "Insights and tools" in chapter 2).

To conclude the musical examples from *Une petite fleur bleue*, let us take a closer look at the last two bars, where Frescobaldi's music is splintered into trills and tremoli, scattered in high-pitched harmonics. My transcription has an extra bar

at the end that prolongs the final chord, allowing it to vanish into thin air (as performed in audio example 4).

Audio 4. Bracci, *Une petite fleur bleue*, bars 12-14, performed by the Freon Ensemble:
https://giulianobracci.com/phd_examples/ch01/03c_Fleur_finale.mp3

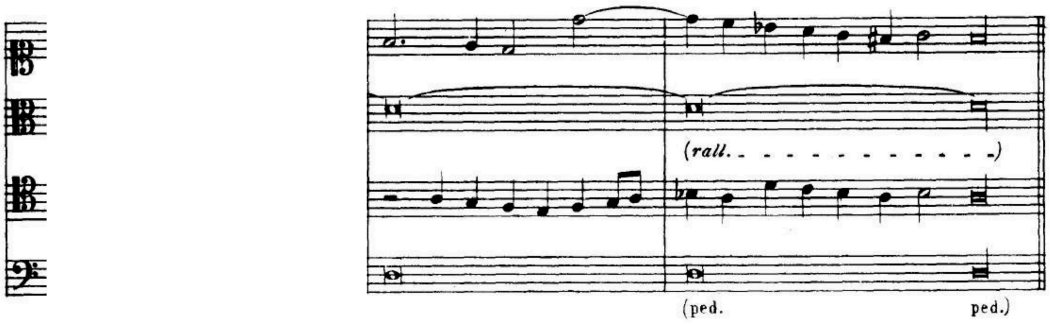


Figure 7. Frescobaldi, "Christe alio modo" (*Fiori Musicali*), bars 12-13

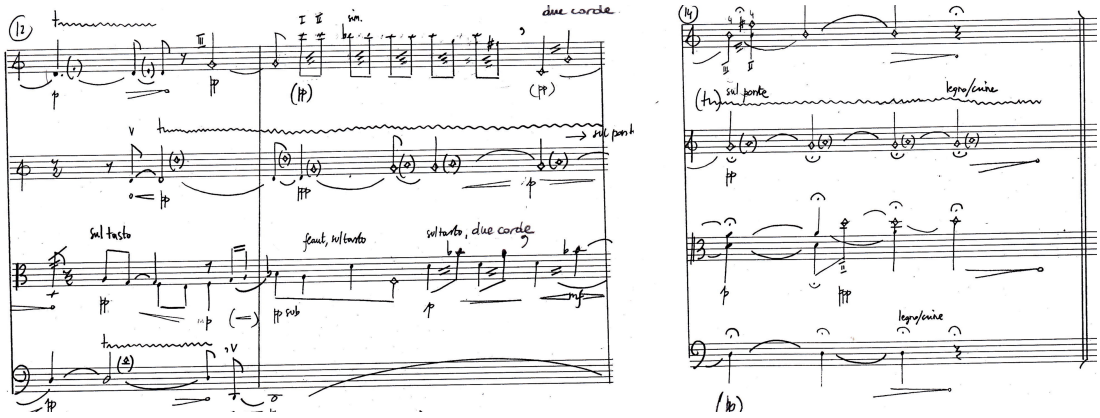


Figure 8. Bracci, *Une petite fleur bleue*, bars 12-14

Shown in figure 7, in the last two bars of "Christe, Alio modo," there are two octave leaps: in the jump to the last bar of the bass (D-D), suggested by the organ pedal indication, and in bar 12 of the soprano (also D-D). In my transcription, shown in figure 8, this interval resonates in the tremoli between an open string and its octave harmonic (in both the cello and the second violin in bar 12). This gesture develops: Following the second violin in bar 13, this tremolo changes pitch and becomes a harmonic tremolo. Furthermore, the leap of the soprano becomes a two-octave leap in my transcription: In bar 12, the first violin plays a low D and then plays a D as a natural harmonic two octaves higher (notated as a diamond shape notehead G on the third string). This line continues as a tremolo: The first violin plays it as tremoli between unisons on two strings. Further, to follow the general expansion of the register, the viola

also plays one octave higher (bar 13), when it touches the drone (D) while playing the line of the tenor.
In these same bars, there are also two examples of how one instrument can play two voices of the original, combining both into a tremolo: In bar 12, the two lines of the soprano and alto are both played by the first violin as a tremolo on one string. The same happens with the viola playing the alto and tenor parts in bar 13.

Layer as a visual metaphor

With the word "layer," I am using a visual metaphor. Sight has its own logic that, in general, I do not want to impose onto sound and listening. But in this case, I find the visual metaphor apt, since it also illustrates the way that I was thinking about my work at the time: I imagined my transcription as a magnifying glass through which one could inspect Frescobaldi's original. My intervention plays with transparency and opacity, and this dimension is also something the performers can play with. To what extent does this magnifying glass filter or let the original piece emerge? These two poles of opacity and transparency can also orient the performing choices of the musicians, in that they can choose to emphasize Frescobaldi's lines and/or the sound of the string quartet.

In order to place my research within a broader context, I will now consider the works and reflections by other composers who have dealt with transcribing as a means to compose the mediation to a musical work.
In the context of this visual metaphor, a relevant work to consider is Dieter Schnebel's *Schubert-Phantasie* (1978), which can be heard in audio example 5. As Schnebel writes in the performance notes of his score, in this fantasia a chamber orchestra plays "an analytic orchestration" – a term that refers to Webern's orchestration of Bach's "Ricercar a 6" – of the first movement of Schubert's late G-Major piano sonata, op. 78, D. 894 (1827). At the same time, the orchestra is placed behind a *Blendwerk,* a sound layer or sound screen, concretely made by another string orchestra (the lower nine staves in the score, which I have outlined in red in figure 9).

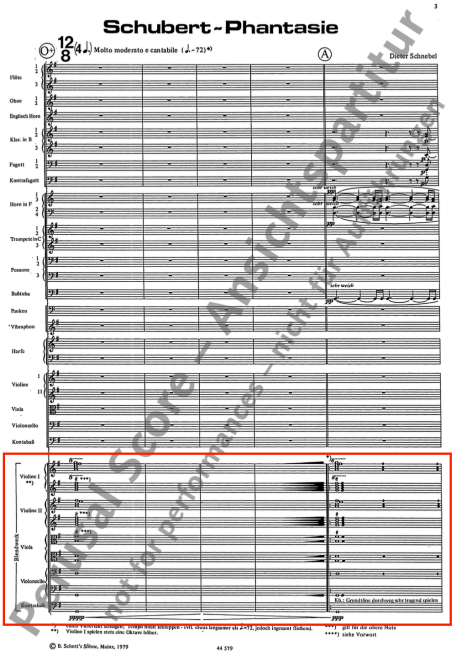


Figure 9. Schnebel, *Schubert-Phantasie*, first page of the score

Schnebel's *Phantasie* begins and ends with the *Blendwerk* alone, that is "moreover, an independent composition for string orchestra which can be performed under this name as a complete piece in itself" (Schnebel 1978). When the two layers are played together, the *Blendwerk* "functions as a kind of veil; if it is played alone it functions as a vague reminiscence of Schubert's work" (Bergé 2007, 229). This veil separates the listener from Schubert's music, but it is also, at the same time, the medium through which it is accessed: It is "at once a means of elucidation, and also an impediment to reception. The same device stages the mediation of the historical object and also the impossibility of it ever becoming immediate" (Brodsky 2017, 165).

Audio 5. Schnebel, *Schubert-Phantasie,* Sinfonieorchester des Südwestrundfunks conducted by Zoltan Pesko:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6dqeI2DtiI&ab_channel=WelleszTheatre.

The German term *Blendwerk* can also be translated as mirage, deception, or illusion (Balik 2011, 177). It expresses a relation to Schubert's music that recognizes its historicity and its belonging to the past, placing it at a distance, separated by a veil. In this sense, Schnebel's transcription does not follow the conception of Schubert's original as a static, eternal, and autonomous entity – presupposed by the notion of *Werktreue* – but lets us perceive the time that separates us from it, transforming Schubert's work in a mirage or a reminiscence.

Tim Rutherford-Johnson, discussing different possible attitudes of restoration in music in relation to Berio's *Rendering* – a "restoration" of Franz Schubert's preparatory sketches for his tenth symphony which does not try "to disguise the damage that time has caused, often leaving inevitable empty patches in the composition" (Berio 1989-90) – emphasizes how in architecture, the concept of *Werktreue* is less significant than in music, as it is obvious that buildings are subject to the passing of time, which consumes and changes them:

> These questions are more easily resolved when dealing with works of architecture than with works of music. The concept of *Werktreue* is less significant, for example, as buildings already track the course of time. They are adapted for different purposes, extended, renovated, and refitted; they fall into disrepair and even ruin. At any given moment, a building reveals its whole history. Attempts are still sometimes made to preserve historical buildings in as close to their original state as possible, but it is more widely recognized that buildings are fluid. (Rutherford-Johnson 2017, 249)

Transcriptions like Schnebel's also acknowledge the fluidity of musical works; they are non-transcendent entities subject to the passage of time and are influenced by how they are listened to in the present.

A transcription that focuses explicitly on the intimate relation of the transcriber with the original work is Gérard Pesson's *Nebenstück* (1998), a "filtered" transcription for clarinet and string quartet of Johannes Brahms's Ballade, op. 10, no. 4 for piano. In his program notes, Pesson writes:

> I have tried to fix objectively the strange contamination that exists between musical invention and memory. […] This ballade from opus 10 literally haunted me for years … If it stayed with me for so long, it is because I never heard it other than in my memory, where it gradually rusted, like something fallen into the sea. Trying to transcribe it was like trying to fish it out again. Discovering it was suitable and indeed contained what my own musical work had added, going so far perhaps as to conceal the ballad, when in fact it took on a precise shape, like coral growing on any matter close to hand, exaggerating the form it encloses. My memory had always multiplied those few bars where Brahms makes a chord turn in on itself, and in order to remain faithful to this false impression, I wrote them out as such. (Pesson 1998b)

Pesson established with the original a relation made of memory and invention: In his poetic description, Brahms's original Ballade had fallen into the sea of the transcriber's memory, after which he transformed and reinvented it. At the end of his program notes, Pesson states that with transcribing, he wanted to remain

faithful to the "false impression" that his memory had made of the original. In this way, Pesson frees himself from the obligation of being faithful to the original work, and even more from the dichotomy between being faithful and unfaithful. Pesson's relation with Brahms's original is made of memory, and memory – remembering (and forgetting) – also invents and creates false impressions.

Transcriptions such as Schnebel's and Pesson's make audible the unavoidable mediation that connects us to (and separates us from) musical works, and tell us that the past cannot be present without mediations: They do not restore the past, but compose the distance that separates us from it. In *Une petite fleur bleue*, I somehow share Schnebel's and Pesson's approaches, aiming to make this distance audible. My transcription acts as a glass that filters – playing with transparency and opacity – the access to Frescobaldi's work. At the same time, by slowing down the tempo and allowing the listener's attention to focus on the timbral dimension and on individual instrumental gestures, I aim to render the intimacy of my listening to Frescobaldi's work.

Further reflections

At the time I was working on *Une petite fleur bleue*, I did not really set myself free from the dichotomy between being faithful and unfaithful to Frescobaldi's work. I indeed still embraced a perspective of respect and faithfulness to an original, considered as a static entity, and consequently I wanted to preserve it at the same time as finding room for my own freedom. These two aims remained quite distinct, and my attitude gave rise to the musical choices and outcomes that I have discussed extensively above.

A relevant achievement of this transcribing experience was the intimacy that I found with Frescobaldi's music and with his writing, and at the same time, an awareness of the possibility of a space to explore where one could play with and adopt different strategies to be in dialogue with a musical work.

My approach in writing *Une petite fleur bleue* had clear limits, which were also the features of the piece: the preservation of the original (every note is there), the freedom in creating a sound layer on top of the original work, and also the absence of any real possibility of a swerve away from Frescobaldi's original. Considering it as a static entity to be respected and preserved did not allow me, for example, to enter into a dialogue with its internal structure, questioning and transforming it: I slowed down and stretched the tempo, but all the harmonic and rhythmic relations and the overall sequence of events stayed intact. Aiming to maintain Frescobaldi's original, recognizable and distinguishable from my intervention, finally limited my capacity to contaminate it and to let my language be contaminated by it.

This experience made me interested in the practice of transcribing, both as a workshop to study and look for a dialogue with musical works from the past, and as a litmus test of a composer's attitude towards musical tradition. I did not

write another transcription for another eight years, after which I decided to tackle this topic again, framing it within my artistic research.
As a next step, I decided to choose another polyphonic piece, and to keep a similar instrumentation, using only strings. For my transcription *Hortense* (2013), for string trio, the original is a five-voice madrigal by Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa. While in Frescobaldi's piece, there were four voices (though in fact one was a drone), and I had at my disposal a string quartet, transcribing five voices for three strings is a greater challenge, and this obliged me to find different, more radical, approaches. More interestingly, while Frescobaldi's *Fiore Musicale* is for organ, Gesualdo's madrigal is for voices, raising the question of how to deal with the text. This scenario obliged me to deal differently with the original, and to search for new ways to be in dialogue with an already existing piece.

I did not decide how to proceed in advance: Composing and transcribing can consist of putting oneself in a situation to see how one's creativity reacts. A metaphor that helped me to frame my research, and that arose during my discussions with composer Stefano Gervasoni, is the idea of looking at each of these transcribing experiences as a chemistry experiment: to consider the already existing musical work as a reagent that comes into contact with my own musical invention, and to allow myself to investigate the reaction. The original work is not a simple pretext, since it produces unexpected reactions with singular specific features.

Before dealing with *Hortense* in chapter 3, however, I will dedicate the next chapter to Webern's *Fuga Ricercata* (1935), his seminal orchestration of J. S. Bach's "Ricercar a 6" from the *Musikalisches Opfer* (1747).

Chapter 2
Webern Transcribes Bach

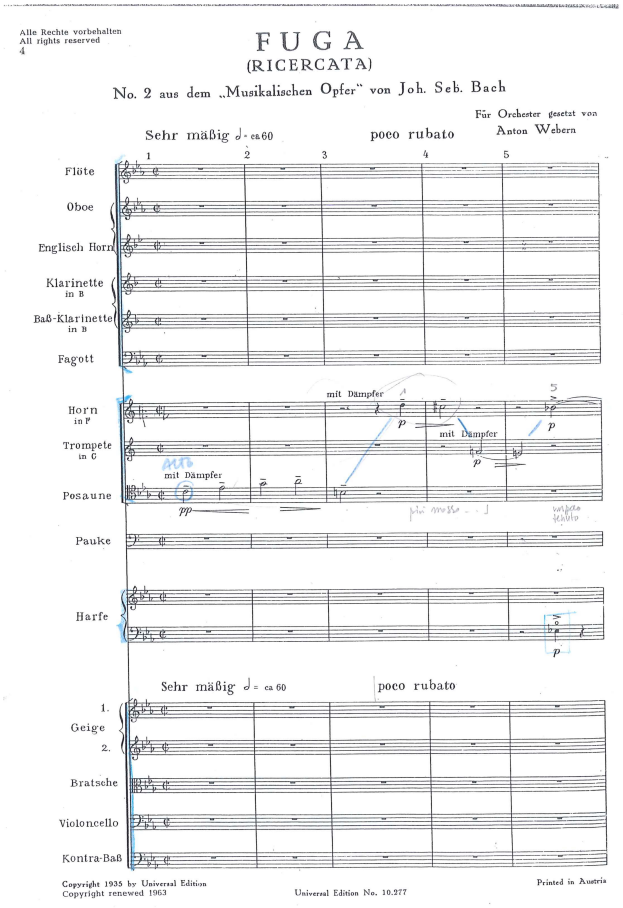


Figure 1. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata,* first page of the score

Before working on *Une petite fleur bleue*, my transcription for string quartet of a piece from Girolamo Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali*, I studied Anton Webern's *Fuga (Ricercata)* (1935), a transcription for orchestra – an orchestration – of Johann Sebastian Bach's "Ricercar a 6" from the *Musikalisches Opfer*, BWV 1079 (1747). Webern disaggregated and fragmented the single voices of Bach's fugue, distributing them among the different instruments of the orchestra. In doing so, he contradicted the usual and expected homogenous sound of the single voices of a polyphonic work; instead, he isolated different motives and highlighted new relations across the single voices.

Webern's work presents a musical situation in which Bach's work and Webern's own intervention as orchestrator remain distinguishable and in tension with each other: It gives rise to a musical space where the relation between the original and the transcription remains audible. How is this musical space articulated, and with what kind of musical logic is it imbued? How does this happen concretely?

I see my *Une petite fleur bleue* as a double homage to both Frescobaldi and Webern, and by investigating the relationship and tension between Webern's transcription and Bach's work, I found possible tools and insights for my own transcribing practice.

Slowness

In chapter 1, I have addressed the slowness of writing that is implied in the practice of copying and transcribing, which allows for a qualitatively different relation with a text, particularly an intensification of attention. In order to understand how Webern transcribed Bach's work, I did not copy Webern's transcription, but I highlighted the six voices of Bach's fugue throughout the entire orchestral score, marking them with different colors. I followed Webern's path in reverse, going back, note by note, to the unity of the voices that he disaggregated, fragmented, and distributed throughout the orchestra. I assigned one color to each of the six voices: soprano I–red; soprano II–green; alto–blue; tenor I–orange; tenor II–purple; bass–yellow. Figure 2 shows an example of my markings on a page of Webern's score where all six voices are present.

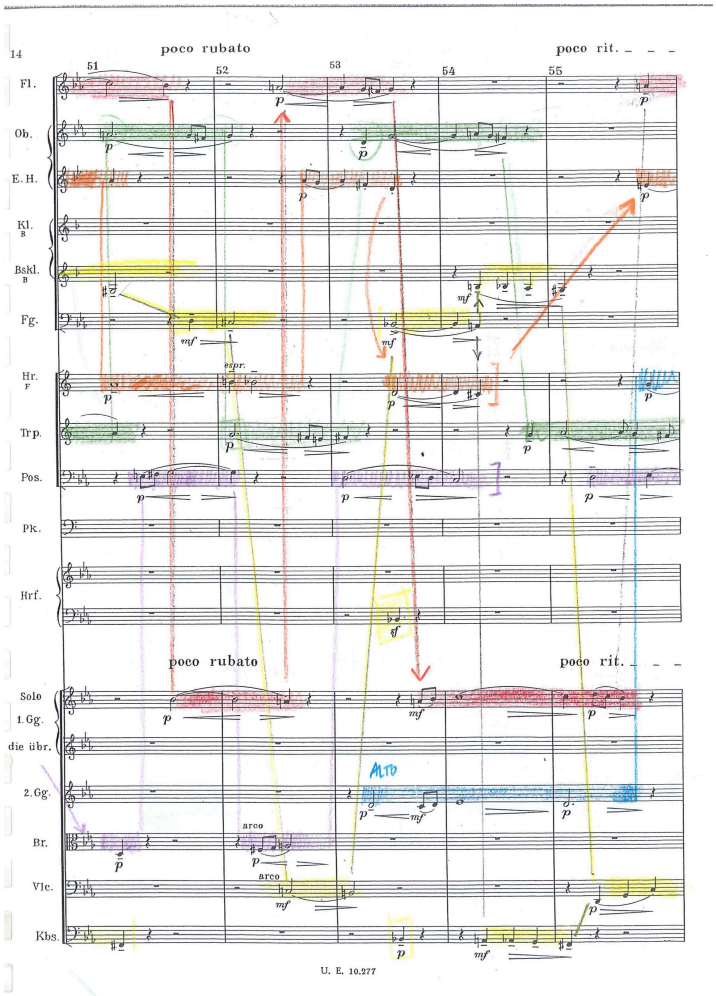


Figure 2. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata,* bars 51-55

Highlighting and checking what happened to each note of the original within Webern's orchestral score shaped my relationship with his transcription: The visual aspect of the score – looking at it, reading it, slowly reconstructing the single voices, and listening to it with my inner ear – was more important for me, both in terms of quality and quantity of time, than listening to a recording of the piece. My reading gave priority to an analytic-compositional perspective rather than to a perceptual-auditory one: In the colored score, the fragmentation of the voices throughout the whole orchestra stands clearly in the foreground compared to other musical elements that have a strong perceptual importance, such as the harmonic flow and the tonal context that remained unaltered from Bach's original. Furthermore, as mentioned in chapter 1, in Webern's transcription the pitches of the original stayed intact, and since there are no additions or subtractions, the number of bars and the form of the piece also remained the same.

My interest lay in the coexistence of a radical musical operation driven by a particular sound concept, and the simultaneous preservation of the original, even if, in Bach's unaltered tonal context, the result of Webern's transcribing process might remain an effect that stays in the background from a perceptual perspective. It is difficult to make general statements about the musical perception of a piece, as it is a very subjective matter, but I can say that the study of Webern's transcription, and especially my visual analysis of it, strongly informed my listening and set off specific aspects of it. I believe that Webern's transcription can allow the listener to move their attention between the polarities of Bach's original and its transformation. But how might a listener make those same shifts of attention without a score? Is sound alone sufficient? Or is additional information necessary? The answer to these questions may lie in the development of curatorial thinking, as "how music is presented defines how it is heard, performed, and talked about" (Amaral 2022, in "Propositions").

Terminology

In this chapter, I use the terms "orchestration" and "arrangement" as interchangeable with the term "transcription." Grove Music Online defines an arrangement as "the reworking of a musical composition, usually for a different medium from that of the original" (Boyd 2001). An orchestration is then an arrangement, or a transcription, for orchestra. Bach's "Ricercar a 6" has no original instrumental indication, nor indications of dynamics or tempo markings; Webern indeed considered it as an abstract conception that he could make concrete by transcribing it. The term "instrumentation" also describes Webern's work and indicates more explicitly the absence of a specific set of instruments in the original. Webern himself refers to his work in his letters using different terms: instrumentation, orchestration, and arrangement.

Webern's *Fuga Ricercata*

Webern's orchestration has already been studied and analyzed in depth (Straus 1986; Zenck 1989; Dahlhaus 2000; Davies 2003; Malvano 2008). I will focus on my own study of Webern's work and on the answers that it gives to my research questions: What happens to the original work? And how is it transformed? Furthermore, I will reflect on and describe the tools that I found meaningful for my own practice.

Studying Webern's thoughts about his own work, it is important to notice how, in a letter to the Swiss painter Franz Rederer, he made explicit reference to the concept of *Klangfarbenmelodie*,[1] and referred to transcribing as an act of transformation:

> Among the works [performed at a concert in London in 1935 by the BBC Orchestra, conducted by Herman Scherchen] was the first performance of my orchestral arrangement of a fugue of Johann Sebastian Bach, a totally unknown and wonderful work. Abstractly notated in the original, as are later the fugues in the Art of Fugue, it is unspecified as to whether it should be sung or played, whether it should be performed fast or slow. It is without tempo markings, includes no dynamics, in short, nothing by which one normally indicates how things are to be understood or performed. And now I have transformed this abstract conception into a Klangfarbenmelodie. (Webern 1935b, quoted in Zenck 1989: 311-314)

The unspecified instrumentation and the absence of tempo and dynamic indications gave Webern room to radically transform Bach's piece. Webern also presented his orchestration as an homage and a way to reveal and give concreteness to elements that were already implied in Bach's counterpoint techniques – in other words, to actualize some of the virtualities already present in the original. This idea follows Webern's position towards tradition: In his lectures "Wege zur neuen Musik" (1933), he indeed insisted on the historical necessity of dodecaphony, and, in this perspective, Bach was one link in a logical development that can be traced from Gregorian chant through the Franco-Flemish School to the Second Viennese School. Webern saw his own music as the further step in this musical tradition, a step that provided a continuity and a development, not a break with the past. Webern's homage reflects a specific position within a musical tradition: He reshaped Bach's work in the direction of post-tonal concerns, and honored him as a predecessor and a key figure of the

[1] See footnote 2 of chapter 1.

historic development of that tradition of which the Second Viennese School was the present heir (Auner 2004).[2]

In his seminal analysis from 1969, Carl Dahlhaus described Webern's orchestration as an analytical process, an operation that made the compositional and motivic structure of the original piece by Bach explicit (Dahlhaus 2000). Webern applied a dodecaphonic technique, but, paradoxically, he did not intervene on the pitches. On the one hand, one can look at this operation as an anticipation of total serialism with an emphasis on timbre as a parameter. On the other hand, Webern's transcription preserved the original, but also gave to the piece – because of the large orchestra and the use of agogics – a late-romantic expressivity, one that is neither baroque nor related to Webern's contemporaneity.

The fugue's subject

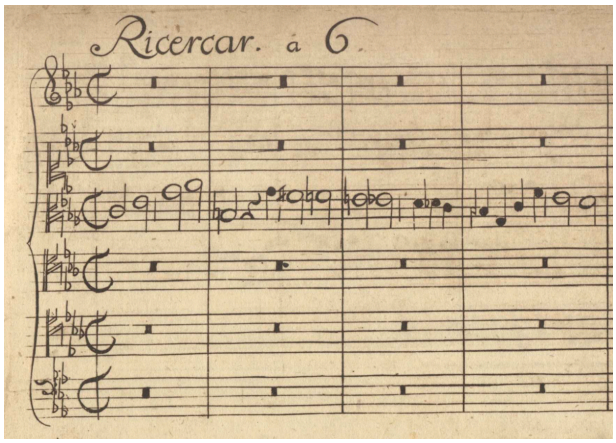


Figure 3. Bach, "Ricercar a 6" (*Musikalisches Opfer*), first appearance of the fugue's subject.

[2] From the late 1920s on, in the years that precede the orchestration of the *Fuga Ricercata*, there are constant references to Bach in Webern's writings related to his own works. For Webern's relation to Bach in his studies, see Martin Zenck's "Tradition as authority and provocation: Anton Webern's confrontation with J. S. Bach" (1989). Webern developed a closer relation with Bach's music through his activity as a conductor, which increased considerably from 1927 on: He conducted the Konzert für vier Cembali, BWV 1065; the Konzert für Cembalo, Traversflöte und Violine, BWV 1044; the premiere of Arnold Schoenberg's transcription of the Präludium und Fuge in Es-Dur, BWV 552; the *Kreuzstab Cantata,* BWV 56, in Busoni's edition; the third "Brandenburgisches" Konzert, BWV 1048; the Konzert in C für 2 Cembali, BWV 1061; the *Actus Tragicus,* BWV 106, and the *Johannes-Passion,* BWV 245**.** About Webern's activity as a conductor and organizer, see Piero Violante's *Eredità della musica. David J. Bach e i concerti sinfonici dei lavoratori viennesi 1905-1934* (2004). Webern and Schoenberg both made a strong effort to place their own music, along with that of the whole Second Viennese School, into the line of a precise German tradition. To make this connection clear is possibly one of Webern's reasons for writing this transcription. For more information, see Auner's "Proclaiming a mainstream: Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern" (2004).

Looking closer at Webern's instrumentation of the first appearance of the fugue's subject, shown in figure 3, we can see in figure 4 how it is fragmented and divided among three different instruments – horn, trumpet, and trombone – sometimes doubled by the harp.

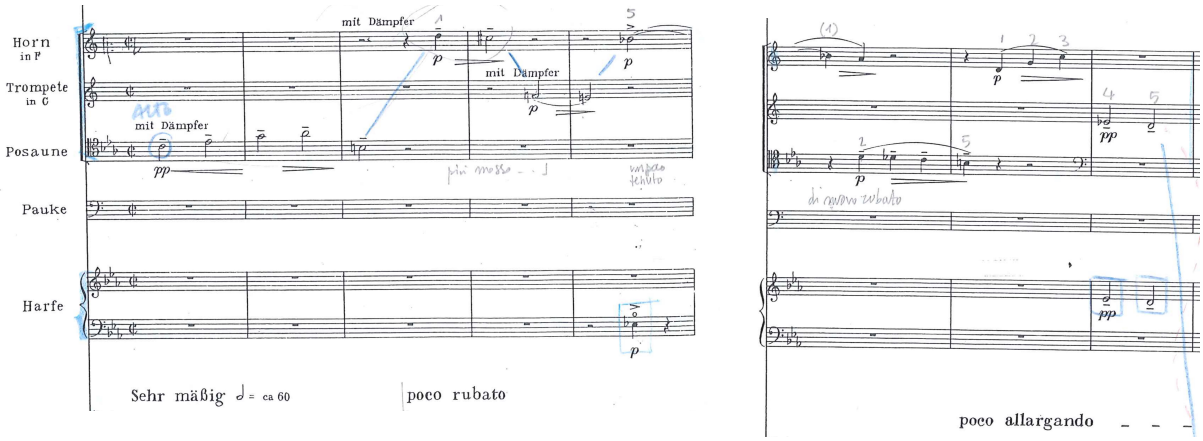


Figure 4. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 1-8, first appearance of the subject

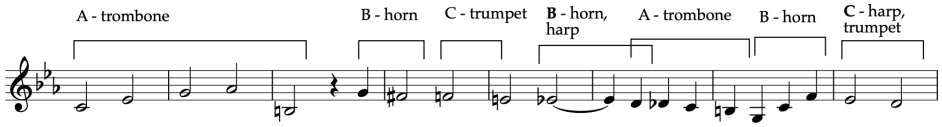


Figure 5. Synthesis of Webern's instrumentation of the fugue's subject

Audio 1. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata,* bars 1-8, performed by the Münchener Kammerorchester and Christoph Poppen (conductor): http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/01-Webern_-Subject-1.mp3

Figure 4 and audio example 1 present the beginning of the piece and the first appearance of the subject (highlighted in blue in figure 4), which is in the alto voice in Bach's original. The subject appears twelve times throughout the entire work, and it is always fragmented in the same way: The seven fragments of the subject stay the same, but they are played each time by a different combination of three instruments. This orchestration of the fugue's subject contradicts the listener's expectation of the subject as an isolated and recognizable element among the other melodic material. However, Webern supplies repetition through "a recurrent timbrical scheme" (Malvano 2008: 11-12). The fragmentation among the instruments of the orchestra indeed follows a stable scheme: ABC/**B**AB**C**, where every letter corresponds to an instrument, while the letters in bold correspond to the doubling of the harp, which underlines the

middle note of the subject and the last two notes. This structure is shown clearly in figure 5, a synthesis of Webern's instrumentation of the fugue's subject. The sixth and the twelfth appearance of the subject are the only exceptions to this scheme and are the only cases in which the strings (cellos and double basses) take part in the subject. They mark the end of the exposition and the end of the whole fugue respectively: the sixth appearance follows the scheme ABC/**B**AC**B**, and in the twelfth one – the conclusion of the piece – the same instruments play *unisono* without any fragmentation for the first and only time in the entire transcription (see figure 6).

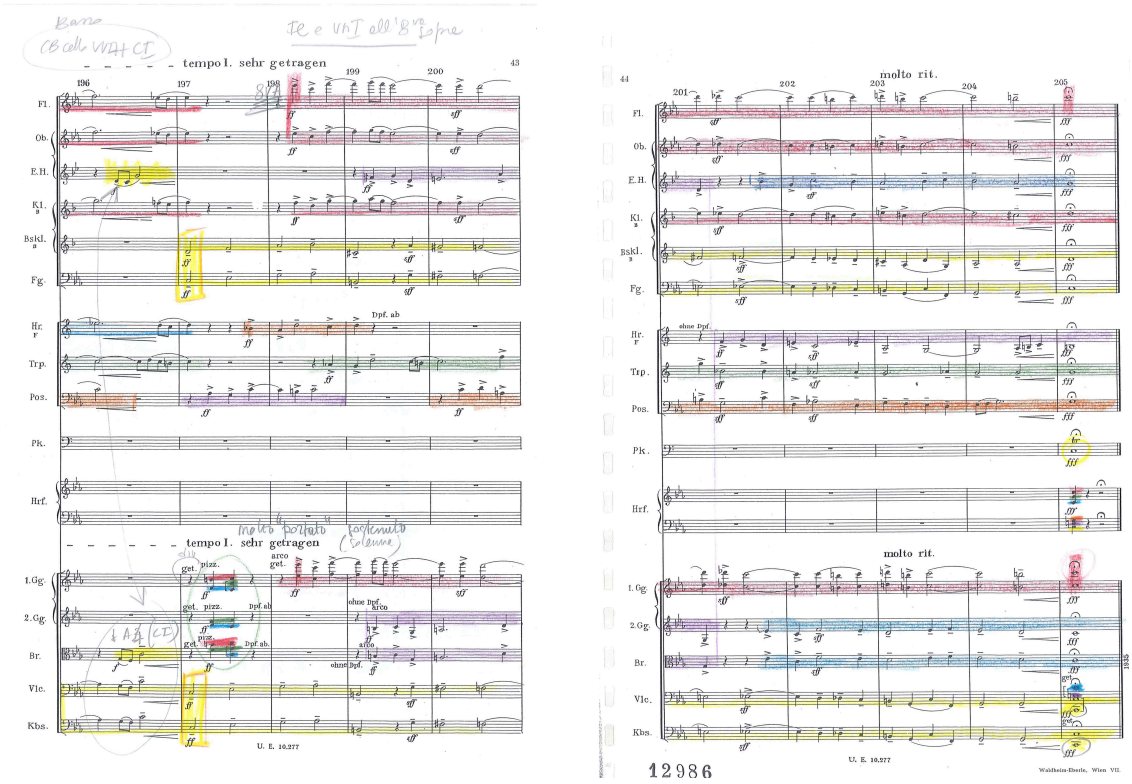


Figure 6. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 197-205. The twelfth and last entrance of the subject, without any fragmentation, is marked in yellow.

On the one hand, Webern's operation dissolves the unity of the subject, but on the other, the unity of the subject is maintained by the repetitiveness of the alternation of the timbre: Without changing any note, Webern transforms the subject's melodic distinctiveness into a repetitive scheme of orchestral colors, "a purely timbral way of developing musical themes" (Malvano 2008, 10). It is exclusively through choices of instrumentation that he concretely intervenes on Bach's polyphony, dissolving the unity of the voices and letting emerge some of the elements that were only virtually present in the original. His choices of instrumentation concern structural musical elements, and, in this sense, timbre proves to be a parameter entirely more than a superficial one.

The next two tables summarize and highlight some aspects of Webern's instrumentation. Table 1 shows the twelve different instrumentations of the fugue's subject.

	Bars	**Voice in Bach**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**Doublings**	**Dynamics of the subject**
1	1-8	contralto	trombone (mute)	horn (mute)	trumpet	harp	*pp-p-pp*
2	9-16	soprano II	flute	clarinet	oboe	harp	*pp-p-pp*
3	17-24	tenor II	bass clarinet	trombone (mute)	bassoon	harp	*pp-p-pp*
4	25-32	tenor I	English horn	horn	bass clarinet	harp	*pp-p-p*
5	37-44	soprano I	trumpet (mute)	oboe	clarinet	harp	*p-mp-p*
6	49-56	bass	bass clarinet, double basses (*pizzicato*)	bassoon	celli	harp, double basses	*p-mf-p*
7	95-103	tenor II	bassoon	bass clarinet	trombone	harp	*pp-p-pp*
8	115-123	contralto	trumpet	English horn	horn (mute)	harp	*mf-mf-f*
9	131-138	soprano I	oboe	flute	trumpet	harp	*pp-p-pp*
10	145- 152	tenor I	horn (mute)	trombone	trumpet	harp	*pp-p-p*
11	171-178	soprano II	clarinet (2nd time with vln I *pizzicato*)	trumpet	horn (mute)	harp, celli	*p-mp-f*
12	197-205	bass	bass clarinet, bassoon, celli, and double basses				*ff-sff-fff*

Table 1. Webern's different instrumentations of the fugue's subject

Table 2 lists the instrumentation of the single voices throughout the whole exposition of the fugue (bars 1-56) and makes clear how they are spread out through the whole orchestra. For each entry of the six voices (playing the subject) and for the two episodes, which precede the last two entries, there is a column. The entries are each eight bars long, as is the subject of the fugue.

Voice	**Bars 1-8**	**9-16**	**17-24**	**25-32**	**Episode (33-36)**	**37-44**	**Episode (45-48)**	**49-56**
Soprano I						**S** tr-ob-cl	**vnI**-fl	**vnI**-fl
Soprano II		**S** fl-cl-hn	**CS** vle-**vnI**	fl-ob-cl	fl-cl	fl-**vla**	fl-ob-cl/ eh-ob-tr	ob-tr
Alto	**S** tbn-hn tr-hp	**CS** vnII-**vla**	hn-vniII **vcl**	**vla**-bs-tr	**vnI**	**vnI**-vniII-eh-vle	hn-vle	vle-hn-vniII
Tenor I				**S** eh-hn-cl	vniII-**vcl**	vniI-vniII-timp-tbn	vniI-vniII timp	timp-eh-hn
Tenor II			**S** clb-tbn-bs	**CS** vcl-tbn	tbn-timp	vcl-clb hn-bs	tbn-bs	bs-tbn-vle
Bass								**S** clb-bs-vcl-cb

Table 2. Webern's instrumentation of each voice

Abbreviations:

S: subject
CS: countersubject

fl: flute
ob: oboe
eh: english horn
cl: clarinet
clb: bass clarinet
bs: bassoon

hn: horn
tr: trumpet
tbn: trombone

timp: timpani
hp: harp

vni: violins
vle: violas
vcl: celli
cb: double basses

Strings in **bold** are *soli*

The fugue's subject is transcribed with different timbres each time. This permutation technique is closely connected with serialism, and with Webern's method of writing his own music. Whereas in a traditional orchestration each voice is usually maintained through a constant timbre, Webern's orchestration disaggregates the unity of the individual voice into isolated fragments, highlighting in this way these motives and their relationships across the voices. The linear character of the single voices is not completely lost, and the "imposition of a new source of musical coherence does not eradicate the old one" (Straus 1986, 327). The unity within one voice is substituted by the structural unity of the instrumentation – that is, by the fixed and stable pattern that governs the fragmentation of the voices and their instrumentation. The musical coherence is further maintained by the presence of all the notes that also keep their original pitches and duration, guaranteeing the original tonal context.

Webern's subtle orchestration invites the listener to focus their attention on its unusual amount of timbral detail and to come – metaphorically – closer. A closer proximity and a focus on the details are asked in order to appreciate and discern all the instrumental changes. This proximity corresponds to the analytic-compositional perspective mentioned earlier in this chapter. By contrast, the original features in Bach's work emerge through moving one's focus of attention and listening as if from a distance or from behind a closed door so that tiny details cannot be perceived. From a distance, the melodic and harmonic contours indeed survive in Webern's orchestration, while their fragmentation becomes less evident.
Continuing with this metaphor, distance plays a similar role in Dieter Schnebel's *Schubert-Phantasie*, discussed in chapter 1. In both situations, it is only possible to perceive the original from a distance. Both transcriptions give concrete existence to the distance that separates us from the original. However, while Schnebel creates a veil, Webern does quite the opposite: His orchestration is timbrically hyper-detailed, so that the listener has to modulate their attention, moving further away to perceive the original, or coming closer to focus on the timbral details. Webern's transcription creates a musical space where the listener can orient themselves between these two poles – Bach's original and its transformation – calibrating the distance in their listening attention.

Connections between fragments of different voices
One of the main features of Webern's orchestration is that it highlights the motivic relations among the single voices. Coming closer to the details, an example of how Webern connects musical fragments belonging to different voices is seen in his use of *pizzicato* throughout the exposition (bars 1-56).

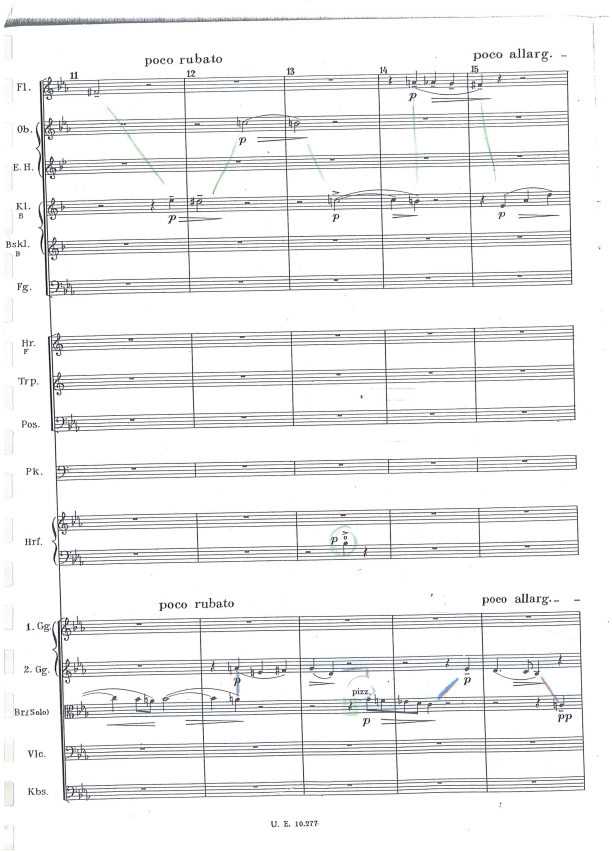


Figure 7. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 11-15

Audio 2. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 11-15:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_11-15.mp3

He uses pizzicato to create a relationship between the central note of the subject and the five-note motif of the countersubject. As shown in figure 7, the middle note of the subject in the soprano II line (highlighted in green) – a sounding B♭ – is played by the clarinet and the pizzicato harp in bar 13. The pizzicato continues into the five-note motif of the countersubject in the alto voice (highlighted in blue), this time played by the violas in bars 13-14. You can hear the effect in audio example 2.

This association through pizzicato is repeated and confirmed in the third appearance of the subject, where the five-note motif is performed by the solo first violin in bars 21-22 (as presented in figure 8 and audio example 3).

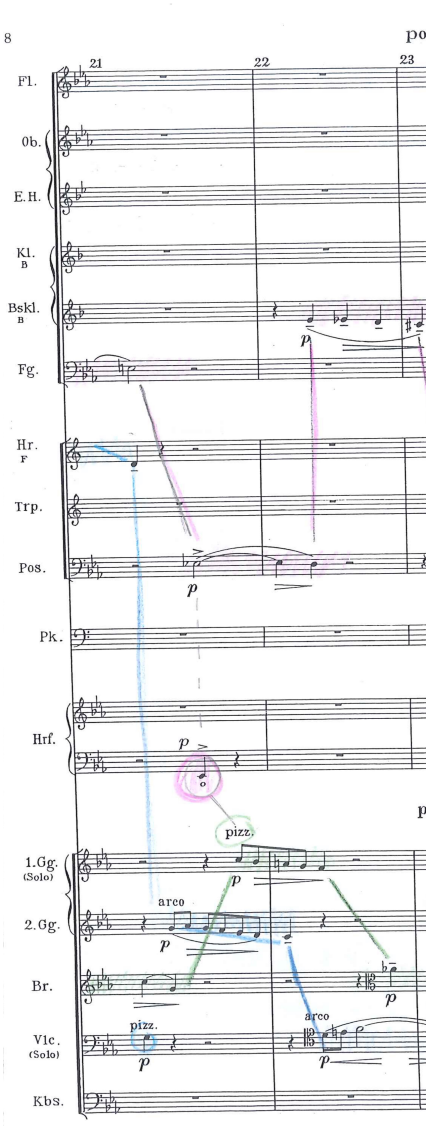


Figure 8. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 21-22

Audio 3. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 21-22:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_21-22.mp3

The pizzicato timbre connects the central note of the subject (from the tenor II line, highlighted in purple: E*b* played by the harp and the trombone in bar 21) to the five-note motif of the countersubject (from the soprano II line, highlighted in green: solo first violin in bars 21-22).
For the fourth appearance of the subject (bars 29-30, presented in figure 9 and audio example 4), instead of a pizzicato in the countersubject, we find the trombone playing *portato*, highlighted in purple at the end of bar 29 and going into bar 30. In this context we can consider, and hear – if we come closer – the *portato* as a timbral development and a variation of the previous pizzicati.

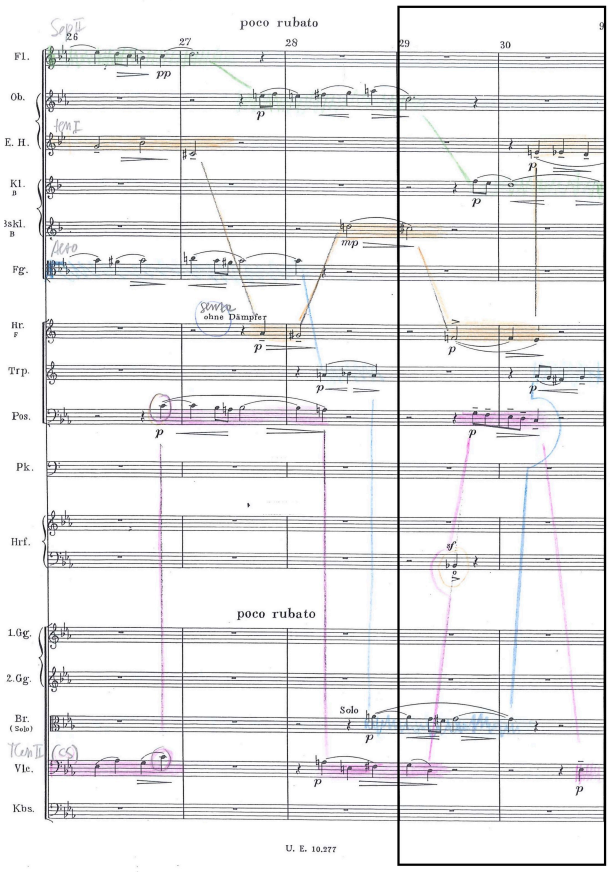


Figure 9. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 26-30

Audio 4. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 29-30:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_29-30.mp3

The sixth entry of the fugue's subject – played by the bass – concludes the exposition. Here, for the first time, we find an octave doubling: The double bass, playing pizzicato, doubles the bass clarinet and highlights the first notes of the subject, the middle note of the subject with the harp, and the countersubject's descending motif. Here the harp shares its role with the double bass. The subject's middle note and the descending motif are even more explicitly connected (see figure 10 and audio example 5, bars 53-55), and this element will be the main building block for the following section of the fugue's development.

Webern's use of pizzicato in the fugue exposition is a clear example of how he employs timbre as a binding element to actualize and make audible implicit connections between different musical fragments of Bach's original. His orchestration has been relevant to my research as it provided a concrete example of how to delimit a challenging space to transform the original and intervene as a transcriber on specific parameters (timbre and instrumentation, in this case) without changing others (pitch and duration).

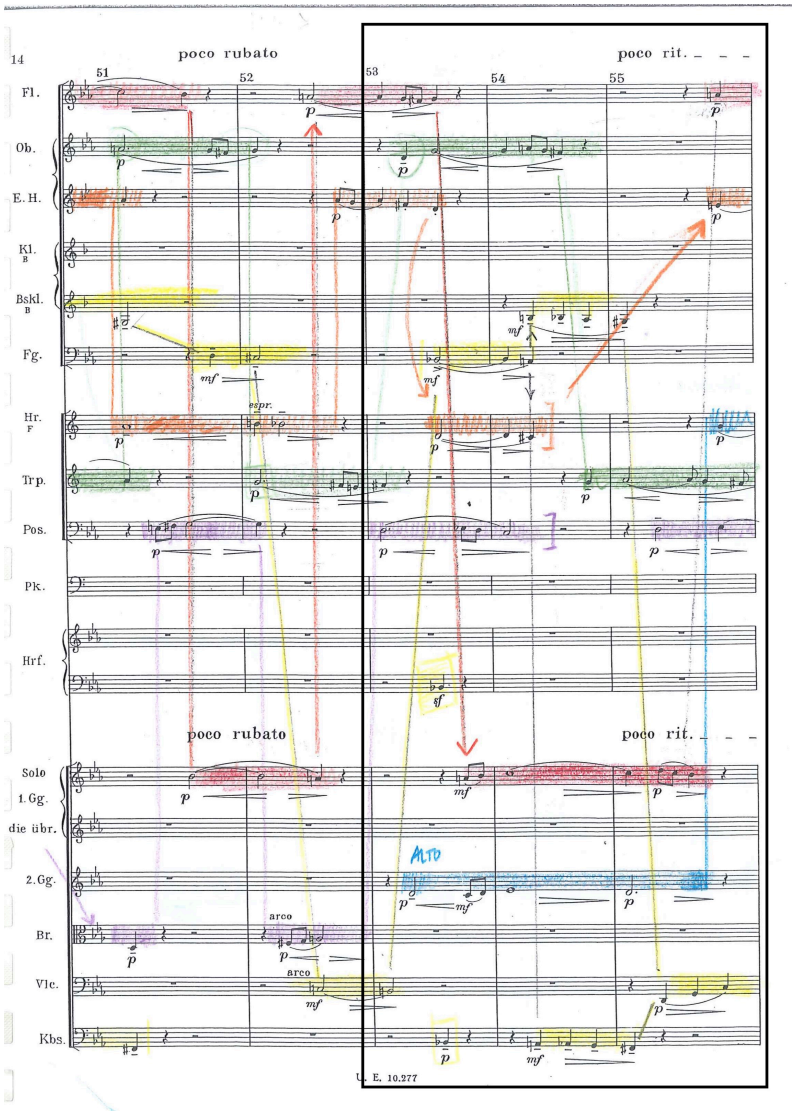


Figure 10. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 51-55

Audio 5. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 53-55:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_53-55.mp3

Insights and tools

My aim for looking in depth at the *Fuga Ricercata,* was to understand Webern's way of working, not in order to reproduce his characteristic aesthetic but to find and develop specific tools to use in my own practice.

I have reflected on Webern's peculiar orchestration of the fugue's subject as an example of his approach to Bach's original for the whole transcription. In the previous examples, I have also shown how Webern's transcription, through the use of timbre, is able to highlight the connections among different fragments in regards to the unity of the single voices. Webern's choices of instrumentation are not simply superimposed as an orchestral garment on top of the original;

rather, they are in dialogue with Bach's music, and, importantly, they reveal and embody Webern's analytic listening of Bach's work in a practice that might be called analyzing-through-transcribing.
The listener can come closer and listen to Webern's *Klangfarbenmelodie*, and, at the same time, they can listen to Bach's "Ricercar a 6" as if from a distance through Webern's instrumentation, focusing on the aspects of the original that are preserved – i.e., the pitches, and therefore the tonal context and the harmonic flow. The coexistence of the original work and the aesthetic freedom inherent in the practice of transcribing is an important element that I have tried to include in my own practice.

One further particular effect of Webern's instrumentation, connected with the disaggregation of the voices, is that it is able to actualize melodies that were only virtually present in Bach's original.

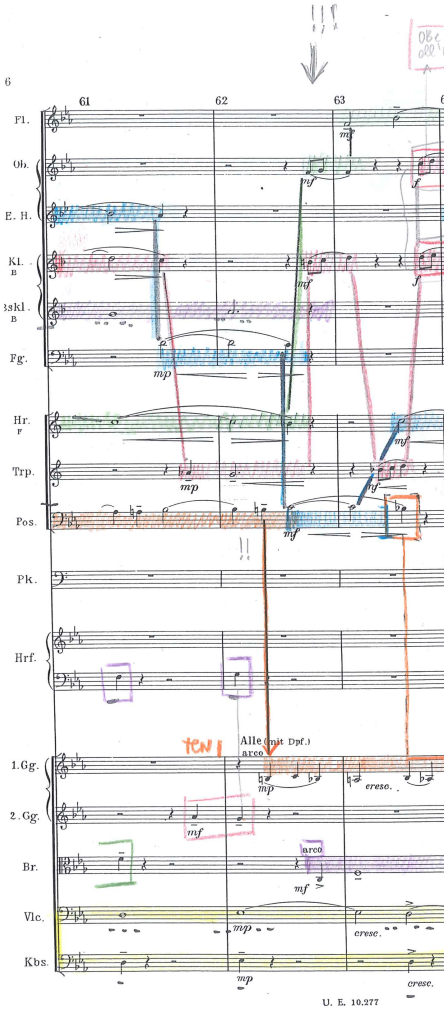


Figure 11. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata,* bars 61-63

Audio 6. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata,* bars 61-63: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_61-63.mp3

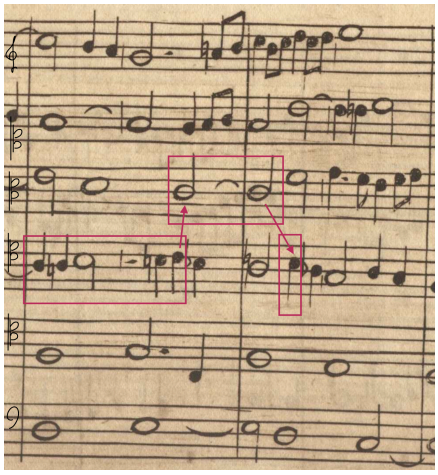


Figure 12. Bach, "Ricercar a 6," bars 61-64, the same passage as in figure 11. I have outlined in red the part that in Webern's transcription is played by the trombone.

The appearance of a new melody that was only virtually present in the original (shown in figure 12) happens for the first time when the trombone connects the lines of the alto voice (highlighted in blue in figure 11) and the tenor I voice (highlighted in orange), in bars 62-63. This technique becomes more frequent in the second exposition of the fugue, where the fragmentation of the voices increases.

In bar 61, the trombone plays the tenor I line, and in the following bar, it shares the B♮ and the C with the first violins, who then continue playing the line of the tenor I (highlight in orange). At that point, the trombone stops playing the line of the tenor and plays the long C of the alto, taking it over from the bassoon. The melody of the trombone ends with a B♭ in bar 63. This note is also part of the tenor I voice, and it is again shared with the first violins. Here, the trombone plays a new melody that is the combination of melodic fragments of the alto voice and the tenor I voice. This melody was not actualized in the original, but it was virtually present in the sense that Webern could assign it to the trombone without adding any new note. Webern's intervention thus opens a door and allows new ways of looking at polyphonic textures: It is not only a sum of individual voices, but a net of points that can be connected and reconnected in different ways. In chapter 1, I used the starry sky as a metaphor to explain this relation between notes and new melodies: We can contemplate the single stars in the sky as individual points, or use our imagination to recognize familiar constellations by connecting them. However, we can also devise new patterns and envision entirely new constellations by linking the stars in different ways. These new linear connections are already virtually present in the polyphonic texture of the original, and the transcriber can imagine and actualize them, making them audible.

I suggest that this is what is happening in bar 62: Bach's two constellations (alto and tenor I) are connected by Webern, which gives rise to a new constellation – i.e., the trombone's melody – as can be heard in audio example 6.
Listening to a polyphonic piece, we enter into a space inhabited by voices. These voices have a certain behavior, but the notes they consist of can be connected differently so as to form new aggregates. The stars (the notes) are already there, but the constellations that Webern draws – connecting the stars in a new way – make some of their hidden relations visible and audible.

Through the practice of transcribing, Webern actualized and created these virtual constellations through timbral relations – i.e., his choices of orchestration. The stars – to stick with the metaphor – can be connected in new and different ways with intentions that are independent of their origin, but these new configurations were nevertheless always already present in the original work. What is relevant and fruitful for my practice is to look at transcribing as a way of inhabiting a polyphonic space, transforming it by actualizing some of its virtual constellations. With figure 11, I have shown how Webern connected two fragments that belong to different voices, making a single melody out of them. Now I would like to point out two other sorts of new constellations that arise in Webern's transcription.

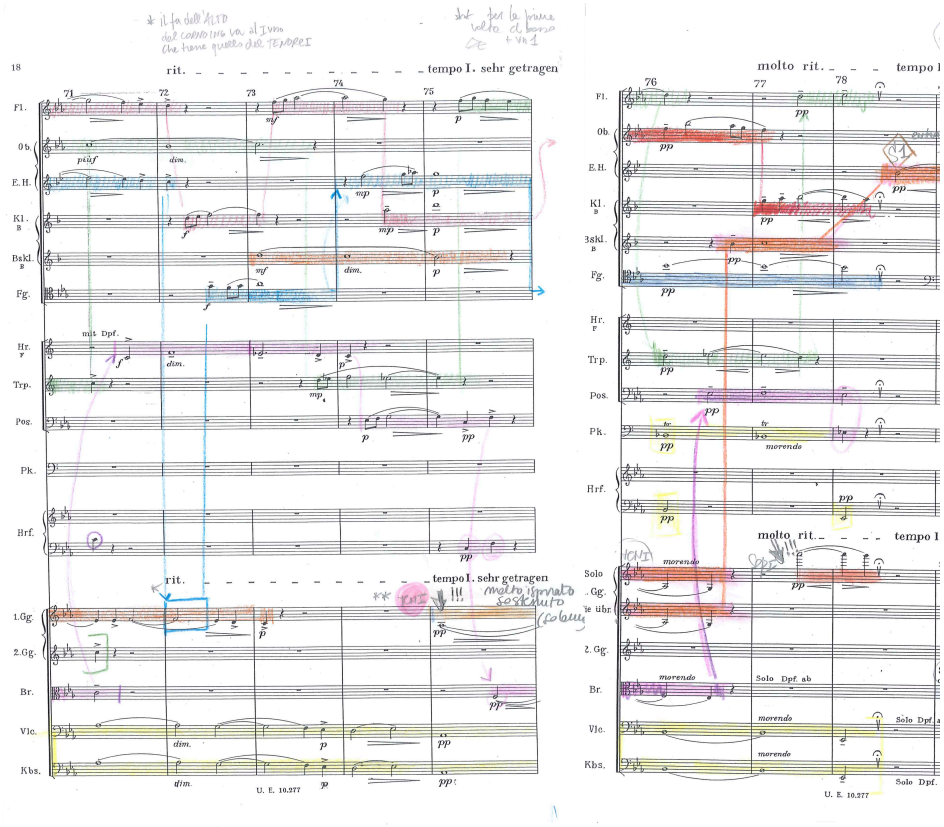


Figure 13. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 71-78

Audio 7. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 73-78:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Webern_violino-acuto_73-78.mp3

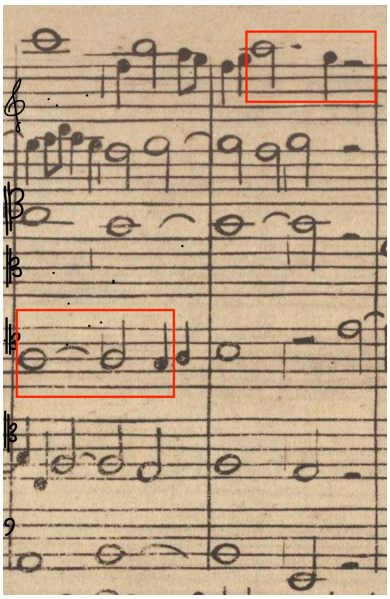


Figure 14. Bach, "Ricercar a 6," bars 73-78. I have outlined in red the two fragments played by the first violin in Webern's transcription (figure 13).

The end of the fugue's development is marked by a remarkable musical gesture: The first violin highlights and isolates the two-note motif Ab-G (from the soprano I line, outlined in figure 14 in red), playing it one octave higher and doubling the clarinet (bars 77-78). If we look at the first violins from bar 75, we find that this motif is isolated and repeated twice, once *tutti* and then *solo* three octaves above. Here again Webern connects in one phrase two fragments that belonged to two different voices, namely tenor I (highlighted in figure 13 in orange) and soprano I (red).

As can be heard in audio example 7, this new individual gesture of the violin stands out for its lyrical character, and it is Webern's first intervention of this kind. It does not sound out of context here, as it would have at the beginning of the fugue. The context has gradually changed and now it allows a new musical gesture – a solo violin's three-octave jump that isolates a two-note motif in the high register.

In the long final section, a second fugue exposition, I have found more individual gestures in the string section: From bar 79 to 99, solo strings play *glissandi* to connect contiguous notes, and close to the end, strings play *acciaccature* that in a single gesture condense more voices. A clear example is the solo viola in bar 180, shown in figure 15 (and based on the notes outlined in red in figure

16): the D belongs to the soprano II line (highlighted in green), but the two notes of the *acciaccatura*, B and F, belong to the alto (highlighted in blue) and the tenor II (purple).[3] This effect can be heard in audio example 8.

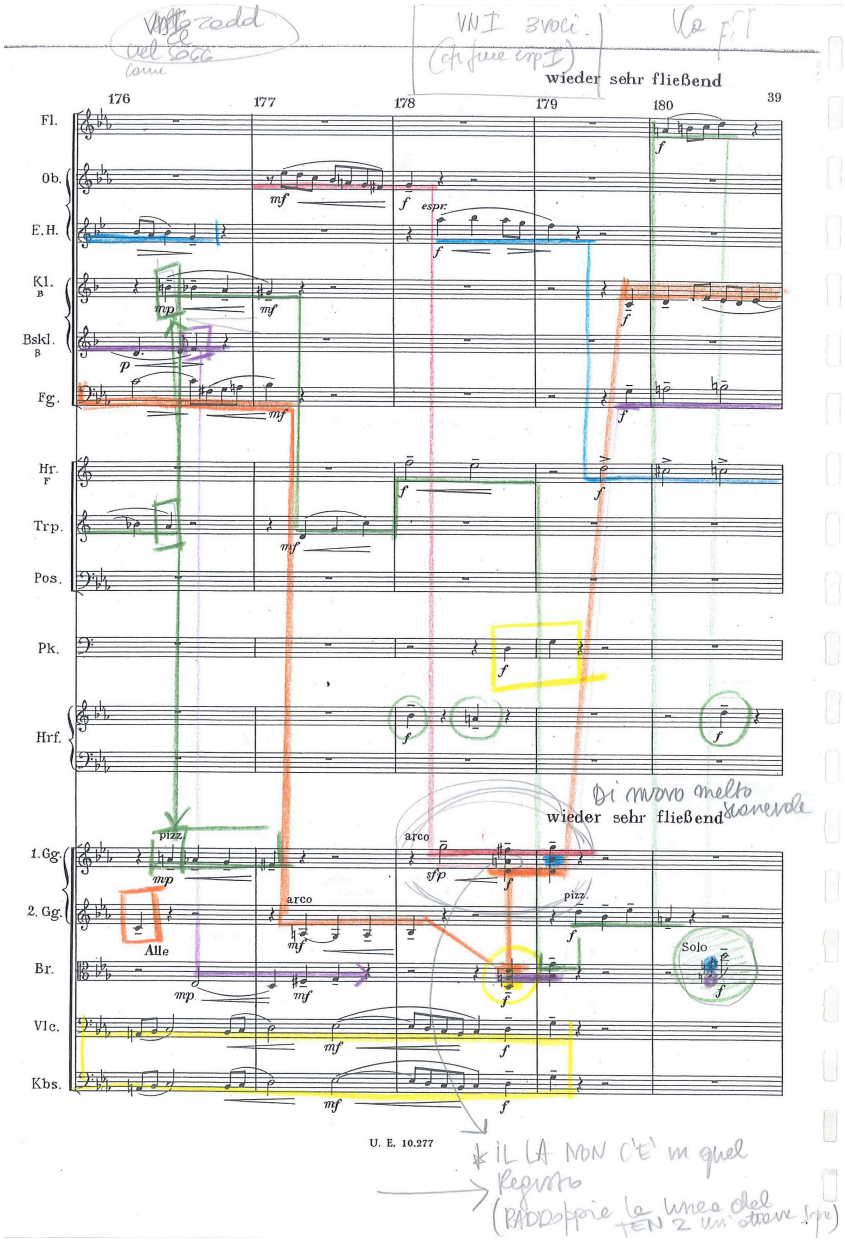


Figure 15. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 176-180

Audio 8. Webern, *Fuga Ricercata*, bars 177-180:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Webern_177-180.mp3

[3] Similar examples are found in the violin and viola parts in bars 178-179 (figure 15); the violin II part in bar 184; the solo cello part in bar 185; the violin II and viola parts in bar 194. The *acciaccatura* and the main note of violin I part in bar 190 both belong to the soprano I line.

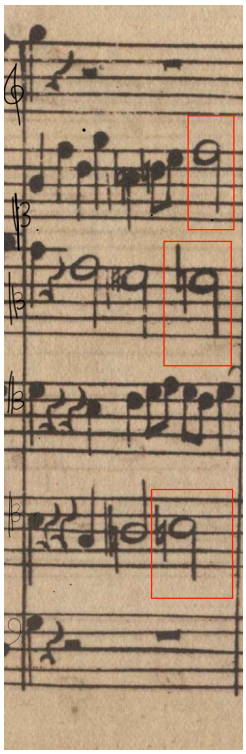


Figure 16. Bach, "Ricercar a 6," bars 179-180. I have outlined in red the three notes played by the viola in Webern's transcription (see figure 15).

I look at these instrumental gestures as well as the emergence of new melodies as Webern's creation of new constellations within the polyphonic space of Bach's work. Without changing any of the original notes, he deeply transforms Bach's work through his orchestration.

Conclusion

Webern's *Fuga Ricercata* was an inspirational model for writing *Une petite fleur bleue* and for my practice of transcribing in general. Studying it allowed me to think of transcribing as a practice that in the first place could allow for a qualitatively different relationship with an original work, a practice that could be a way of attentively listening to a work. Second, Webern's work was a model in showing how this very relationship transforms an original work and actualizes some of its virtualities. Beyond giving me the understanding of transcribing as a creative practice, Webern's *Fuga Ricercata* provided me with concrete tools for my own practice in writing *Une petite fleur bleue* and my further transcriptions. It gave me the idea of looking at the polyphonic texture of a piece as a net of individual points that could be connected in new ways, thereby actualizing virtual constellations and giving rise to melodies or instrumental gestures that may emerge thanks to the encounter between the transcriber and the original.

Furthermore, Webern's almost exclusive work on instrumentation was an example of how using timbre can be a way to deeply transform a musical work. As I wrote in chapter 1, in *Une petite fleur bleue*, I worked exclusively on the timbral

parameter, creating a sound layer on top of Frescobaldi's original work without changing or adding any notes, and slowing down the tempo in order to make room for articulating – and perceiving – the constant and very detailed changes of sound.

Webern's work has therefore been the starting point for me to think about transcribing as a way to reinvent and transform musical works from the past, and for making further explorations with this practice, exploring and forcing its borders, experimenting with different approaches and possibilities of artistic freedom, and, finally, extending the concept of what transcribing can be.

Chapter 3
Hortense
"Alas, that person is me"

Find Ortensia
who dies among the lilacs

Amelia Rosselli, *The Dragonfly*

In 2013 I wrote *Hortense*, a transcription for string trio of "Languisce al fin," a madrigal from *Madrigali a cinque voci. Libro quinto* (1611), by Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa. This was the next step in my research on transcribing, and I intended to deepen my experience in this practice by exploring the boundaries of what transcribing could mean, looking for an approach that would allow both a more intimate relation with the original and wider artistic freedom. Audio example 1 presents *Hortense* in its entirety.

Audio 1. Giuliano Bracci, *Hortense*, performed by the New European Ensemble:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Bracci_Hortense_NeUE_orgelpark-2016.mp3
Complete score in pdf:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Bracci_Hortense.pdf

Paying respect

Using Derrida's ideas about the relation to the other, I have argued in the introduction that paying respect to the original is a central ethical matter in the practice of transcribing, but that it truly means operating in "absolute ingratitude." Both the original and the transcriber are affected by their encounter, and their contact produces a contamination on both sides: On the one hand, the original is transformed by the transcriber's musical in(ter)vention, and on the other hand, the transcriber must deal with the presence of a musical work that affects their own musical language.[1] Leaving something untouched means not running any risk of betrayal, but it also means missing the chance for transformation. The transcriber has the opportunity to remove a musical work from a situation where it is protected – an "imaginary museum" (Goehr 1992),

[1] As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, my focus lies on transcribing as a creative practice primarily carried out by composers, which deeply involves the transcriber's imagination and musical language. Therefore, my research excludes transcriptions mainly intended for practical purposes, where transcribers usually strive to minimize the divergence from the original, erasing (or at least trying to erase) their own musical language.

or a metaphorical display cabinet – and where, in order to be preserved, it cannot be touched or contaminated. In doing so – following Agamben's ideas about profanation – transcribing enables a new use of a musical work, which produces a new meaning, a new understanding.
In this context, "meaning" can be seen as a synonym of the term "use." Paraphrasing Wittgenstein, who wrote that "for a *large* class of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language" (Wittgenstein 1953, § 43), one could say that the meaning of a musical work is the use that one makes of it. A transcriber transcribes an original work, and in doing so, they show a new possible use of it, a new encounter with it.

Context
Examining some transcriptions by other composers will help to understand my own transcription of Gesualdo's madrigal, making more clear the context in which I worked, my references, and my ideal interlocutors.

A work that I did not know before writing *Une petite fleur bleue*, and that afterwards had a strong influence on my research, is Stefano Gervasoni's *Recercar cromaticho post il Credo* (2005), a transcription for string quartet of Girolamo Frescobaldi's ricercar of the same name from the *Fiori Musicali* (1635). This transcription is performed as a self-standing piece, but Gervasoni included it in his second string quartet, *Six lettres à l'obscurité (und zwei Nachrichten*) (2006), as the seventh of its eight movements. It is remarkable that this complete transcription was able to be integrated into the architecture of a larger composition. Gervasoni integrates a musical work from the past inside his own writing, and deals with it without deactivating its otherness. In Gervasoni's transcription, "the music of Frescobaldi is presented in its entirety, although it is traversed by figurations and sounds that distort it: It appears as a foreign body, or as a form of otherness" (Albèra 2015, 376). Gervasoni's writing progressively distorts and corrodes the texture of Frescobaldi's music from within. As if in a kaleidoscope, a game of deforming and multiplying mirrors, Frescobaldi's music is fragmented and projected into a new, complex, and rich musical space.

Two excerpts of Gervasoni's transcription can highlight the relation between Frescobaldi's original and Gervasoni's language. Figures 1 and 3 show a modern edition of the Frescobaldi score. The score and bar references to Gervasoni's transcription (figures 2 and 4) correspond to those included in the string quartet *Six lettres à l'obscurité (und zwei Nachrichten)*, while the audio examples (audio 2 and 3) are from a recording where the transcription is performed as an independent piece.

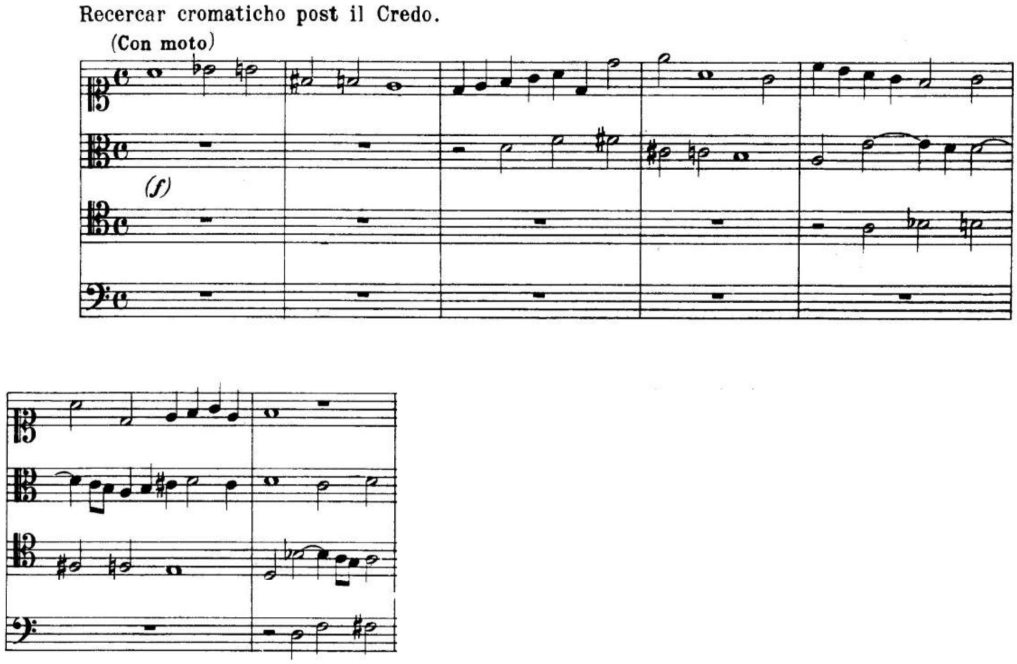


Figure 1. Frescobaldi, "Recercar cromaticho post il Credo" (*Fiori Musicali*), bars 1-7

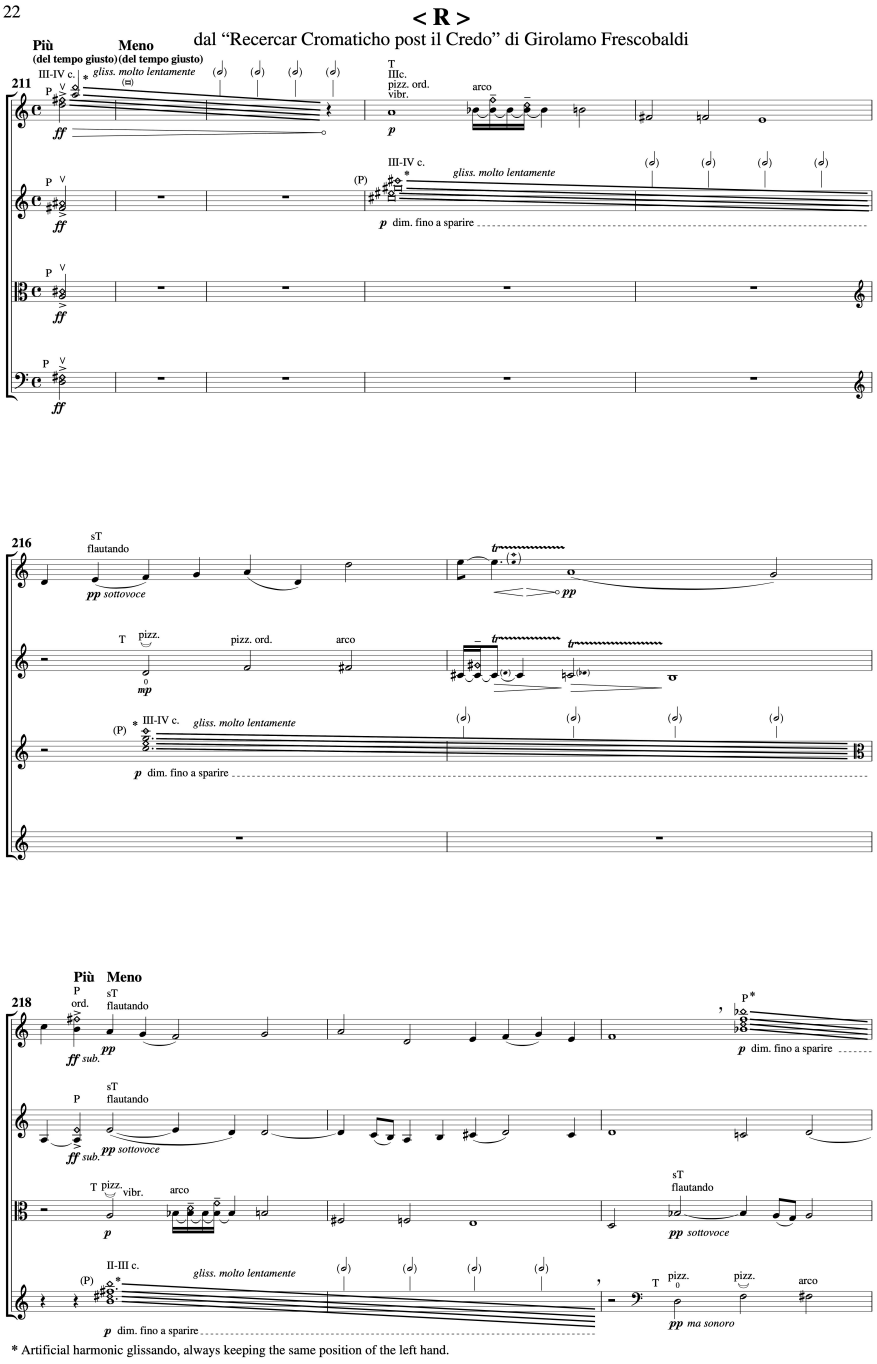


Figure 2. Gervasoni, *Six lettres à l'obscurité (und zwei Nachrichten)*, bars 211–220

Audio 2. Gervasoni, *Recercar cromaticho post il Credo*, bars corresponding to figure 2, performed by the Quartetto Prometeo: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Gervasoni-AUDIO-Recercar-cromaticho-EX.1.mp3

In the opening bars, where the individual voices enter gradually, we can distinctly observe many of the elements that characterize Gervasoni's transcription. First, Gervasoni fills the pauses with very slow, artificial harmonic *glissandi* on two strings. Initially, these glissandi are only descending, but in the final section, they are both ascending and descending. The glissandi, coupled with sudden accents (like the one in bar 218), are elements that immediately sound alien to the original, revealing the hand – and the thought – of the transcriber: They make it clear that the transcriber is not, and does not want to be, invisible. The silence from which a musical piece emerges is often an implicit, undefined context. In contrast, Gervasoni fills the musical pauses – the silence – with these harmonic glissandi, immediately emphasizing the mediated nature of our listening experience of Frescobaldi's music. In a metaphorical sense, they are the cuts that traverse the canvas – the musical space – upon which the transcription is written.

Second, Gervasoni does not distribute the individual voices of Frescobaldi's polyphony among different instruments, a technique seen in Webern's transcription of Bach's "Ricercar a 6" and also used in subsequent examples in this chapter by other composer-transcribers. Instead, with the exception of a small three-bar episode (251-253, shown in figure 4), each instrument of the quartet is consistently assigned one of the four voices of the ricercar. Through his instrumental writing, Gervasoni delves into each voice, fragmenting it from within. He employs various timbral interventions through a rich array of performing techniques such as trills of harmonics*, sul tasto* and *sul ponte* passages, *flautando*, *col legno*, and other bowing techniques. For instance, the first six notes of the second violin (bars 216-217; see figure 2) each utilize a different technique: *pizzicato* with the nail; *pizzicato ordinario*; *arco*; the subsequent C♯ alternating with an artificial harmonic that projects it a twelfth higher; a trill; and *arco ordinario* again. These frequent changes in sound production fragment the individual voice through hyper-articulation: Gervasoni engages in a close combat with Frescobaldi's writing, creating a highly expressive effect.

Finally, Gervasoni intensifies his interventions as the transcription progresses. In response to the tempo changes (*con moto*, *poco più mosso*, and *più mosso*) in the original (see an excerpt in figure 3), Gervasoni transcribes the first part without transposing it, transposes the second part (bars 248-253) a semitone higher, and places the third and final part (from bar 254 onward) a minor third higher. These transpositions, heard in audio example 3, accentuate the increasing tension – almost a frenzy – in which Frescobaldi's original accelerates and is gradually eroded from within. Moreover, to heighten the sense of crowding in the third part, Gervasoni introduces "diminutions," to borrow the term from the Renaissance meaning to embellish individual long notes of the melody by dividing them into smaller units.

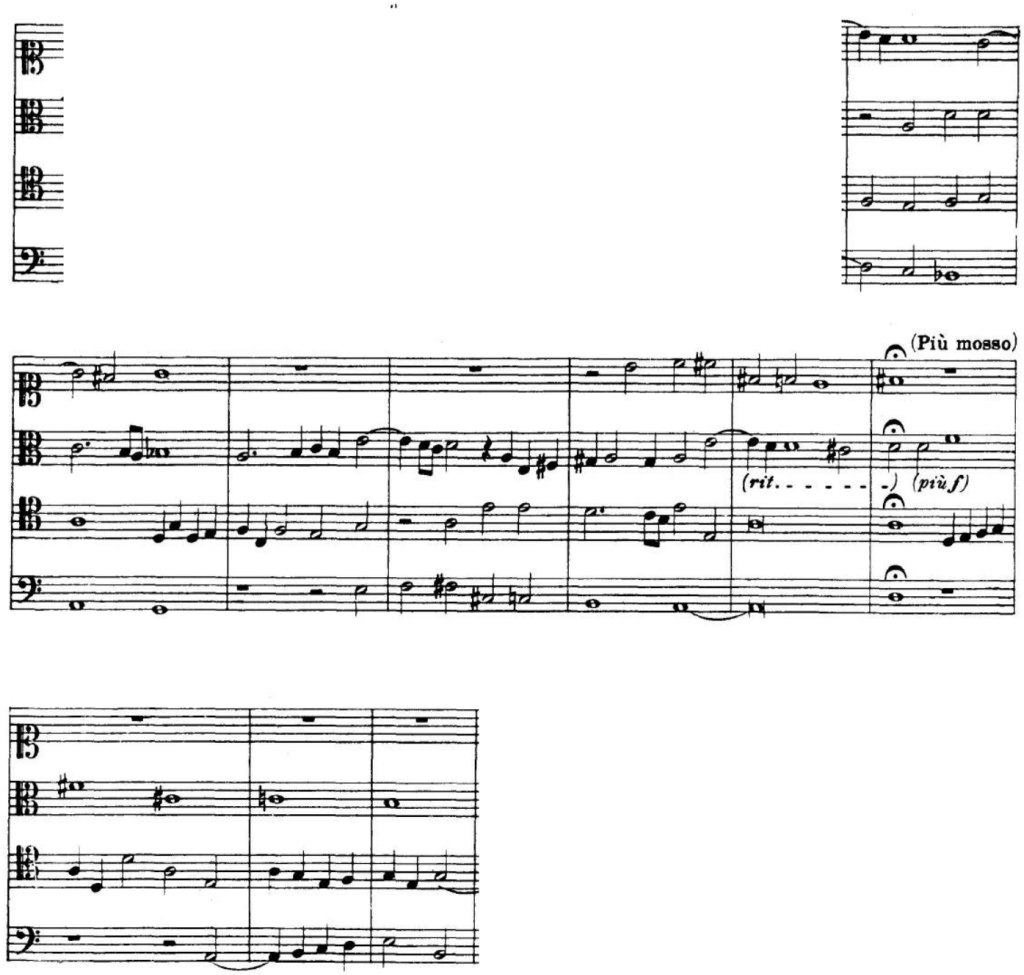


Figure 3. Frescobaldi, "Recercar cromaticho post il Credo" (*Fiori Musicali*), bars 35-44

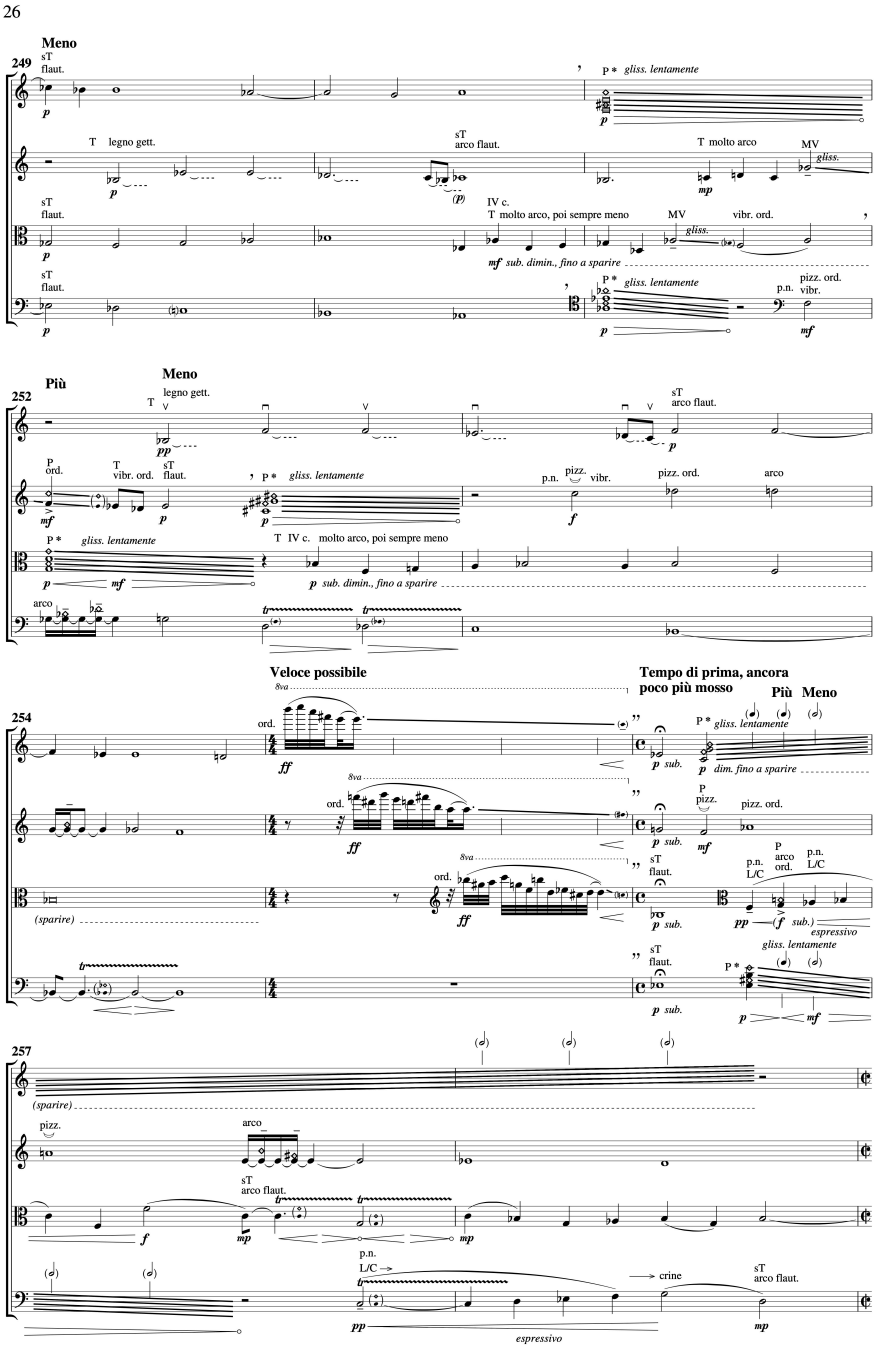


Figure 4. Gervasoni, *Six lettres à l'obscurité (und zwei Nachrichten)*, bars 248-256

Audio 3. Frescobaldi, *Recercar cromaticho post il Credo*, bars corresponding to figure 4, performed by Quartetto Prometeo: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Gervasoni-Frescobaldi-AUDIO-ESEMPIO-2.mp3

Studying transcriptions and listening to them provides valuable insights into a transcriber's thoughts and their relation to the original musical work. As I have argued in chapter 1, it is the action of transcribing that defines the original as such. The notion of what constitutes the original is therefore not a settled matter. Instead, it becomes the choice of the transcriber. Nevertheless, the very presence of an original – and hence the opportunity to compare it with its transcription – allows for a questioning of every note in the transcription, tracing how the original has been transformed through the transcriber's relationship with it, their way of thinking, and their listening. The gap between the original and the transcription reveals the language of the transcriber, and in this sense, studying transcriptions can offer a privileged pathway to the music of transcribers who are also composers.

As mentioned earlier, the choice of a slow tempo in a transcription can be related to a qualitatively different attention to the original. The composer and double-bass player Stefano Scodanibbio's transcriptions – apart from being in slowed-down tempi – possess as a distinctive quality an intimacy with the originals. As a child, I studied classical guitar, and listening to Scodanibbio's transcription (2009) of Fernando Sor's étude op. 35, no. 22 (1828) gave rise to some of my most concrete and almost physical musical memories: the attention to every single sound and to the different ways the fingers touch a guitar string – e.g.., pizzicato, *appoggiato*, with the fingernail, or with the fingertip. This is, of course, a personal perception tied to a musical memory that is both auditory and tactile, but it is an example of how transcribing can render someone's closeness to a musical work: an intimacy defined by tactile timbral details, brought near through a meticulous examination, as if observed through a magnifying lens – or better, as if listened to in slow motion.
I argue that, beyond my own perception of this transcription and my personal memories, the strong relation between Scodanibbio's timbral accuracy and the related variety of performing techniques has an important role in making audible the intimacy with the original, the intensity of the relation with it. An excerpt of Scodanibbio's transcription for string quartet can be heard in audio example 4.

Audio 4. Scodanibbio, excerpt from "Fernando Sor: Studio op. 35, no. 22" (*Quattro Pezzi Spagnoli*), performed by Quartetto Prometeo:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Scodanibbio-Sor_-AUDIO_Quattro-Pezzi-Spagnoli-Studio.mp3

Transcriptions can highlight or reveal hidden sides of original works. One can listen to Wendy Carlos's music for Stanley Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) with this perspective: Carlos's "March from *A Clockwork Orange*" and "Title Music from *A Clockwork Orange*" are electronic transcriptions of the fourth movement of Beethoven's Symphony no. 9 (1826) and Henry Purcell's *Funeral of Queen Mary* (1695). The way in which these transcriptions transform the

originals can be perceived as the distorted reality experienced by the main character, a violent and charismatic young man leading a small gang. Or, to mention an example in a very different vein, Mozart's music can be experienced as a reflection on the enchantment and apparent simplicity of childhood in Gervasoni's *Adagio ghiacciato* (2012) for violin and toy piano (or prepared piano), heard in audio example 5.

Audio 5. Gervasoni, *Adagio ghiacciato (d'après Mozart)*, performed by Aldo Orvieto, piano, and Saori Furukawa, violin:
https://youtu.be/SN1yuyttjGs?si=E00zmPruXf6qW3zZ

In the booklet for Quartetto Prometeo's *Reinventions* CD, Scodanibbio's aphoristic program notes about his transcriptions for string quartet distill many of the topics that I am dealing with in my research:

> Kaleidoscopic appearance, through the use of harmonics
> Bowing technique and slowed-down tempos
> Reclothing – estrangement
> Original figures emerging 'in shadow'
> As if somehow in mist (mannerist painting)
> Or behind a gauze (Degas)
> But also divisionism (Webern!) and Baroque philology.
> (Scodanibbio 2013)

Here Scodanibbio refers to the way in which an original work can appear kaleidoscopic in a transcription: The slowed-down tempo and an extremely detailed use of contemporary instrumental techniques – e.g., harmonics, bowing techniques such as *sul tasto* and *sul ponte* – are some of the tools transcribers can use to dissect and fragment the original, highlighting particular details. A crucial point is that through transcribing, it is possible to compose the distance that separates and at the same time connects the original and the transcriber (and then the audience): Scodanibbio describes this distance as a shadow from which the original emerges, or as a gauze interposed between an observer and an object. Both of these metaphors describe a form of mediation constituted, for instance, by the passing of time, by the historicity of the original work (and of the transcriber), or by individual or collective memories. In the same sense, Dieter Schnebel uses the image of a sound screen (*Blendwerk*) when writing about his *Schubert-Phantasie*. And Gérard Pesson describes, when writing about his *Nebenstück*, the transcriber's memory as a sea into which the original musical work has sunk. As I mentioned in chapter 1 when discussing Schnebel and Pesson, the medium of transcribing through which we can access an original work is at the same time perceived as an obstacle to an impossible immediate – non-mediated – perception.

Scodanibbio ends his program notes by mentioning Webern and Baroque philology. While Webern's transcription of J. S. Bach's "Ricercar a 6" from the *Musikalisches Opfer* is an unavoidable reference for composer-transcribers, and, in Scodanibbio's words, "the unsurpassable example from the 20th century" (Scodanibbio 2019, 294), Baroque philology and especially the present-day Historically Informed Performance (HIP) movement constitute an important example of a critical approach to the music of the past directed towards the research of an original sound through investigation and experimentation on period instruments and their performance practices. The HIP approach is significant, as it rarely takes for granted what an original is, critically questioning the originality of manuscripts and acknowledging the historicity of the music being performed. Furthermore, HIP musicians and researchers aim to rediscover lost performing practices, and in doing so, have (re-)invented forgotten sounds.

Richard Barrett's transcription of "Deuil angoisseus" by the Franco-Flemish composer Gilles Binchois (ca. 1400–1460) is a distinct and recent example of a possible way of embracing Webern's legacy in transcribing a polyphonic work. In particular, Barrett's work shows how the individual voices can be distributed to different instruments and also projected onto higher octaves through the use of string harmonics. Barrett's transcription of "Deuil angoisseus" is the third of *3 chansons* (2021), the composer's collection of three transcriptions for ten instruments of music by Guillaume Dufay (1397-1474), Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300-1377), and Binchois. In the score's performing notes, Barrett makes explicit an unexpected closeness to the HIP aesthetic when he writes:

> […] at the same time, while 'modern' instruments are used, they should be approached in such a way that bears in mind the kinds of instruments that might originally have been used to play this music. In particular, vibrato shouldn't be used, articulation should be sensitive without sounding 'classically' polished, and the different registers of each instrument should again be timbrally distinct rather than homogenized. (These are all features of my own compositions also!). (Barrett 2021a)

This aesthetic positioning shows how early and contemporary experimental music can share some important features, particularly the attention to the singularity of the timbre and to the individuality of every register of the instruments, in contrast to a classical approach, where good articulation is intended to be "polished" and the different registers of the instruments are as homogenized as possible. This aesthetic principle guides the training of the performers, but it has primarily determined the transformation of how the instruments are built along the centuries.

Coming back to Barrett's transcription of Binchois's "Deuil angoisseus" and the fragmentation of the single voices, it is insightful to compare the first three "bars" of the original (figure 5), with the first three bars of the score (figure 6).

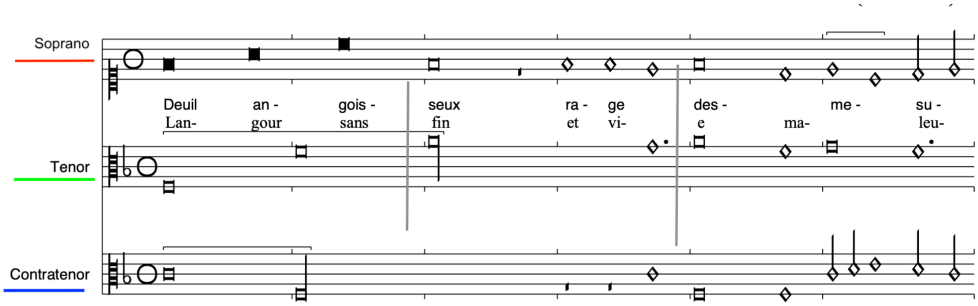


Figure 5. Binchois, "Deuil angoisseus," incipit

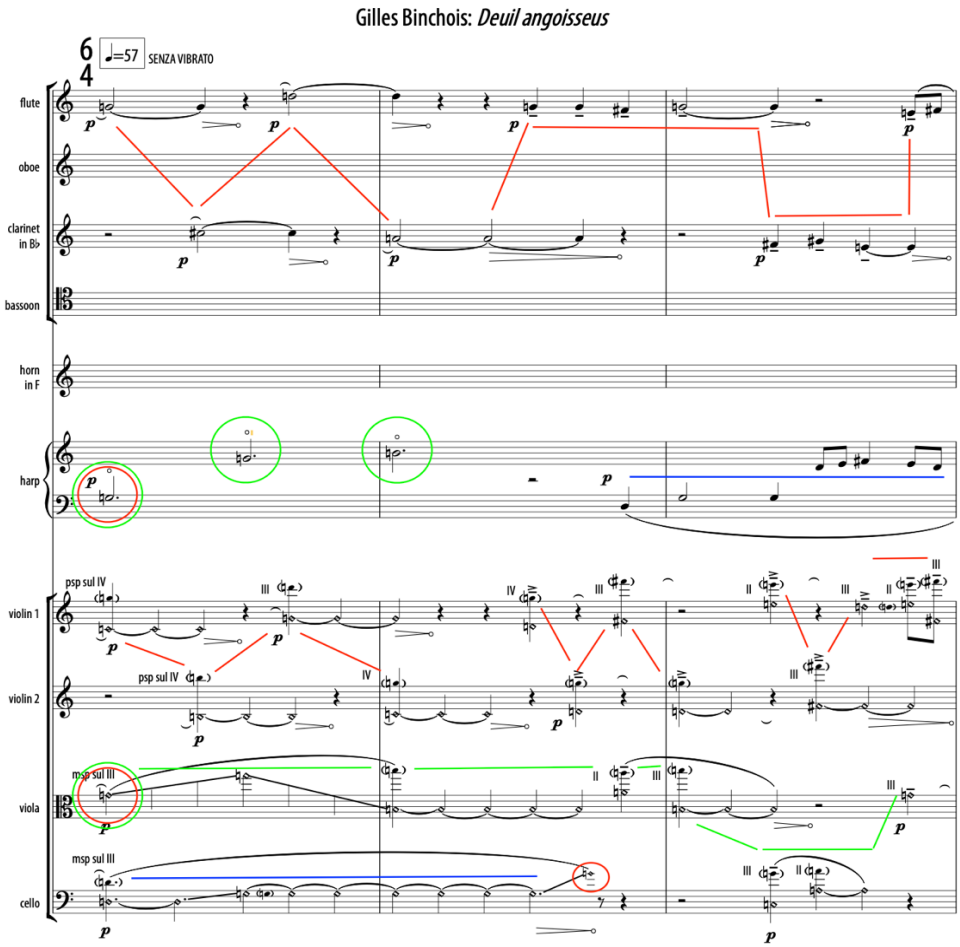


Figure 6. Barrett, "Gilles Binchois: Deuil angoisseus" (*3 chansons*), bars 1-3

Audio 6. Barrett, "Gilles Binchois: Deuil angoisseus" (*3 chansons*), bars 1-3, performed by Ensemble Studio 6: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Barrett_Binchois-audio-example.mp3

Barrett's transcription has been transposed up a major second from the three manuscripts that contain this piece. This option allows for a larger use of the strings' natural harmonics (i.e., harmonics performed on open strings).
As can be seen in figure 6, I have highlighted the three voices of the original in the first bars of Barrett's score in order to show how he divided them among the instruments. The soprano line, outlined in red, is played by the flute and the clarinet, never playing exactly together, but alternating and overlapping. The same line is doubled and alternated by the two violins, who play harmonics *poco sul ponticello* one octave higher. In the second and third bars, when the soprano line becomes more articulated, the division between the flute and clarinet pair and the two violins is no longer upheld.
On the one hand, Barrett's writing maintains the recognizability of the soprano line, but on the other, it highlights and isolates the single notes, thanks to their individual timbral treatment. The tenor line, outlined in green, is transposed up one octave, played by harmonics on the harp and viola: The first G coincides with the one played by the flute, and in this way, the soprano and tenor lines meld together even more. Furthermore, the viola connects the three first notes of the tenor line with a glissando of natural harmonics on an open string. The cello does the same, connecting its first two notes (D and G) with a glissando of harmonics on its third open string. The way in which the cello disappears *al niente* in bar 2 – a glissando of natural harmonics that ends on the G which belongs to the soprano line (played by the flute) – is a small but relevant detail, showing the transcriber's attitude in inhabiting the original's polyphonic space: Even elements such as the ending point of a glissando that disappears *al niente* belongs to the original's polyphony. This passage can be heard in audio example 6.
The projection onto higher octaves and the large use of natural harmonics and glissandi determine a very characteristic sound, which, in a way, uses the notes of the original not only as notes of one voice in a polyphonic piece, but also as a network of points that delimits the glissandi and frames a distinct sound world inhabited and produced by specific instrumental gestures. Here again is the legacy left by Webern's transcription of J. S. Bach's *Ricercare*, and the capacity of transcribing to occupy a polyphonic space in diverse ways, enabling the emergence and actualization of connections that are virtually present in the original polyphonic texture.

Transcribing Gesualdo

Transcribing Gesualdo's music in 2013 was not a random choice for me, as it was in fact the 400th anniversary of the composer's death. Furthermore, Gesualdo was not only one of the most important composers of the late Renaissance, but he is also a central figure in the landscape of contemporary transcriptions. Transcribing his music therefore also means encountering his legacy in the works of other composers and entering into the discourse constituted by the several transcriptions of his music created in the context of contemporary music.

Glenn Watkins, the musicologist and leading expert of Gesualdo's music, dedicated "Stoking the Flame," the eleventh chapter of his book *The Gesualdo Hex: Music, Myth and Memory* (Watkins, 2010), to transcriptions of and works inspired by Gesualdo's music. He describes the interest many contemporary composers have in Gesualdo, but he never delves into any musical detail. Some remarkable examples he includes are Louis Andriessen's *Principe* (1974), Ton de Leeuw's *Lamento Pacis* (1969), and Peter Maxwell Davies's *Tenebrae super Gesualdo* (1972). Watkins also includes an appendix titled "A Gesualdo Breviary" that lists a number of works inspired by Gesualdo's music.[2]

Unlike Watkins, musicologist Marilena Laterza presents a detailed analysis of four transcriptions of Gesualdo's madrigal "Moro, lasso al mio duolo" in the second part of her book *Gesualdo more or less. Sulla riscrittura nella musica contemporanea*: Salvatore Sciarrino's *Le voci sottovetro* (1998) for voice and ensemble, Luca Francesconi's *Respondit* (1997) for five instruments and electronics, Bruce Adolphe's *Oh Gesualdo, Divine Tormentor!* (2003-4) for string quartet, and Peter Eötvös's *Drei Madrigalkomödie* (1990) for twelve voices. This analysis enables her to explore different transcribing attitudes and approaches to the same original musical work, and to illustrate her understanding of the practice of transcribing as a "creative hermeneutic experience," and as a "dialogue between the present and past," where the transcriber must question not only the original "but also themselves, because the answer, the interpretation, and the rewriting find place in the mediation between the transcriber's world and that of the original one." Laterza effectively uses the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's ideas from *Wahrheit und Methode* (1972) to present transcriptions as "incarnated acts of interpretation" and as "fusions of horizons" (Laterza 2017, 53–55). Her perspective resonates with Peter Szendy's idea of considering transcriptions as "traces of actual attitudes of listening" (Szendy 2008, 102). Furthermore, following Gadamer's ideas, she makes explicit that the transcriber's finitude – i.e., their prior involvement and partiality – is not a barrier to approaching a musical work from the past, but rather an enabling condition. The transcriber's

[2] An update to Watkins's extensive list of works inspired by Gesualdo's music can be found in more recent publications. These include Marilena Laterza's book *Gesualdo more or less*, which offers detailed analyses of works based on Gesualdo's music by composers such as Bruce Adolphe, Brett Dean, Luca Francesconi, Georg Friedrich Haas, Bruno Mantovani, Lucia Ronchetti, and Salvatore Sciarrino. Other examples based on Gesualdo's music are included in a list of transcriptions from 1985 to 2016; Laterza's selection aims to demonstrate the widespread adoption of the practice of transcribing music from the past among contemporary composers (Laterza 2017, 159-171). Other relevant sources include the essays collected in the conference proceedings *Gesualdo dentro il Novecento* (Tortora 2017), particularly the second part of Dinko Fabris's article "Gesualdo: a Renaissance Myth for the Third Millennium: A Tribute to Glenn Watkins" (Fabris 2017). In this article, Fabris presents an updated bibliography and provides an in-depth discussion of two recent operas by contemporary composers who have been deeply influenced by the life and music of the Prince of Venosa: Francesco d'Avalos's *Maria di Venosa* (completed in 1992, recorded in 2005, and performed live in 2013), and Bo Holten's *Gesualdo-Shadows* (2014).

horizon, determined by their historically determined situatedness, is not something fixed, but it is susceptible to change in the practice of transcribing itself, thanks to a process of mediation between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar, with neither remaining unaffected.

Among the transcriptions considered by Laterza, Sciarrino's *Le voci sottovetro* (1998) is an important case study for my research. For the works that I have mentioned up to this point, I have not needed to consider the presence of a text. Indeed, my *Une petite fleur bleue* is a transcription of Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* for organ, and Webern's *Fuga Ricercata* is a transcription of J. S. Bach's *Musikalisches Opfer*, which, even if lacking instrumental designation, cannot be considered a vocal work, or at least does not have any words to be sung. Transcribing a madrigal thus presents itself as a new and substantially different situation.
Sciarrino's transcription of "Moro, lasso, al mio duolo" from Gesualdo's *Madrigali a cinque voci. Libro Sesto* (1611), is one of four transcriptions of music by Gesualdo that constitutes Sciarrino's *Le voci sottovetro* (1998). Here, Sciarrino's adapts a five-voice madrigal to an ensemble of one voice and eight instruments. This example makes clear how Sciarrino composes the vocal part of his transcription, selecting a new path for his singer through the original polyphony, and creating a new melody that was nevertheless virtually present in the original. The beginning of Gesualdo's madrigal can be heard in audio example 7 and seen in figure 7.

Audio 7. Gesualdo, "Moro, lasso, al mio duolo" (*Madrigali a cinque voci. Libro sesto*), performed by Ensemble Métamorphoses:
https://youtu.be/6dVPu71D8VI?si=9DdkXCisx4tHV-4l

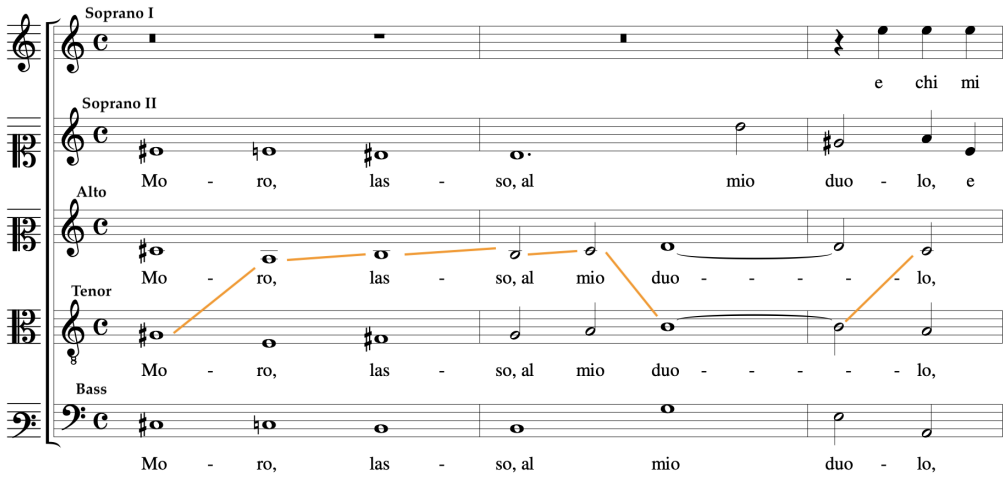


Figure 7. Gesualdo, "Moro, lasso, al mio duolo" (*Madrigali a cinque voci. Libro sesto*), bars 1-3

In the score of the original, I have highlighted the vocal line of Sciarrino's transcription. Figure 8 and audio example 8 present an excerpt from Sciarrino's transcription.

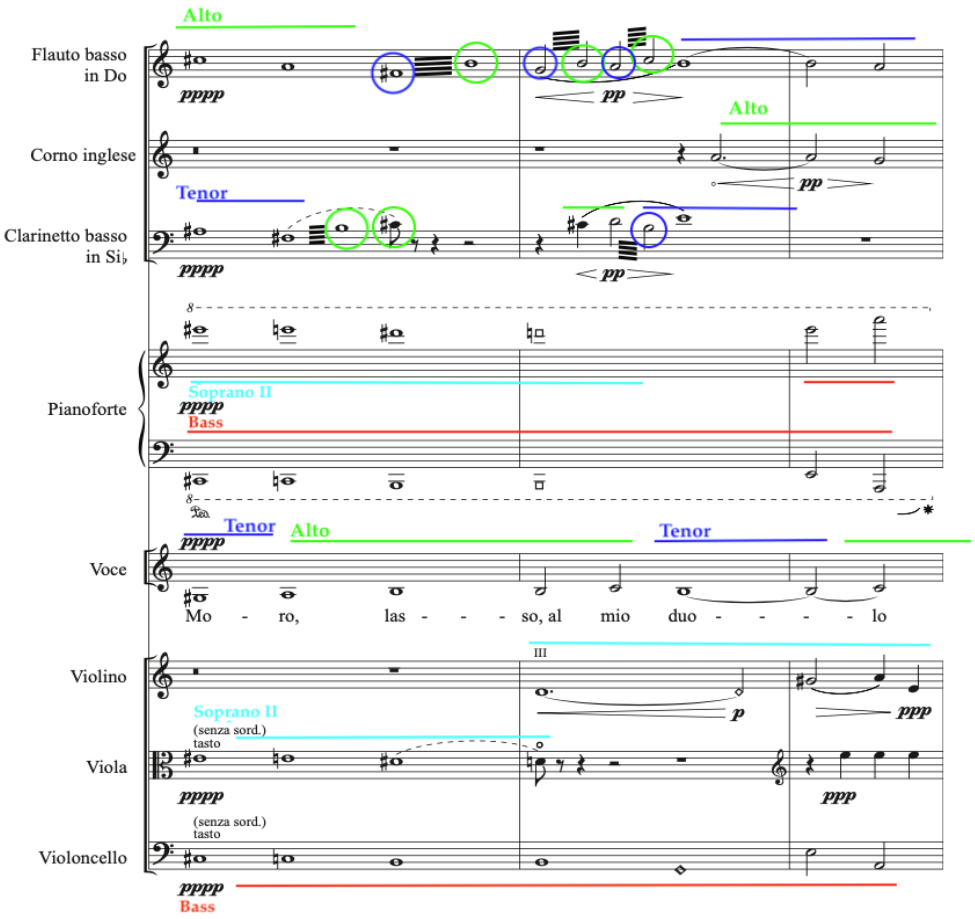


Figure 8. Sciarrino, "Moro, lasso" (*Le voci sottovetro*), bars 1-3

Audio 8. Sciarrino, "Moro, lasso" (*Le voci sottovetro*), bars 1-3, performed by Ensemble Recherche:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Sciarrino_Gesualdo-esempio-audio.mp3

Sciarrino derives the vocal line by selecting fragments from all five voices of the madrigal. In the three bars shown in figure 8, the voice alternates between the alto and the tenor lines of the original. The bass flute and the bass clarinet also share these two lines, alternating between themselves and blending through *tremoli* in bars 1 and 2. The soprano II line is divided between the violin and the viola, while the cello plays the bass voice's line. The musical space is further expanded by the piano, which plays the two outer voices – soprano II (before the soprano I enters) and bass – with one of them three octaves above and the other two octaves below the original.

As in some of the previous examples, the voices of the original polyphony are fragmented and distributed among the instruments, and the original polyphonic texture becomes a space inhabited by new sounds. Sciarrino's vocal line has a new character and new melodic intervals – it is a simple ascending melody; nevertheless, the notes of this melody are all present in the original, in different voices. More importantly, in Sciarrino's transcription, the presence of a single voice singing the poetic text of the original transforms a polyphonic madrigal into the lyrical intimacy of a Lied for voice and instruments.

The transcriptions by Gervasoni, Barrett, Scodanibbio, and Sciarrino that I have discussed so far illustrate various personal approaches to engaging with musical works. All of them inhabit and transform the polyphonic space of the original works with great attention to timbral dimensions and refined instrumental writing. In this way, they compose and stage (make audible) the mediation of the original works. Working on *Hortense*, my transcription of a Gesualdo madrigal, I continued to align with this approach, but I sought to engage with the original and its vocal nature primarily through the madrigal's poetic text.

Hortense

I explicitly intended for *Hortense*, my transcription for string trio of Gesualdo's madrigal "Languisce al fin," to go one step further than *Une petite fleur bleue*, in terms of transcribing with more artistic freedom. In continuity with my previous experience in transcribing one of Frescobaldi's *Fiori Musicali* (translated as "Musical Flowers" in English), I chose the title *Hortense*, which denotes a flower, but also signifies a female name and is a reference to a passage of Amelia Rosselli's poem *The Dragonfly* (1958). While the connection to Frescobaldi's musical flowers is apparent, it is valuable to briefly explore certain texts where flowers manifest a profound association between past, memory, and tradition on the one hand, and future and desire on the other. Flowers, in this context, assume a symbolic role that permeates my transcriptions. It is worth noting that the title of Frescobaldi's collection of pieces likely alludes to the term "anthology," which originates from ancient Greek and literally translates as "collection of flowers." *Une petite fleur bleue* also references Raymond Queneau's novel *The Blue Flowers* (originally published in French as *Les Fleurs bleues* in 1965), a work that was also significant for my larger project, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, a transcription that I will discuss further in chapter 5. The expression "blue flowers" appears only twice in Queneau's novel, both times when the Duke of Auge, one of the two main characters, contemplates the historical situation from the summit of a tower. One instance is found at the very conclusion of the narrative, where the Duke "went over to the battlements to consider, be it ever so little, the historical situation. A layer of mud still covered the earth, but he could already see, blossoming here and there, some little blue flowers" (Queneau 1985, 224). This description of the little blue flowers blossoming up through the mud reminded me of the opening of T. S. Eliot's seminal poem *The Waste Land:*

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
(Eliot, 1922)

Flowers signify memory and remembrance, and, at the same time, new life and desire that blossom from a "somewhat confused" historical situation (Queneau, 1985, 7). Transcriptions share with flowers this entanglement of memory and novelty.

Also in continuity with *Une petite fleur bleue*, I chose to transcribe a polyphonic piece for strings, and I kept the same approach concerning the slowness of the tempo: As I wrote in chapter 1, I wanted a tempo slow enough to allow ample space for articulating – and subsequently perceiving – the continual shifts in sound. Simultaneously, I aimed for a pace not so slow as to disrupt the linear melodic connection between each note. My intention was for these two aspects – my intervention on the timbral dimension and the melodic linear continuity of the original – to be perceptible concurrently. I sought to enable the listener to shift their focus between the two, perceiving their interrelation.
A substantial difference with *Une petite fleur bleue* was that the original on which *Hortense* is based is a madrigal for five voices singing a text. I opted to transcribe it for a string trio, which posed a notable limitation due to the challenge of transcribing five voices for three instruments. This limitation compelled me to make clear musical choices to adapt (and adopt) the original work effectively.

In madrigals, the relationship between music and words is fundamental, with music employing madrigalisms – i.e., devices such as word-painting – to render and illustrate the text. Though the text of the madrigal is not actually sung in *Hortense*, it nevertheless deeply informed the music: I engaged with the formal choices that Gesualdo derived from the poetic text, dividing the composition into subsections that correspond to the text's fundamental meanings. (The verses are written in the score, readable by the musicians, to indicate the different sections of the transcription.) In this way, the presence of a text, especially a poetic one, has often become a central element in my transcribing process.
Gesualdo's setting of the poetic text uses various musical solutions and dedicates a more or less extensive space to each verse. Transcribing Gesualdo's madrigal allowed me to closely consider his musical choices and play with his music, transforming and adapting it to a new context. In transcribing the madrigal for a string trio, I drew guidance from both the text and Gesualdo's musical interpretation of it. During this process, I made deliberate additions and omissions, expanding certain passages while leaving out others.

Before going into the details of my transcription, it is useful to read the text of the madrigal (and its English translation):

Languisce al fin chi da la vita parte
E di morte il dolore
L'affligge sì che in crude pene more.
Ahi, che quello son io,
Dolcissimo cor mio,
Che da voi parto e per mia crudel sorte
La vita lascio e me ne vado a morte.

The one who is departing life languishes in the end,
And the suffering of death
So afflicts him, that he dies in cruel pain.
Alas, that person is me,
My sweetest heart
I leave you, and, my cruel fate is such
That I leave life for death.

Gesualdo dedicates nine bars to the first line, as presented in figure 9 and audio example 9.

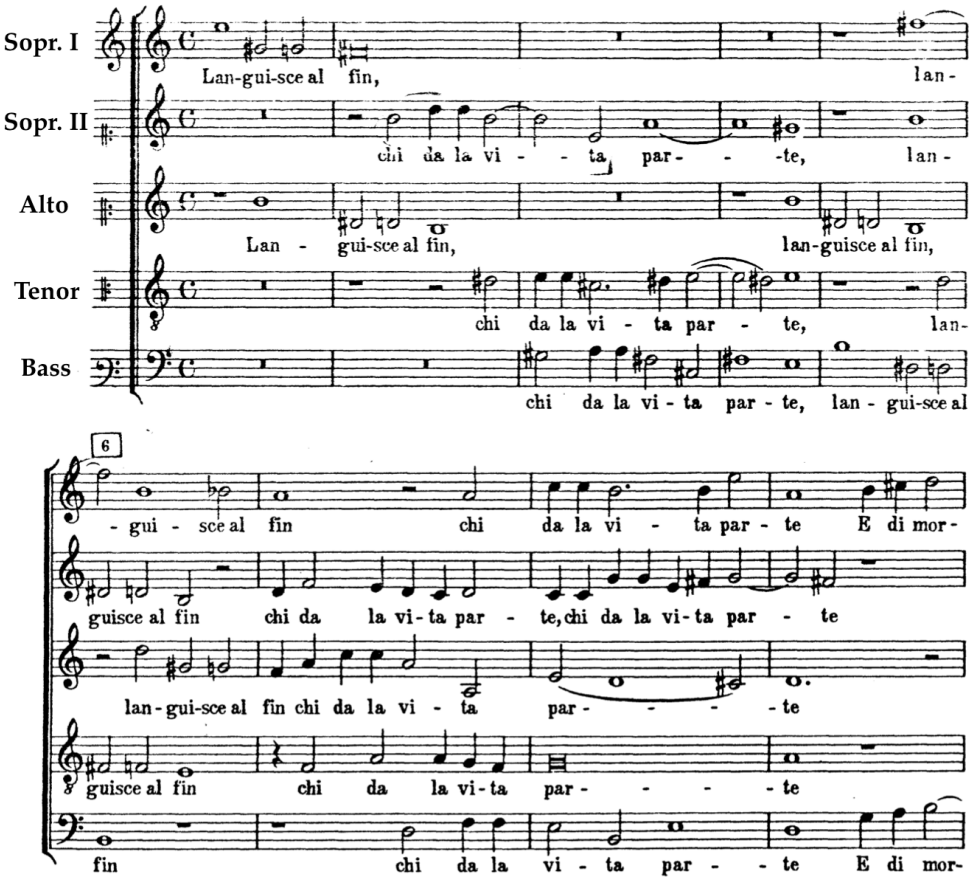


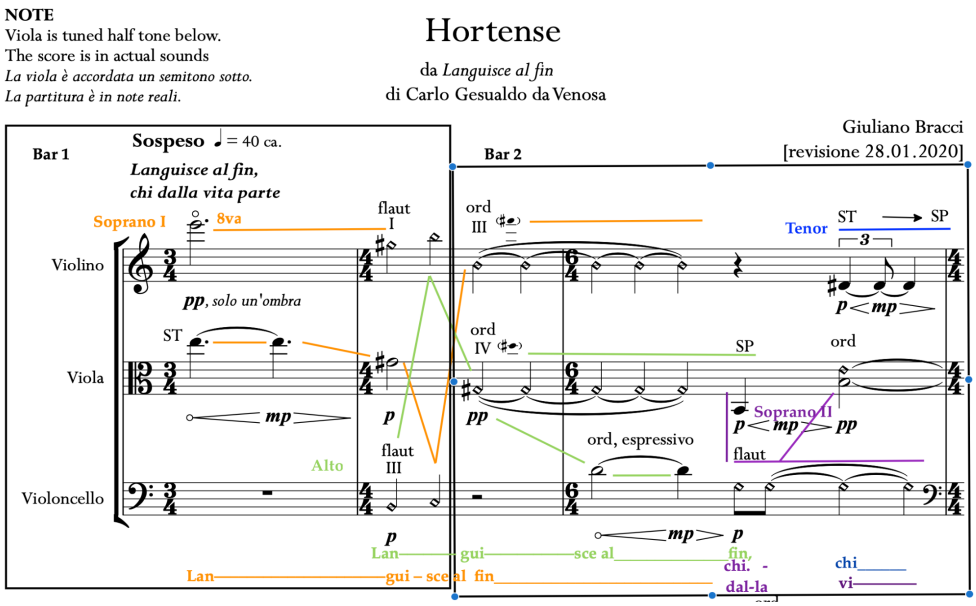
Figure 9. Gesualdo, "Languisce al fin" (*Madrigali a cinque voci. Libro quinto*), bars 1-9. A complete score can be consulted here:[3]
https://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Gesualdo_Languisce-al-fin_SCORE.pdf

Audio 9. Gesualdo, "Languisce al fin" (*Madrigali a cinque voci. Libro quinto*), performed by Ensemble Métamorphoses, bars 1-9:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Gesualdo_languisce-al-fin_audio_esempio-1.mp3

In *Hortense* all of these bars are transcribed – even if a voice is sometimes partially omitted – and the same section lasts more than double the time (compare audio example 9 with audio example 10). The tempo is slowed down quite extremely, which creates space for listeners to focus on the timbral details obtained by a palette of performing techniques, and on the broader use of registers.

Audio 10. *Hortense*, performed by the New European Ensemble, bars 1-13:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Bracci_Hortense_NeUE_orgelpark-2016-audio-esempio-1.mp3

As an example of the relation between *Hortense* and "Languisce al fin," I will focus on my transcription of the very first two bars of Gesualdo's madrigal. In figure 10, each black square corresponds to one of Gesualdo's bars.



[3] It is noteworthy that the *New Gesualdo Edition* (Caraci Vela, Fabris, and Ziino, 2017-present), a new critical edition of the complete works by Gesualdo, is in progress at the Bärenreiter Verlag.

Figure 10. Bracci, *Hortense*, bars 1-4

Audio 11. Bracci, *Hortense*, performed by the New European Ensemble, bars 1-4:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Bracci_Hortense_NeUE_orgelpark-2016-audio-esempio-2.mp3

The pulse of 1/2 in "Languisce al fin" corresponds to the pulse of 1/4 in *Hortense*, a simple adaptation of the notation. Furthermore, in *Hortense* I freely extended the duration of every syllable of the text to respond to the musical needs of the new context. Therefore, there is no longer an exact correspondence in terms of bars and durations between *Hortense* and the original Gesualdo madrigal. Durations, as well as bar lengths and their divisions, follow the breath of the musical events. They follow my listening of Gesualdo's music – the wider sense of transcribing as a form of listening – and Gesualdo's approach to setting a poetic text to music.

As in the previous examples, I have highlighted in the score of the transcription the individual voices of the original madrigal. However, the unity of these voices is not maintained in the transcription. Similar to *Une petite fleur bleue*, the individual notes create a polyphonic texture that gives room to imagining new melodic connections – connections that are virtually present in the original – and new instrumental gestures.
Throughout the transcription process, I maintained a constant awareness of the vocal nature of the original work. I imagined the words themselves being transcribed, and their meaning and sounds – the vowels, the syllables, and their accents – were crucial factors in my musical decisions. Figure 10 and audio example 11 – which I will discuss in detail below – provide a concrete example of this approach. In Figure 10, I have explicitly matched each note in *Hortense* with the corresponding syllable from the madrigal's text. Even though the madrigal's voices are fragmented and dispersed across different registers, the instruments continue to echo a – by now – concealed poem.
The primary transformations applied to the original composition include the adoption of a slower tempo, the freedom to utilize different octaves and registers, the introduction of doublings, and the use of harmonics. Furthermore, I exercised the liberty to extend certain notes, allowing them to intersect and collide with subsequent notes. In this way, I simulated a resonant acoustic space, allowing notes that appeared subsequently in the original to coexist simultaneously. This technique, akin to what occurred in *Une petite fleur bleue*, holds a closer relationship with Gesualdo's musical style, particularly evident in the descending chromatic lines. Chromaticism – a distinctive expressive device in Gesualdo's music – produces melodic tension. The tension between the notes

only exists in the listening experience, as it is there, as if in a virtual acoustic space, that the notes coexist and collide. In transcribing, I worked with this virtual acoustic space, actualizing what is virtual in the listening experience.

Audio example 11 makes clear how the beginning of Gesualdo's madrigal is transformed in *Hortense*. The madrigal begins with the soprano I singing the syllable "lan" on the note E, while in *Hortense*, the viola plays this note with a dynamic that mimics the vocal gesture of a *messa di voce*, the gradual swelling and diminishing of sound that gives shape to a long note. The viola is doubled, one octave above, by the violin playing a static harmonic sound, an icy shadow projected into the high register. The second note of the soprano I – a G♯, on the syllable "gui"– is again shared by the viola and the violin, this time with the violin's harmonic two octaves higher than the viola. The cello also enters at the same time, playing the B (on a harmonic that sounds two octaves above the written B) of the alto; this note then passes to the violin which projects it up one octave. The melodic descending chromaticism (G♯–G♮) in *Hortense* becomes both melodic and harmonic, as the G♯ is held longer by the viola, while the cello plays the G (a harmonic notated as a C). The same collision happens with the melodic interval D♯–D♮ originally sung by the alto on the text "-gui-sce," and highlighted in green in *Hortense*: The viola holds the D♯ while the cello plays the D♮. The alto line then concludes with the B of the viola.
The phrase of the soprano II – "chi dalla vita…" in the original, highlighted in purple in *Hortense* – is divided between the cello ("dal-la") and the viola ("vi-ta"). Following the same principle to emphasize and render Gesualdo's chromaticism, the cello prolongs the D (notated as a natural harmonic G) that then collides with the D♯ of the tenor voice played by the violin. The word "chi" of the soprano II line is not omitted, but implied by the same note (a low B) played by the viola.

The original lines of Gesualdo's madrigal are reshaped. The chant stays present, although transformed and hidden by the instruments. These are a few minute details, but my transcription also transforms the original at a wider formal level. Gesualdo set the poetic text to music, and in doing so, he allocated different space to different verses, imbuing them with varying formal significance within the madrigal. His musical decisions were influenced by the expressive possibilities of the text. Through transcribing and trying to gain access to the composer's musical choices – as if they were still open and could be different – I was able to get a closer perspective on Gesualdo's work. This allowed me to adapt his music into the novel context crafted by my transcription.

While I meticulously transcribed the verse "languisce al fin, chi dalla vita parte," the subsequent verses served as a creative departure point, albeit not fully

realized. The presence of three instruments coupled with the extremely slow tempo and deep attention to the timbral dimension led me to create a synthesis, a reshaping, in order to convey Gesualdo's original. Every repetition within Gesualdo's madrigal is a deliberate element, serving the intricate interplay of voices. In the significantly elongated duration of the transcription, these repetitions, if fully rendered, would have risked verbosity, so to speak. However, the most substantial formal intervention did arise directly from the text.

In the first part of the poetic text, the narrator speaks in the third person about someone who is dying. In the central verse "Ahi, che quello son io" (Alas, that person is me), there is a sudden shift to the first person, marking a formal turning point. As shown in figure 11, Gesualdo emphasizes this line significantly: The voices sing "Ahi" together only once, and the verse is given two bars isolated by rests (bars 21-22). The absence of repetitions and the clarity of homorhythm – "Ahi" – make this line highly impactful to the listener. Immediately afterwards, the voices momentarily abandon their imitative approach and proceed homorhythmically, or nearly so, singing the continuation of the line, "dolcissimo cor mio" (my sweetest heart), in bars 23-26. These effects can be heard in audio example 12.

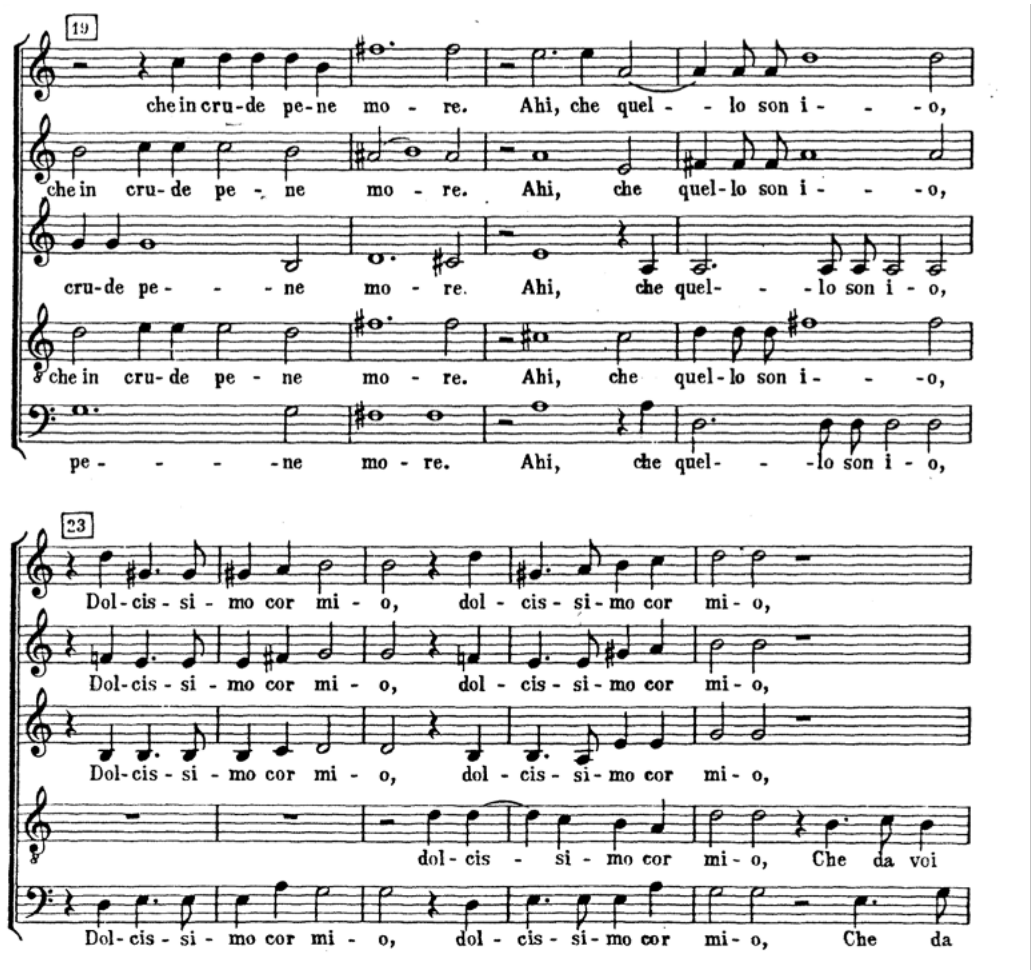
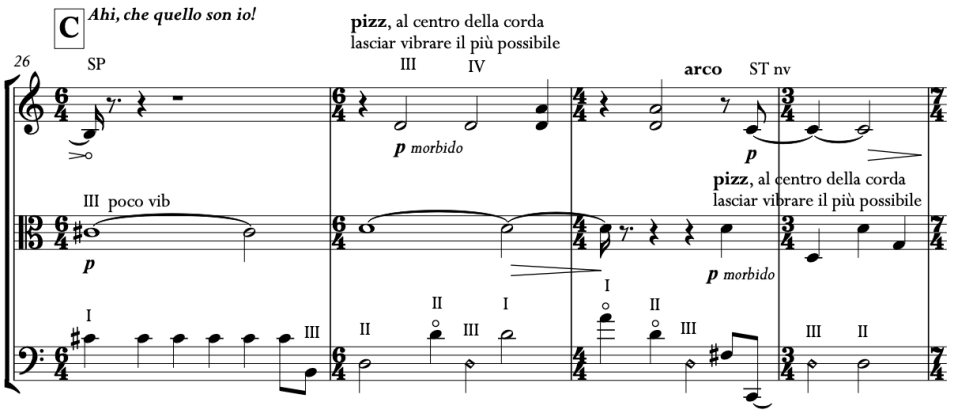


Figure 11. Gesualdo, "Languisce al fin" (*Madrigali a cinque voci. Libro quinto*), bars 19-27

Audio 12. Gesualdo, "Languisce al fin" (*Madrigali a cinque voci. Libro quinto*), performed by Ensemble Métamorphoses, bars 21-27: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Gesualdo_languisce-al-fin_audio_esempio-21-27.mp3

In *Hortense*, this line also corresponds to a sudden change, explicitly opening a window into my own music. When transcribing, the transcriber focuses on the original and on listening to the "other." The abrupt shift in the text from the third person to the first suggests that the person being talked about, the other, is in fact the one who is speaking – or, in this context, transcribing. Thus, to these verses, I have matched a reverse quotation: Inserted within my transcription of the madrigal by Gesualdo is a quotation from *Un giardino chiaro* (2013), a piece for piano and string quartet that I wrote two years before completing *Hortense*. This quotation – which is, in a way, also now a transcription for a string trio – occupies the entire section C (bars 26-34) of *Hortense*, shown in figure 12. In bars 35-39, Gesualdo's melody for "dolcissimo cor mio" flows seamlessly upon the quotation. This passage can be heard in audio example 13.



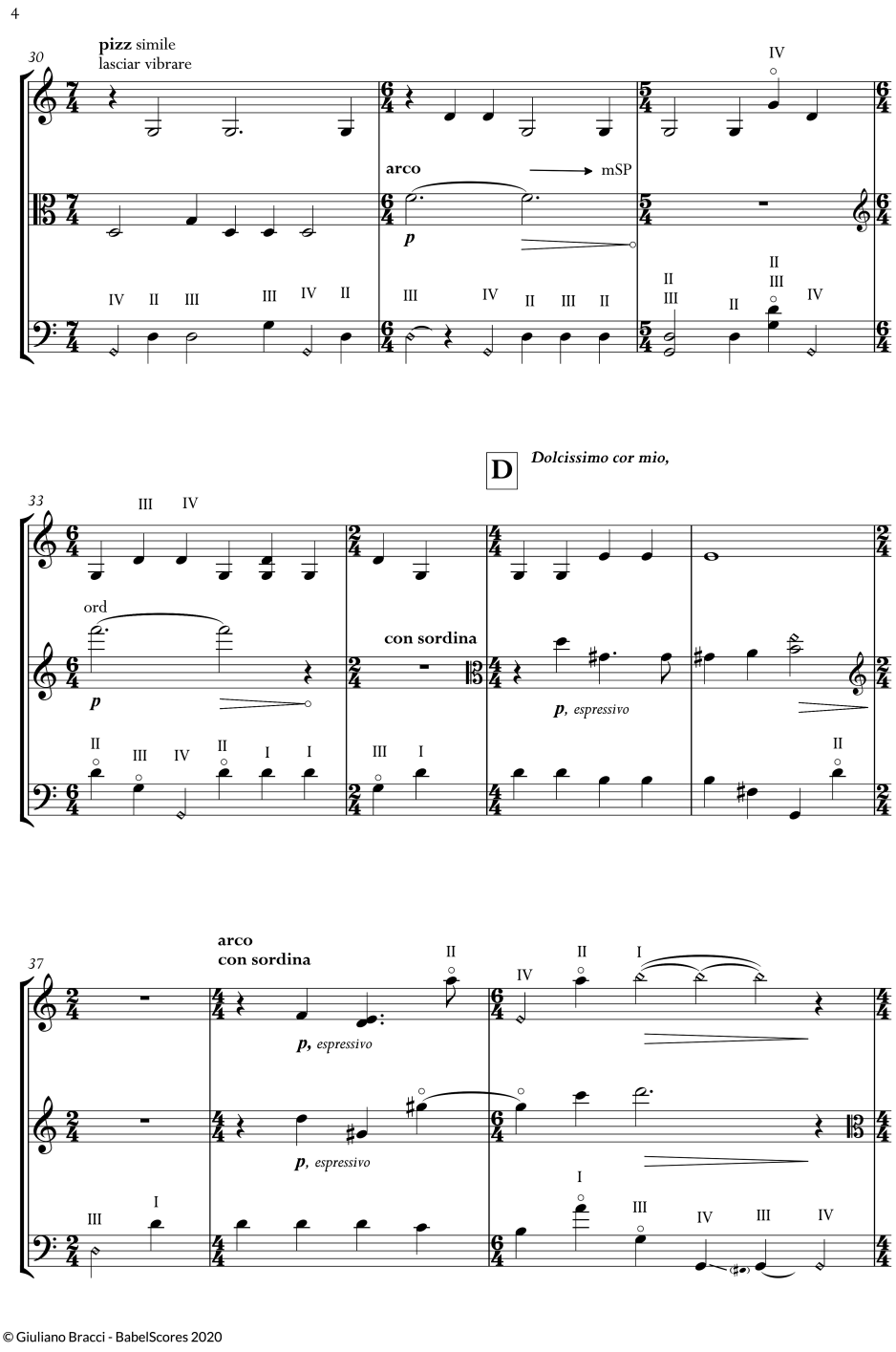


Figure 12. Bracci, *Hortense,* bars 26-39

Audio 13. Bracci, *Hortense,* performed by the New European Ensemble, bars 26-39:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Bracci_Hortense_NeUE_orgelpark-2016-audio-26-39-nuova-versione.mp3

Conclusion

Aiming to shed light on the multifaceted nature of the practice of transcribing, I have used this chapter to discuss the motivations that led me to create *Hortense*. With this piece, I continued exploring the boundaries of what transcribing could mean, seeking an approach to the original that was simultaneously more intimate and more free, and following Derrida's idea of showing respect for the original by acting ungrateful, assuming the "risk of betrayal" and looking for strategies to create openings that would allow the original musical work to contaminate and transform my language as a transcriber. Before addressing my transcription work, I examined recent experiences of other composer-transcribers such as Gervasoni, Scodanibbio, and Barrett. While discussing these examples, I delved into themes related to transcription, such as intimacy with the original work, the ability to account for the inevitably mediated perception of an original piece, and the possibility of embracing Webern's legacy regarding transcription. By examining excerpts from scores and recordings, I connected these themes to concrete musical choices, both technical and aesthetic.

For further critical contextualization, I placed *Hortense* and my transcription practice within the landscape of Gesualdo's music transcriptions. I then dove into the details of a page from Sciarrino's *Le voci sottovetro*. Subsequently, I explored Laterza's understanding of transcription as a hermeneutic mediation between the transcriber's world and that of the original work, an approach rooted in Gadamer's ideas of the fusion of horizons. Laterza's concept of transcriptions as "incarnated acts of interpretation" highlighted that the transcriber's situatedness is not a hindrance but the very enabling condition for engaging with an original musical work. Moreover, and more importantly, the transcriber's inherent situatedness is a dynamic element that can evolve within the very practice of transcription. Similarly, it works the other way around: Due to one's situatedness – which is, in a way, always singular – a transcription can take various forms.

Hortense presents one significant difference compared to *Une petite fleur bleue*: The original contains a poetic text. This presence altered my approach to the original work and broadened my perspective on transcribing, adding an additional layer of meaning to this practice. Moreover, my decision to transcribe a five-voice madrigal for a string trio forced me to move away from a literal rendition of the original voices, compelling me to explore new solutions.

In the process of transcribing, a triangulation emerged between Gesualdo's music, the madrigal's poetic text, and my transcription. The text of the madrigal became a map through which I navigated Gesualdo's music, providing concrete guidance and enhancing my understanding of it. This triangulation also created a broader space of freedom compared to my previous work: A more articulated context allowed me to engage with the original in diverse ways, culminating in

the idea described in the last example – suggested by the poetic text – of incorporating a quotation from my own music within the transcription, explicitly transitioning from a third-person to a first-person narrative.

In conclusion, my relationship with the madrigal's text, and thus the triangulation of text-original-transcription, allowed me to explore new aspects of this practice, giving a central role to the poetic words of a vocal work even in the process of creating an instrumental transcription. This new relationship with an original mediated by a poetic text had significant implications for my practice, particularly in *Una notte*, my transcription for voice and orchestra of a Schubert Lied that is at the heart of the next chapter, and that lies on the fertile boundary of what can be understood as transcribing.

Chapter 4
Una notte
The Musical Work and Its Double

Another language comes to disturb the first one.
It doesn't inhabit it, but haunts it.

Jacques Derrida, "At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am"

In chapter 3, I discussed how, when writing *Hortense*, my relation to Gesualdo's music was significantly shaped by the poetic text featured in the madrigal "Languisce al fin." In *Una notte*, my transcription for voice and orchestra of Schubert's Lied "Der Doppelgänger" (1828), I further explored the possibilities of engaging with a vocal work through its poetic text.

Audio example 1 presents *Una notte* in its entirety.

Audio 1. Bracci. *Una notte*, performed by RKST21 (Orkest de Ereprijs, Nationaal Jeugdorkest); Sterre Konijn, voice; Jurjen Hempel, conductor:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/E07227-05-Giuliano-Bracci-Una-Notte_STERRE.mp3
Complete score in pdf:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Bracci_Una-notte.pdf

In order to reflect on my relationship with the original musical work in *Una notte*, I will consider the practice of transcribing in light of certain ideas regarding the possible relations to a musical score from the perspective of musical performance. First, I will focus on the ideas of the composer and conductor Hans Zender (1936-2019), whose insights were instrumental for me in considering the performative nature of transcribing, a practice of which transcriptions serve as tangible traces. In the introduction to this thesis, I described transcriptions as evidence of listenings, following Peter Szendy's ideas (Szendy 2008), while delineating listening as auditory imagination – a listening that is able to imagine – and envisioning it as a genuinely performative and creative endeavor. I believe that the transcriber's listening that Szendy refers to encompasses a multitude of practices, all of which represent tangible forms of imagination. Hence, the transcriber's body (analogous to that of the composer, as described by Paul Craenen) "is a body that alternates between the positions of a planner, improviser, listener, performer, technician, or official manager of the composer's thinking" (Craenen 2014, 244).

Zender designates his *Schuberts "Winterreise"* (1996) as a "composed interpretation."[1] It is a transcription for tenor and orchestra of Franz Schubert's entire *Winterreise* (1827) cycle. In a lengthy and insightful commentary on *Schuberts "Winterreise,"* which merits a thorough examination, he writes:

> Since the invention of musical notation, music has been divided into the text set down by the composer and the reality actualized in sound by the performer. I have spent half my life attempting to deliver performances that are as true as possible to the original text – especially of Schubert's works, which I love deeply – only to have to admit to myself that no interpretation can ever be really true to the original. Apart from the fact that I changed a great many things in *Winterreise* – instruments, concert halls, the importance of marginal notes, etc. – one must understand that each note in a manuscript is primarily a challenge to action and not an explicit description of sound. (Zender 1999a, 18)

After expressing his love for Schubert's music and contemplating the attempt – and the impossibility – of being "really true to the original," Zender asserts that notation is primarily a challenge to action. The nature of musical notation is ambiguous, as it could simultaneously indicate the action *and* the outcome of the action – i.e., the sound – and this ambiguity constitutes its very richness.[2] In line with Zender's perspective, the score does not function as a set of instructions for (re)producing music; rather, it is a challenge, and it primarily prompts taking initiative: It encourages embarking on an exploration, making musical choices, and engaging in musical thought. Performers are thus engaging with their

[1] Zender also designates as a "composed interpretation" his *33 Veränderungen über 33 Veränderungen* (33 Variations on 33 Variations) (2011), a transcription for ensemble of Ludwig van Beethoven's "Diabelli Variations" (1819-1823). The concept of variation is latently present in my research on transcribing, as it encompasses both repetition and difference. However, I have chosen not to explicitly introduce it into my thesis, because doing so would deviate from the primary focus of my research. Variation, both as a musical technique and as a musical form, holds its own significance within the repertoire and it does not necessarily correlate with transcribing as a way of engaging with another musical work.

[2] In musical notation, a distinction is often made between sound result notation and action notation. Sound result notation primarily refers to the relatively fixed properties of a note, such as pitch and duration. Action notation, on the other hand, pertains to techniques that alter the sound through additional actions or techniques, such as applying a damper. Although this distinction is not absolute, it is nevertheless significant. For instance, extended techniques are often notated through graphic visualizations or representations of actions on the instrument, without a direct relationship between the written symbol and the resulting sound. In contrast, traditional pitch notation is independent of the instrument for which it is written, allowing, for example, a clarinet player to read and perform a violin part. Since these two types of notation coexist and are not completely separated, performers are constantly (re)constructing the actions to be taken starting from the indicated sound results, and vice versa, deducing the sounds to be produced from the actions indicated in the score. Moreover, notation is not fixed but evolves over time. As extended techniques – previously requiring action notation for comprehension – become familiar among performers, they can then be indicated through sound notation (for example, by simply using a specific notehead).

intelligence and sensitivity, both of which are essential for the "creative transformation" of a "lively and exciting performance" that can "bring new aspects of the work to attention" (Zender 1999a, 18).

In his *Schuberts "Winterreise,"* Zender has left Schubert's vocal part nearly intact, but he has redesigned it by introducing new dynamics and repetitions. His main interventions primarily focus on the orchestral component, extending to the creation of new interludes that frequently introduce individual Lieder within the cycle. As the musicologist James Wishart emphasizes, "Zender's work is in no way orchestrated in Schubertian style, and the world of late-twentieth-century modernism is everywhere on view: in the instrumentation, the timbral sophistication, the composer's attitude to rhythm, the use of polytonality, the adventurous manipulation of pulse and tempo, and many other dimensions" (Wishart 2000, 229). A good example of Zender's way of approaching Schubert's music is the beginning of the nineteenth song "Täuschung," where the few bars of Schubert's piano introduction – see figure 1 and audio example 2 – are transformed into an articulated and extended orchestral passage where the plucked sounds of the guitar, the harp, and the strings isolate and emphasize the rhythmical character of the piece, putting it in the foreground and gradually establishing the context for the entry of the voice. Zender's version of the beginning of "Täuschung" is presented in figure 2 and in audio example 3.

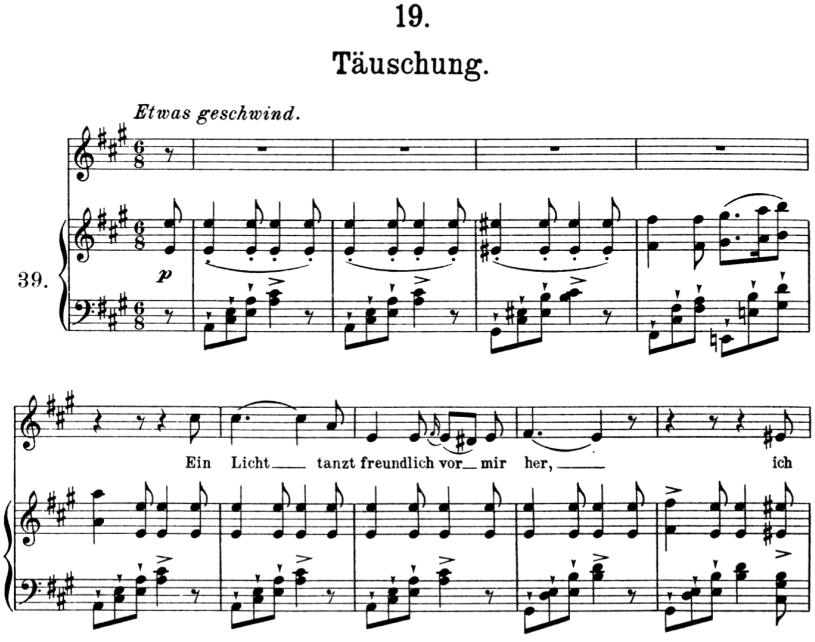


Figure 1. Schubert, "Täuschung" (*Winterreise*), bars 1-9

Audio 2. Schubert, "Täuschung" (*Winterreise*), bars 1-9, performed by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, voice, and Alfred Brendel, piano:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Schubert_Tauschung-bars-1-9-AUDIO.mp3

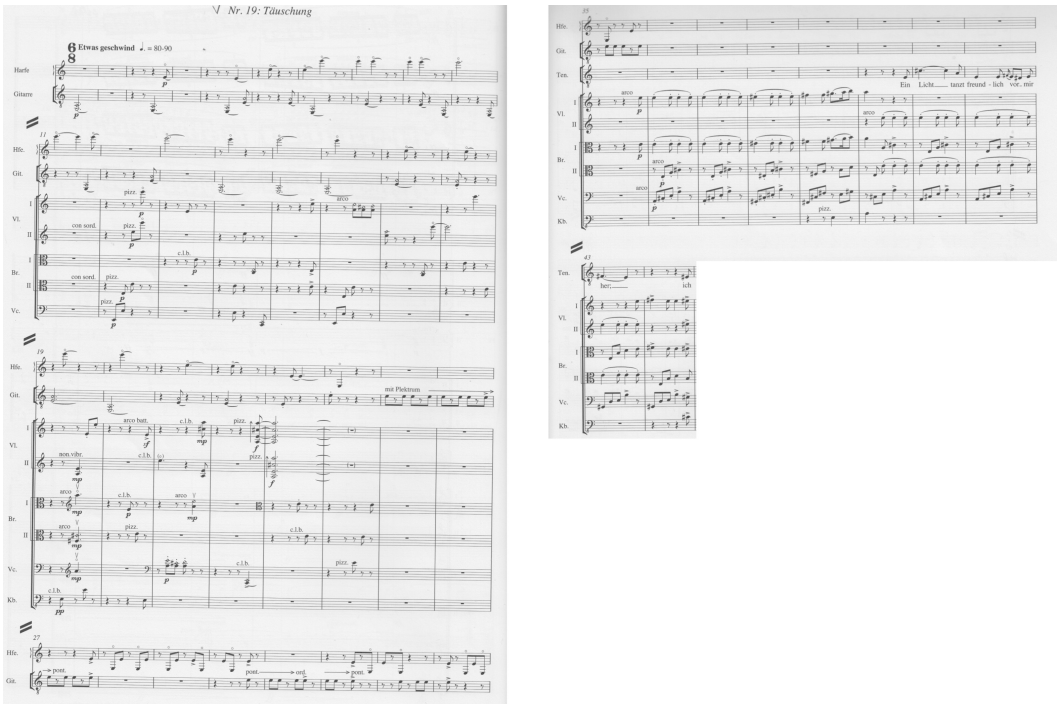


Figure 2. Zender, "Täuschung" (*Schuberts "Winterreise"*), pages 150-151

Audio 3. Zender, "Täuschung" (*Schuberts "Winterreise"*), pages 150-151, performed by Julian Prégardien and the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie conducted by Robert Reimer:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Zender_Tauschung-INIZIO.mp3

In one of his essays on music, Zender claims that "the past is not finished; its forces can regroup and affect our present in a barely predictable way" (Zender 2004, 185). As aptly noted by the musicologist Håvard Enge, in Zender's view, looking at the past as something unfinished and open for a creative transformation in the present also means that "heritage must always be revised critically; tradition must be reinterpreted, reinvented and supplemented for each new historical situation" and that "it is only through this continuous critical actualisation that the tradition can survive" (Enge 2010). Beyond his radical engagement with the musical works of the Western tradition, Zender's idea of the reinvention of tradition also sees the composer, the performer, and the audience as equals due to their shared practice of active and productive listening. Indeed, akin to the past, the musical text also maintains the characteristic of being unfinished, thereby positioning the performer (and the audience) as a co-creator of the work.
Zender's ideas of the past (and of scores) as something unfinished and open, and of shared authorship between composers and performers, resonates with Roland Barthes's ideas expressed in his essay "The Death of the Author." Barthes claims that "a text consists not of a line of words, releasing a single

'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) […] but of a multi-dimensional space in which are married and contested several writings" (Barthes 1977a, 52-53). A text, he continues, "consists of multiple writings," and – like a score is for Zender – it is open for creative transformation. Furthermore, the "site where this multiplicity is collected" and "the destination of a text" (Barthes 1977a, 54) is not the author, but precisely the reader – or, in our context, the listener (i.e., the transcriber, the performers, and the audience).
In the commentary on his transcription, Zender further elaborates:

> My interpretation of *Winterreise* does not seek a new expressive meaning but rather makes use of the liberties that all composers intuitively allow themselves: the slowing or quickening of tempi, the transposition into different keys, and the revealing of more characteristic and colourful nuances. To this, we must add the potential of 'reading' music; moving around within the text, repeating certain lines of music, interrupting continuity, comparing different readings of the same passage…In my version, all these possibilities remain subject to compositional discipline and thus create autonomous formalistic passages layered over the original Schubert manuscript. The transformation of the piano sound within the multicoloured possibilities of the orchestra is only one of the many consequences of this method: this is definitely not a matter of a one-dimensional 'colouring,' but rather of permutations of tone colour arranged in a manner fully independent of the formal rules relating to Schubert's music. The appearance, in a few parts, of 'contrafacta' (that is, the addition to Schubert's music of invented sounds as introductory, epilogue or bridge passages, or as simultaneous parallel music) are but one extreme of this methodology. (Zender 1999a, 18-19)

In the middle of the Lied "Täuschung" lies another example of Zender's freedom in (re)reading Schubert's music: The beginning of the line "Ach! wer wie ich so elend ist," is repeated three times by Zender before continuing. Figure 3 and audio example 4 present Schubert's Lied, while figure 4 and audio example 5 present Zender's reading of the same passage.

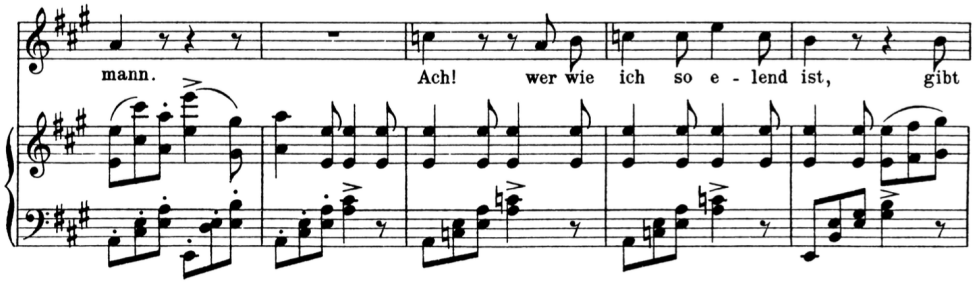


Figure 3. Schubert, "Täuschung" (*Winterreise*), bars 20-24

Audio 4. Schubert, "Täuschung"(*Winterreise*), bars 20-24, performed by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, voice, and Alfred Brendel, piano:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Schubert_Tauschung-AUDIO-Ach.mp3

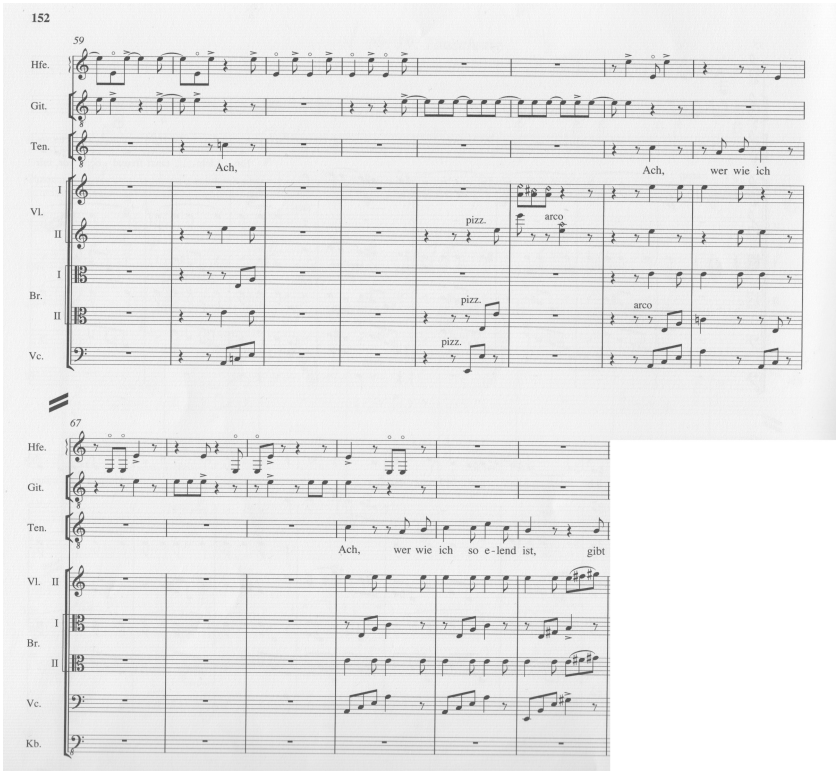


Figure 4. Zender, "Täuschung" (*Schuberts "Winterreise"*), bars 59-72

Audio 5. Zender, "Täuschung" (*Schuberts "Winterreise"*), bars 59-72, performed by Julian Prégardien and the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie conducted by Robert Reimer:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Zender_Tauschung-ACH.mp3

In his commentary, Zender discusses his interpretation of Schubert's *Winterreise* as though it were a distinct performance of Schubert's work. Following his perspective, it becomes possible to perceive transcriptions as recomposed performances. Instead of generating sounds by playing an instrument, transcribers (re)create and (re)imagine music by reading a score. Zender provides an insight that makes explicit what reading a score could mean for a composer (and also for a transcriber): "moving around within the text" in a non-linear way, allowing repetitions of certain lines of music, comparing different possible ways of reading the same passage, and imagining other music that is not in the original score (Zender 1999a, 18-19). Zender's description represents a common attitude among composers when facing their own musical scores, examining the

unexpressed or unrealized potential within them. I find it noteworthy that this perspective is also clearly articulated when composers relate to the music of others, particularly within the context of transcribing.
Zender's reference to reading implies imagining: Reading is already a rereading, where the transcriber imagines what they are reading, utilizing the potentialities and freedoms of the imagination. The way Zender describes the potentials of reading music contradicts the prescriptive conception of the score as "an authoritative grid, mainly designed to facilitate unidirectional instructions from composer to performer" (Cobussen 2017, 111). However, it is also important to consider how the original score dictates its influence in each specific instance. In the transcriptions discussed in this thesis so far, and next to other elements that are more case-specific, pitch patterns – i.e., melodic or harmonic identities – generally retain a certain authority, occasionally remaining recognizable or becoming evident upon re-examination. This emphasis might aid in the comprehension of instances of deviation or transformation of the original.

Zender's stance, which redefines what a score is and how it can work, is also embraced and explored by performers advocating for a reshaping of the bond between notation and performance, aiming to liberate themselves from a static and prescriptive tradition. Some of these radical approaches are present in the work of Heloisa Amaral and Lucia D'Errico, two musicians and artistic researchers who were involved in MusicExperiment21, a research program led by Paulo de Assis at the Orpheus Institute in Ghent, that explored notions of experimentation, aiming to introduce innovative performance practices for Western notated art music.

In her doctoral research, Amaral problematized the activity of mediating classical music and the conditions in which this music is presented, from a curatorial perspective. Her approach, which challenges the boundaries of freedom for classically trained musicians, is pertinent to my research, as it addresses the issue of establishing a living and critical relationship with existing musical works. It explores, from a performer's perspective, various ways of engaging with classical music in contemporary contexts. In Amaral's performances, classical works coexist with other sounds – the action of the instrument, the creaking of floors, the breathing of the performer, or the steps of the audience – (sometimes) amplified by electronic means. The explicit inclusion of environmental sounds in the performance of a classical work affects the audience's attention, and it modifies the practice of the performer and their relationship with the musical work, inviting "a form of openness and a listening attitude that would cover a sonic landscape broader than that of the musical work" (Amaral 2022, 77). Specifically, when discussing the concepts put forth by musicologist Nicholas Cook (2001), Amaral suggests dealing with scores as scripts. In her work, she considers scores not as rigid and prescriptive artifacts to be replicated, but as open sources of inspiration. They serve as starting points for the execution of

more expansive musical endeavors in which "musical interpretation, improvisation, and curatorial thinking are tightly interwoven" (Amaral 2022, 131).

In her work, D'Errico aims to redefine "the locus of performance as a place of experimentation, where instead of replicating the past through a set of inherited modalities and tools, 'what we know' about a particular musical work is reshaped and constituted anew" (D'Errico 2018, 14). For D'Errico, the musical work – that for Amaral was the point of departure to explore a broader musical environment – acts as the pretext for an exploration that centralizes the performer's relationship with the music, extending beyond the boundaries of the work itself. Her approach is based on the concept of divergence from the traditional paradigms of musical interpretation: D'Errico's divergent performances are in fact constituted by sounds and gestures that are mostly unrecognizable as belonging to the score they reference. D'Errico refers to the musical work that she is performing as the "primary work," thus making explicit its nature as the fundamental point of departure – and not the goal or arrival – and also setting herself outside of a traditional paradigm of reproduction and reiteration of past musical works.

A powerful example of D'Errico's strategies is her *n(Amarilli-1)*, a series of reenactments of Giulio Caccini's *Amarilli mia bella* (1602). D'Errico uses the forceful rhetorical organization of the original song as her starting point. She understands Caccini's song to be "a scene of desire and violence" (D'Errico 2018, 96), and then divides it into six sections, or vectors: distance, desire, suspicion, laceration, penetration, and rapture. D'Errico uses the rhetorical structure of the original piece as the main material to draw a visual diagram that then functions as a guide for her performances. The first three vectors of D'Errico's diagram are illustrated in figure 5. Audio example 6 presents an excerpt of a performance – or reenactment – of Caccini's *Amarilli mia bella* in the context of *Aberrant Decodings*, a performance by D'Errico and Marlene Monteiro Freitas.[3]

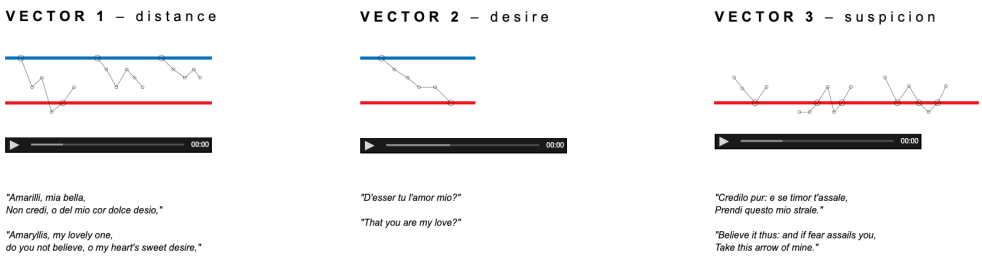


Figure 5. The first three diagrams of D'Errico's *n(Amarilli-1)*

[3] Other versions of D'Errico's *n(Amarilli-1)* are available on the Research Catalogue's page showing her project *Powers of Divergence* (2019): https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/278529/386193

Audio 6. D'Errico, *Aberrant Decodings*, performed by D'Errico and Marlene Monteiro Freitas (starting at 51'50"):
https://youtu.be/P3hLQBVT9To?si=hwShVsY95-oHU98r&t=3110

The performances and reflections by both Amaral and D'Errico are relevant for my practice as they show possible, radical, and liberating approaches to a score, putting a musician's relation to the musical work at the center. Scores become a "challenge to action" (Zender 1999, 18), and a point of departure that enable the musicians to place the musical work in a wider context and to actualize unheard virtualities of it. While writing *Una notte*, I worked on Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger" in a similar way: Schubert's Lied on Heinrich Heine's poem became the point of departure for my transcribing process.

Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger"

Part of Schubert's last song collection *Schwanengesang*, "Der Doppelgänger" is one of six pieces setting Heine's poetry. The composition of this Lied dates back to 1828, the year of Schubert's death, and it was published posthumously in 1829.

To start transcribing Schubert's Lied, I spent time reading it, playing and singing it at the piano, listening to it with my inner ear, thinking about it, and imagining different possible approaches to it. This time spent with the musical work made me quite familiar – intimate even – with the words and the music. Schubert's score and a recording are presented in figure 6 and audio example 7. The text and an English translation of Heine's poem are below. (Once again, the score and the recordings that I have chosen are the ones that were available to me at the time, without any implication that they were more original or more correct than others that I could have possibly chosen.)

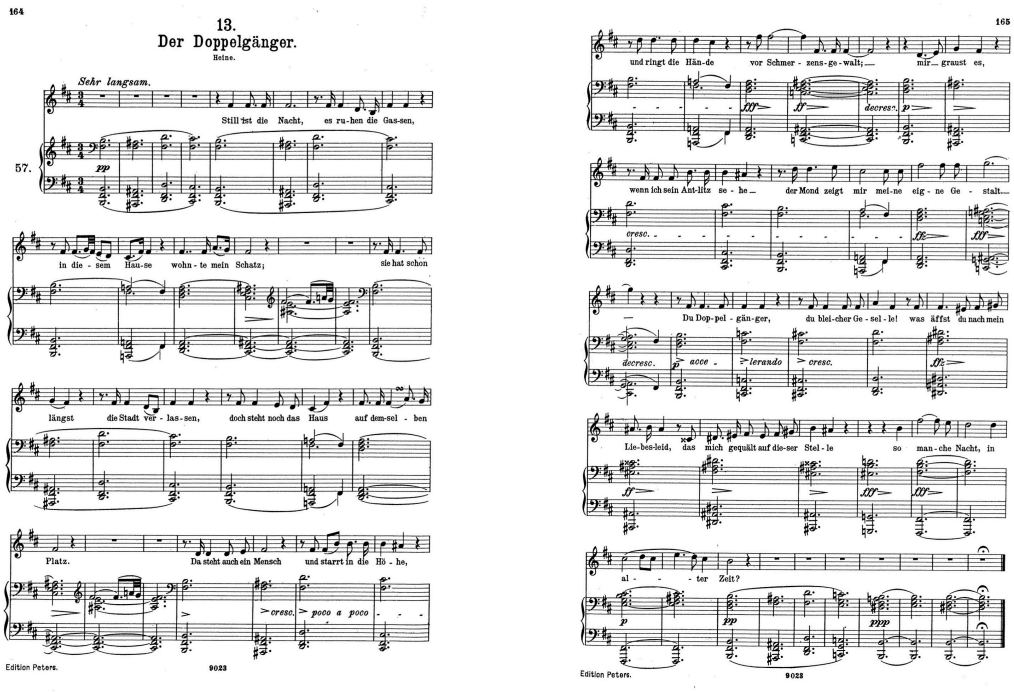


Figure 6. Schubert.,"Der Doppelgänger" (*Schwanengesang*)

Audio 7. Schubert, "Der Doppelgänger" (*Schwanengesang*), performed by Christoph Prégardien, tenor, and Andreas Staier, fortepiano: https://youtu.be/_hoCMcHzlrM?si=XpEw_kdpHgXGZWDy

Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen,
In diesem Hause wohnte mein Schatz;
Sie hat schon längst die Stadt verlassen,
Doch steht noch das Haus auf demselben Platz.

Da steht auch ein Mensch und starrt in die Höhe,
Und ringt die Hände, vor Schmerzensgewalt;
Mir graust es, wenn ich sein Antlitz sehe -
Der Mond zeigt mir meine eigne Gestalt.

Du Doppelgänger! du bleicher Geselle!
Was äffst du nach mein Liebesleid,
Das mich gequält auf dieser Stelle,
So manche Nacht, in alter Zeit?

(Heine 1877)

An English translation by Hal Draper (Heine 1982):

The night is still, the streets are dumb,
This is the house where dwelt my dear;
Long since she's left the city's hum
But the house stands in the same place here.

Another man stands where the moon beams lace,
He wrings his hands, eyes turned to the sky.
A shudder runs through me – I see his face:
The man who stands in the moonlight is I.

Pale ghost, twin phantom, hell-begot!
Why do you ape the pain and woe
That racked my heart on this same spot
So many nights, so long ago?

(Heine 1982)

The poem unfolds entirely in one night, when the poet sees his double at the window of the house where his beloved once lived. The theme of self and other – how disturbing it is to face oneself as if one were someone else – forms the central theme of the poem. The poet sees himself as he was some years before, yet thinks he sees someone else, and this event – of which he questions the meaning – terrifies him. The repetition of an experience, the repetition of our self – that is, of what we believe to be unrepeatable – changes its very meaning. The presence of a double is also what is produced by the practice of transcription: The original splits, both repeated and modified. As I discussed in chapter 1, the copy precedes its original: It is the practice of transcribing that defines a musical work as an original. The presence of a transcription – of a double – prompts a different consideration and reveals new facets of the original work, after which it is no longer possible to listen to it in the same way.

Why Schubert?

I chose Schubert's Lied "Der Doppelgänger" (and indeed the other works for my research on transcribing) primarily because of my affection for it, and above all, because of the desire to spend more time with it. Specifically, I aimed to allow myself to be musically changed and contaminated by this encounter. Unlike the late-Renaissance polyphonic music of Frescobaldi and Gesualdo that inspired *Une petite fleur bleue* (chapter 1) and *Hortense* (chapter 3), "Der Doppelgänger," my starting point for *Una notte*, is a solo song for voice and piano from the nineteenth century. I explicitly sought this difference from my previous experiences to see what would happen if I placed myself in a different situation, observing – much like in a chemical experiment – how my creativity would react

when exposed to a different reagent. Indeed, in transcribing, the original work is not just a pretext; it triggers unforeseen and distinct reactions. The choice of instrumentation for my transcription was also quite different from previous experiences: I chose to utilize a commission I had received at the time to write a piece for voice and orchestra, using it as a means to advance this experiment of transcribing Schubert's Lied.

As I delved into the available options, studying the potentialities at hand, I sensed that the presence of a single voice, both in the original and in my transcription, would restrict my scope for maneuvering more than in my previous experiences. I also found the fusion of text and music in Schubert's work challenging to disassemble. The Lied asserted itself strongly, unlike the pieces I had previously transcribed, which had provided a polyphonic space to intervene in and to rearticulate. I struggled to find the right distance; it seemed that my transcription, by preserving the seamless integration of voice and lyrics, would stay too close to the original. It risked adhering too faithfully, blending in without standing out, thereby denying me the real opportunity for change or contamination – i.e., the possibility (and the freedom) of betrayal. I continued to read and imagine Schubert's Lied, awaiting a convincing approach and consequently, a direction to pursue. I waited, and, as "one does not make the other come, one lets it come by preparing for its coming" (Derrida 2007b, 45), I invited the other to come, preparing an opening for its arrival.

Una notte

As previously mentioned, my process for transcribing "Der Doppelgänger" initially involved reading and rereading the Lied along with the poetic text by Heine. Initially, I could not find an approach to Schubert's Lied that satisfied me; I struggled to find the right distance from (and closeness to) the text. Therefore, I decided to look for a different text that revolved around the theme of duality – the encounter with another self, hence the fragmentation of one's own identity. I discovered several relevant poems by the American poet Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), and assembled the final text for *Una notte* from a selection of fragments of various poems (catalog numbers 850, 410, 1721, and 1619) by Dickinson:

I sing to use the Waiting
My Bonnet but to tie
And shut the Door
No more to do have I

We journey to the Day
To Keep the Dark away

The first Day's Night had come —
I told my Soul to sing —

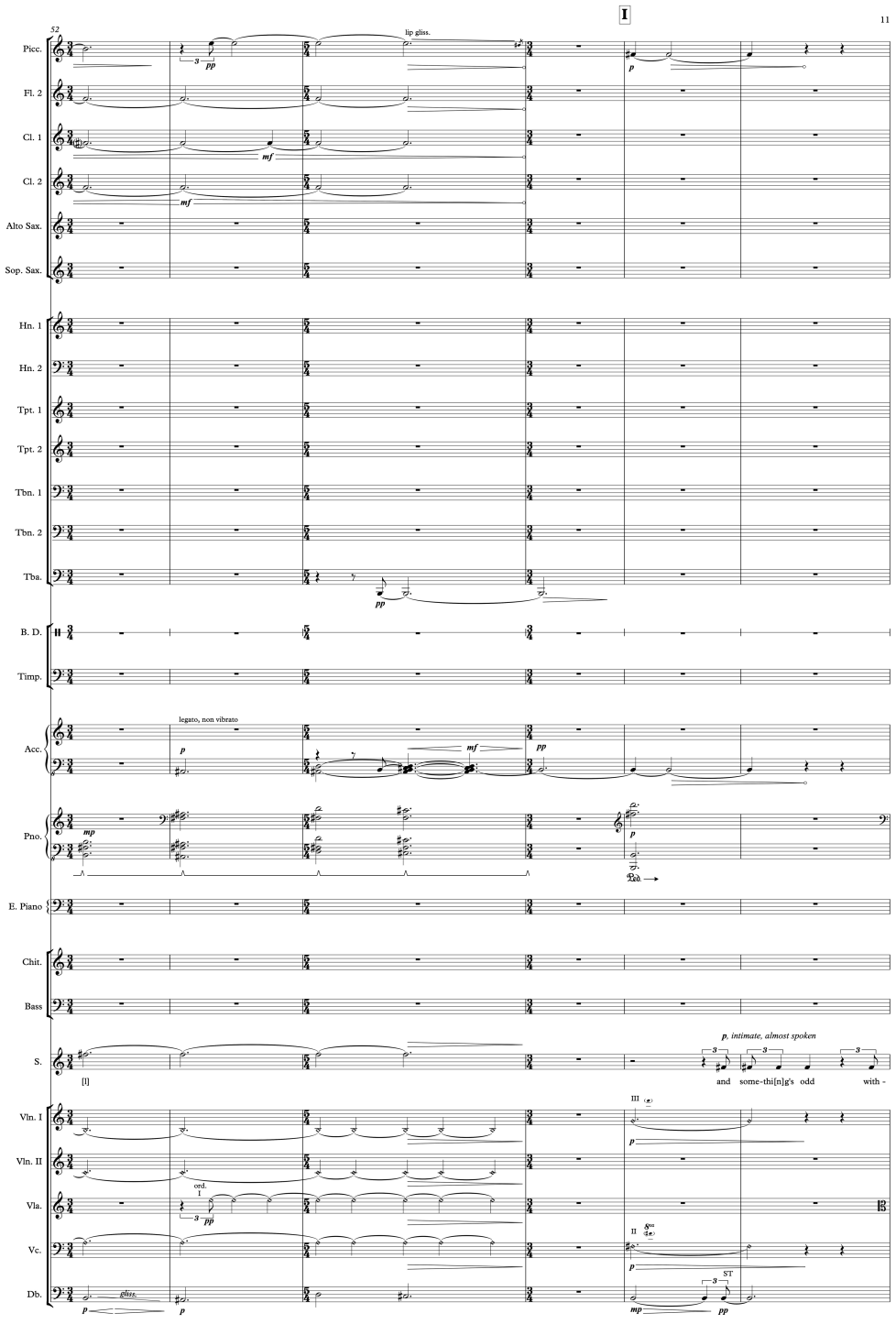
And Something's odd — within —
That person that I was —
And this One — do not feel the same —

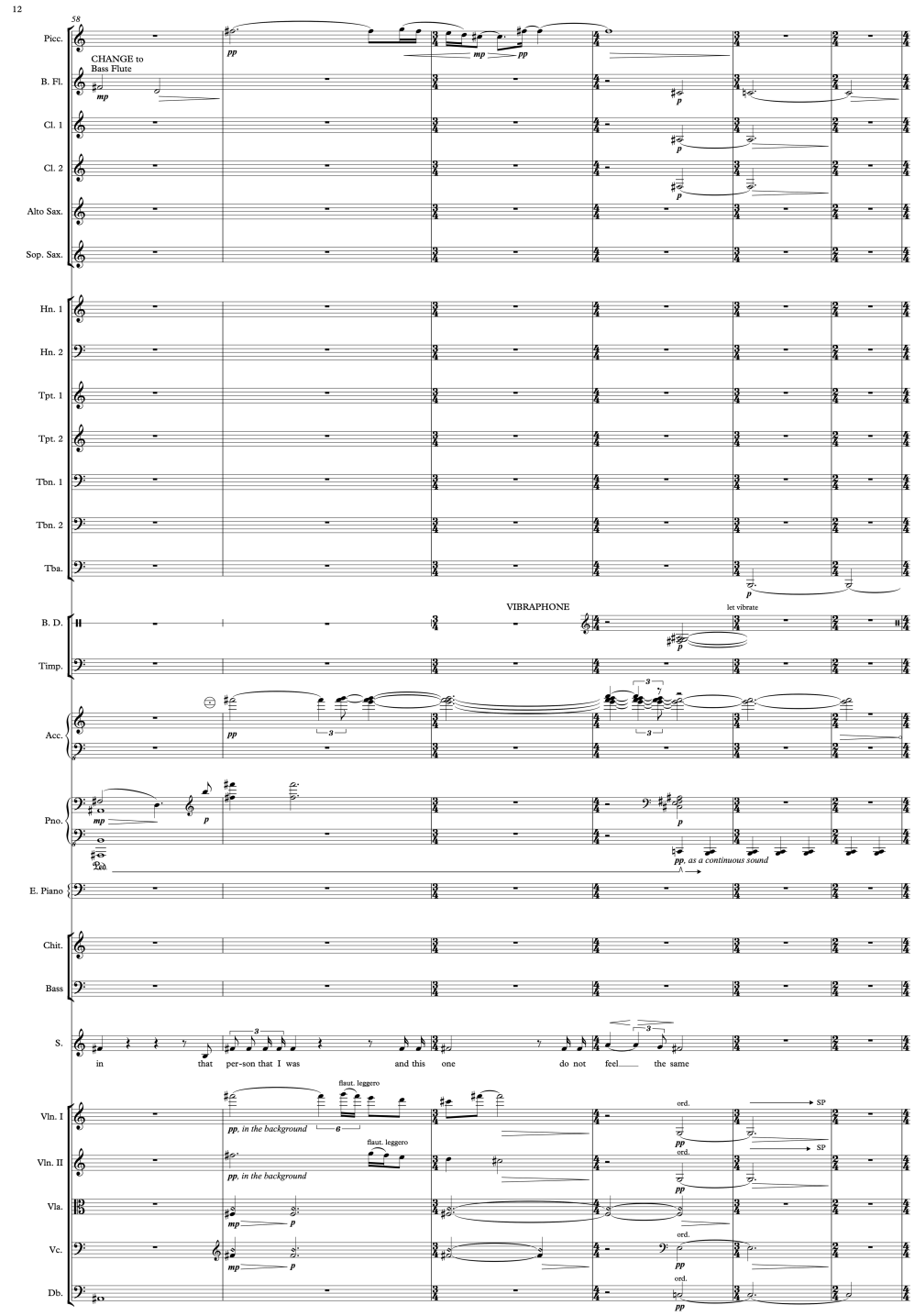
She was my host — she was my guest,
I never to this day
If I invited her could tell

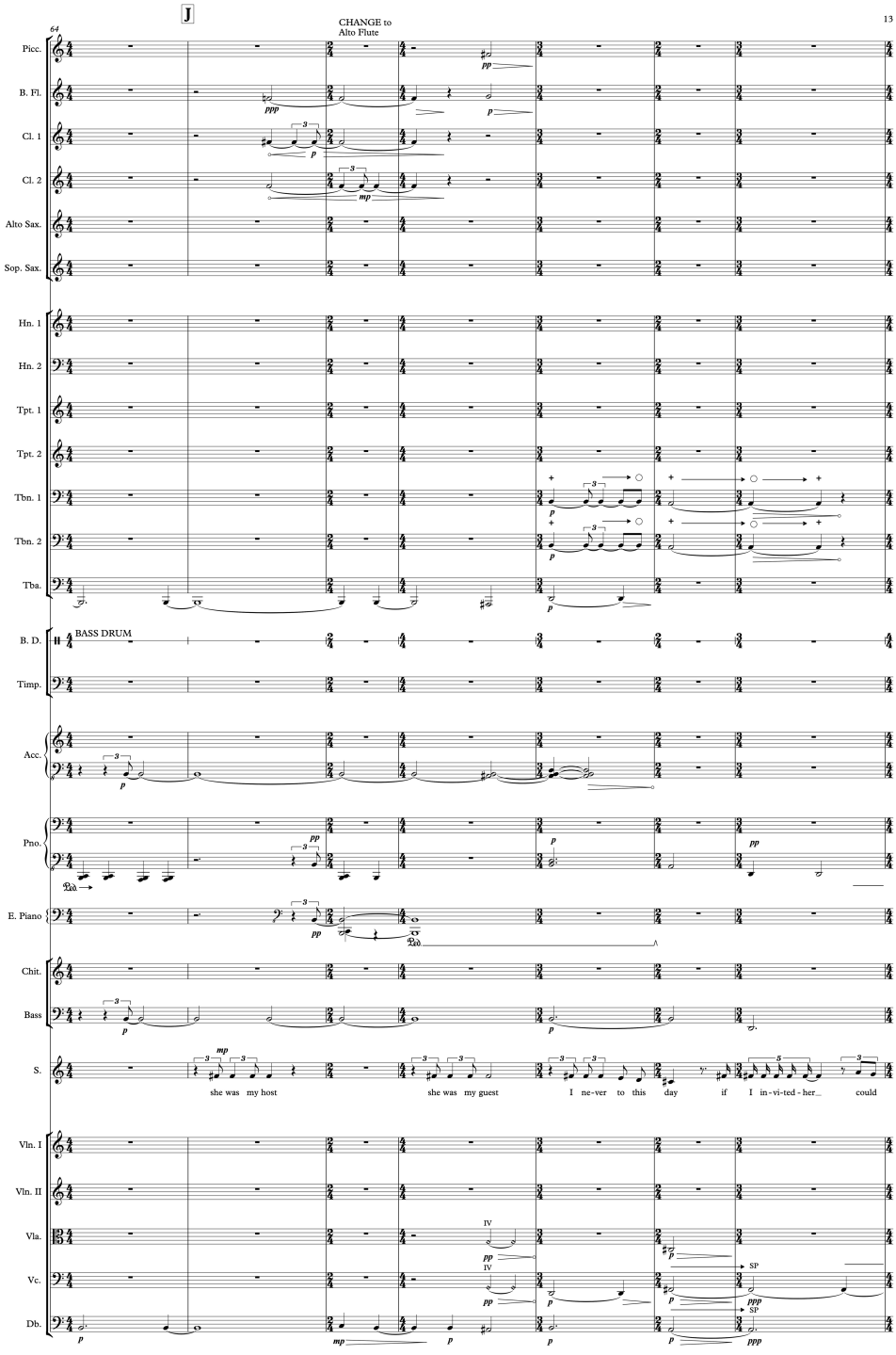
Not knowing when the Dawn will come,
I open every Door

(Dickinson, 2009)

I established the order of the verses as I progressed in writing *Una notte*. After an initial impasse, and still uncertain of how to proceed, I began writing while keeping Schubert's Lied in front of me. It remained a ghostly presence throughout the whole writing process, becoming more explicitly evident at the core of the piece.
In the selected verses by Dickinson that I chose and rearranged, initially a voice sings to pass the time – "to use the Waiting" – mirroring my approach with Schubert's Lied. I indeed opted to start writing while still uncertain of the outcome. After an instrumental section that heralds the onset of the night – "The first Day's Night had come" – the voice sings Dickinson's words to Schubert's music. Within the night of *Una notte*, Schubert and Dickinson converge. Figure 7 and audio example 8 present the score and a recording of the section of *Una notte* where Schubert's Lied is recognizable, but with Dickinson's words.







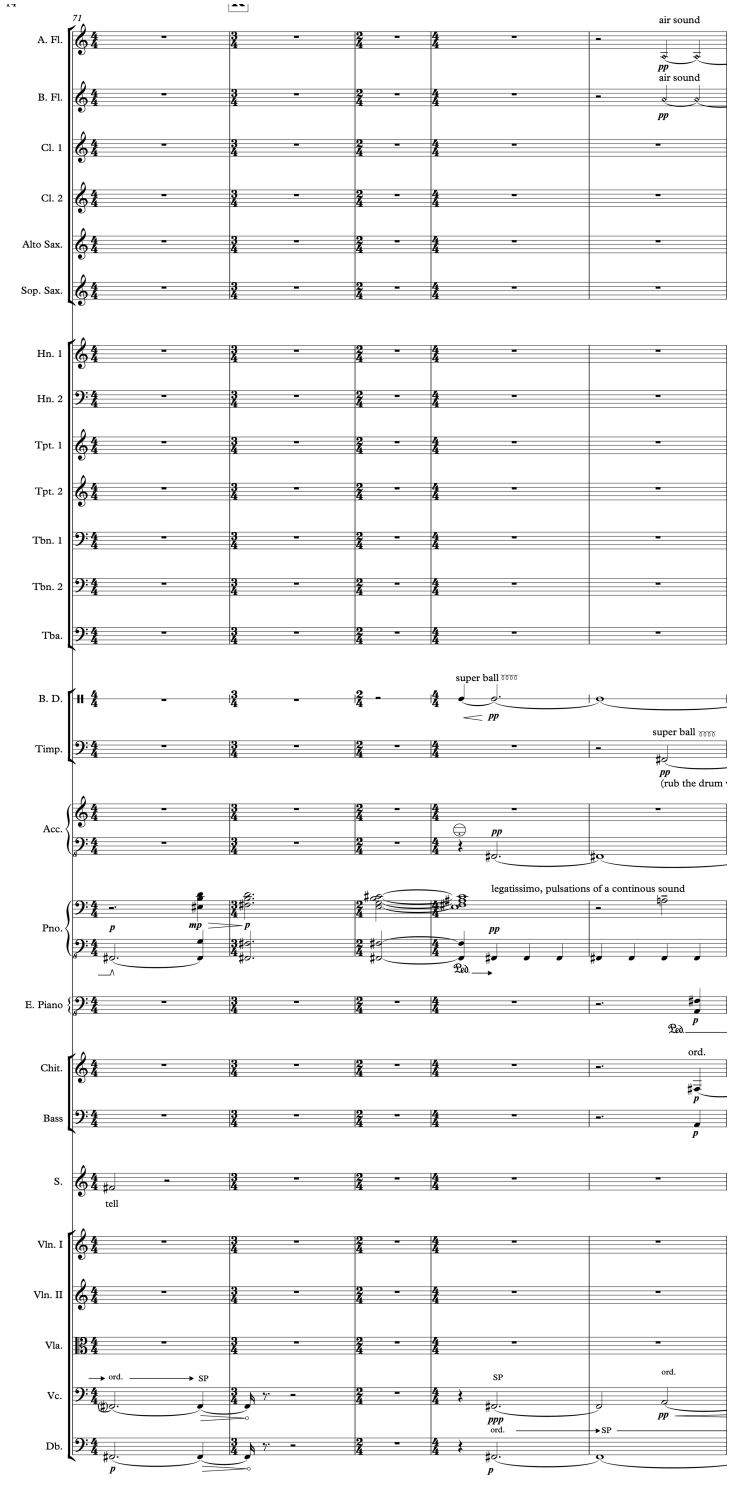


Figure 7. Bracci, *Una notte*, bars 52-77

Audio 8. Bracci, *Una notte*, bars 52-57, performed by RKST21 (Orkest de Ereprijs, Nationaal Jeugdorkest); Sterre Konijn, voice; Jurjen Hempel, conductor:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Bracci-Una-Notte-selezione-b.52-75.mp3

Schubert's Lied, always present throughout my writing process, guided my choice of Dickinson's texts and their assembly. The ghostly presence of the Lied becomes more explicit when the first two verses emerge, transcribed and orchestrated with new words. This constitutes the core of *Una notte*, and while writing the first part of the piece, my aim was to establish a suitable context where there was room for the emergence of Schubert's Lied. The explicit presence of the Lied is initially revealed through the piano chords (see bars 52-56 of figure 7) mirroring the first five measures of the original (see figure 8). In the subsequent bars, I transcribed the first two verses, adapting their rhythm to Dickinson's words and rendering the vocal melodic line more essential and static.

At the beginning of the Lied, the voice sings "Still ist die Nacht," remaining on an F♯, which I carried over into *Una notte*, when the voice sings "and something's odd within" in bars 56-58. From the subsequent fragment of Schubert – "es ruhen die Gassen" (F♯-D-B-F♯) – I employed the open fifth B-F♯ to initiate the phrase stating "that person that I was" (bars 58-59). I omitted the vocal part's melody that revolves around the F♯ (G-F♯-E-D-C♯-F♯) on the words "in diesem Hause," instead allowing it to resonate within the orchestra, performed at a higher pitch by the first and second violins along with the piccolo (bars 58-60).

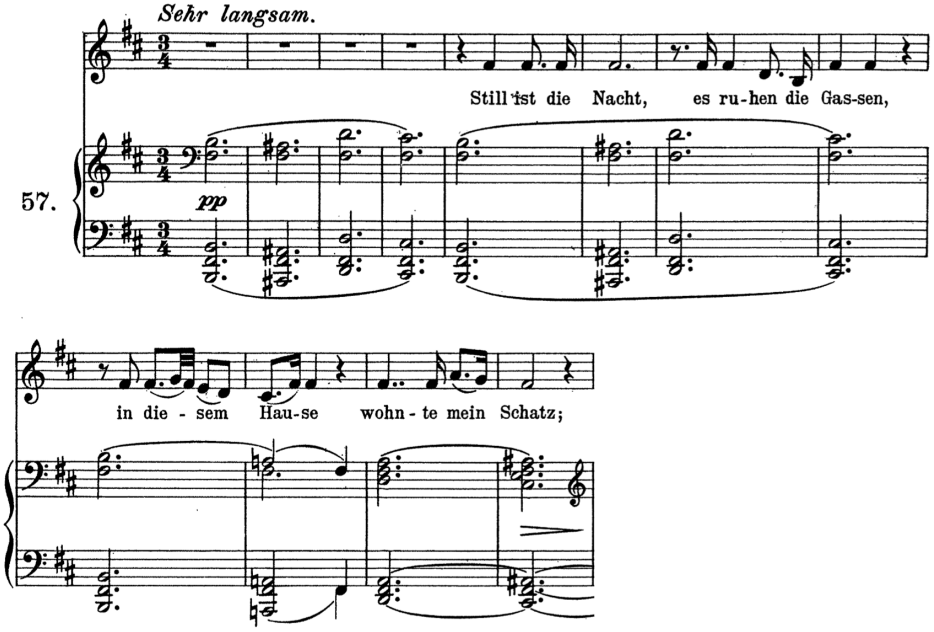


Figure 8. Schubert, "Der Doppelgänger," bars 1-12

In the subsequent verse of *Una notte* – "She was my host, she was my guest" (bars 65-67) – the vocal line keeps singing an F♯, a note that in "Der Doppelgänger" serves as the shared tone among the four chords initiating the

Lied. The F♯ also functions as a drone throughout the entire Lied, with only a few exceptions in the second part. It is noteworthy that despite its sustained nature, the F♯ acquires varied sonic qualities due to the shifts in harmonies: Harmony alters the role and the perception of the F♯ throughout the piece, enabling the listener to hear the same persistent note in different ways.
The constant presence of a note throughout an entire piece is an enticing characteristic that "Der Doppelgänger" shares with Frescobaldi's "Christe, Alio modo," which I transcribed in *Une petite fleur bleue* (see chapter 1). I regarded the presence of a drone – i.e., a single note traversing an entire composition – as an invitation, an entryway for a musical writing that concerns itself with sound and timbre rather than notes, a writing that contemplates how one listens to sound. The unchanging pitch of a note directs one's attention to the timbral element, particularly through a changing context that surrounds the note and gives it meaning.

In *Una notte*, when the voice sings "she was my host, she was my guest," the interval G-F♯, which in Schubert's Lied is sung on the word "längst," appears solely within the orchestra as a harmonic interval rather than a melodic one: The alto flute and bass flute together sound these two notes, and the G is reinforced by the doubling of harmonics in the violas and cellos (bar 67). This technique of transforming melodic tensions into harmonic dissonances is the same that I had used to transcribe the chromaticism of Gesualdo's madrigal "Languisce al fin" in *Hortense* (see chapter 3).

Una notte is not an orchestral piece containing a quotation from Schubert. Schubert's Lied served rather as the starting point and a constant presence throughout my entire writing process. This presence unfolded in various ways: in my selection of Dickinson's texts, and in the overall dramaturgy of the piece, depicting the night wherein the encounter with the double occurs, a moment mirrored in *Una notte* as the convergence of Dickinson's words and Schubert's music.
Furthermore, the Lied is echoed in the choice of notes for the final vocal phrase, following a line present in the initial chords of Schubert's Lied (bars 3-6: D-C♯-B-A♯). This final phrase of *Una notte* can be seen in figure 9 and heard in audio example 9.

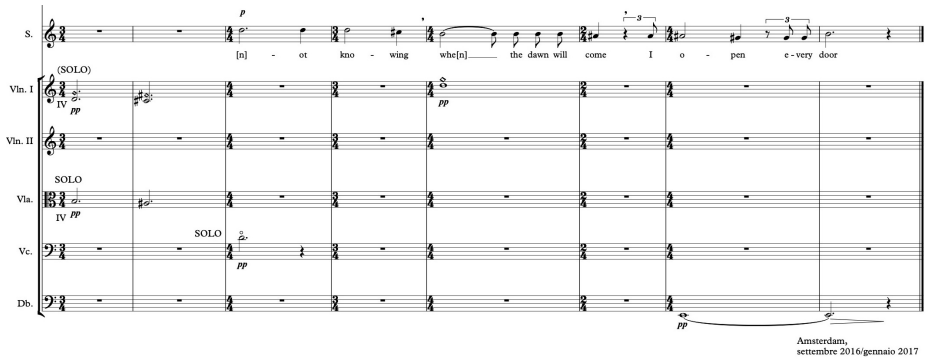


Figure 9. Bracci, *Una notte*, bars 97-104

Audio 9. Bracci, *Una notte*, bars 97-104, performed by RKST21 (Orkest de Ereprijs, Nationaal Jeugdorkest); Sterre Konijn, voice; Jurjen Hempel, conductor: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/E07227-05-Giuliano-Bracci-Una-Notte_last-bars.mp3

Nieder's transcription of Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger"

In an interesting coincidence, another composer transcribed Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger" in the same year that I wrote *Una notte*. Fabio Nieder's *Dem Doppelgänger in memoriam* (2017) is also a transcription for voice and orchestra, and his transcription is worth considering as a fascinating experiment with the idea of the double.

The theme of the double guides Nieder's transcribing in several ways. First, akin to a play of mirrors, his transcription is embedded within another Lied by Schubert. The record of a version for piano and baritone of "Das Wandern ist des Müllers Lust" is played on a turntable – not by the musicians on stage – at the very beginning of the piece, and then reappears near the end. In this way, Nieder creates a duality between the music performed by the singer and the orchestra on one hand, and on the other, by the record playing on stage alongside the orchestra, featuring a voice and piano recording of the other Lied. This doubling causes a disorientation regarding what constitutes an original: We are faced with a live orchestra playing a transcription and a turntable playing a supposed original. Yet, upon closer inspection, even the Lied played by the old, crackling turntable "reveals that the time between us and Schubert has irreversibly passed. Much like the tape recordings in Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*" (Nieder, 2018b).

In Samuel Beckett's theatrical work *Krapp's Last Tape*, first published in 1958, the elderly Krapp, the protagonist and sole character, obsessively listens to old reels on which he recorded a personal diary years earlier. Krapp's presence and his voice recorded years before convey a significant temporal gap. However, unlike in Nieder's transcription, in Beckett's work, the tape recorder is a newly invented instrument. Consequently, the play seems to be set in the distant future, while

the old recorded memories are contemporaneous with the audience of the late 1950s. For today's audience, Beckett's reels and Nieder's turntable likely evoke similar sensations of old objects and voices from the past.

Second, Nieder divides the orchestra into two groups, apart from the baritone, celesta, and percussion, which hold a central position. One group is comprised of a clarinet in A, horn, two double basses, viola, cello, and six violins, while the other group – mirroring the first – is comprised of horn, bass clarinet, two cellos, two violas, harp, and five violins. The singer is thus positioned between the two orchestras, which play the original song by Schubert simultaneously with its twelve transpositions performed one after another (Nieder, 2017). Split between the two orchestras, the baritone embodies two voices: The chest voice consistently aligns with the first orchestra, adopting the style of a Lieder singer. His second voice, the head voice, follows the twelve transpositions, which escalate chromatically throughout the piece. Figure 10 shows Nieder's transcription of the first two verses of Schubert's Lied: "Still ist die Nacht, es ruhen die Gassen, / In diesem Hause wohnte mein Schatz." The baritone sings both the first transposition (one semitone higher) for the first verse, and the second transposition (one tone higher) for the second verse.

Figure 10 presents page 5 of the score, with the beginning of the first verse. The repeated and transposed words that the baritone sings are written in parentheses. As heard in audio example 10, the voice moves between these two poles, and so between the two orchestras. Nieder turns the duality conveyed by the Lied into a musical principle that has consequences on his transcribing, and especially on his vocal writing. In *Dem Doppelgänger in memoriam*, one can hear Schubert's music contaminated and transformed by Nieder's writing, as well as Nieder's writing contaminated by the encounter with Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger."

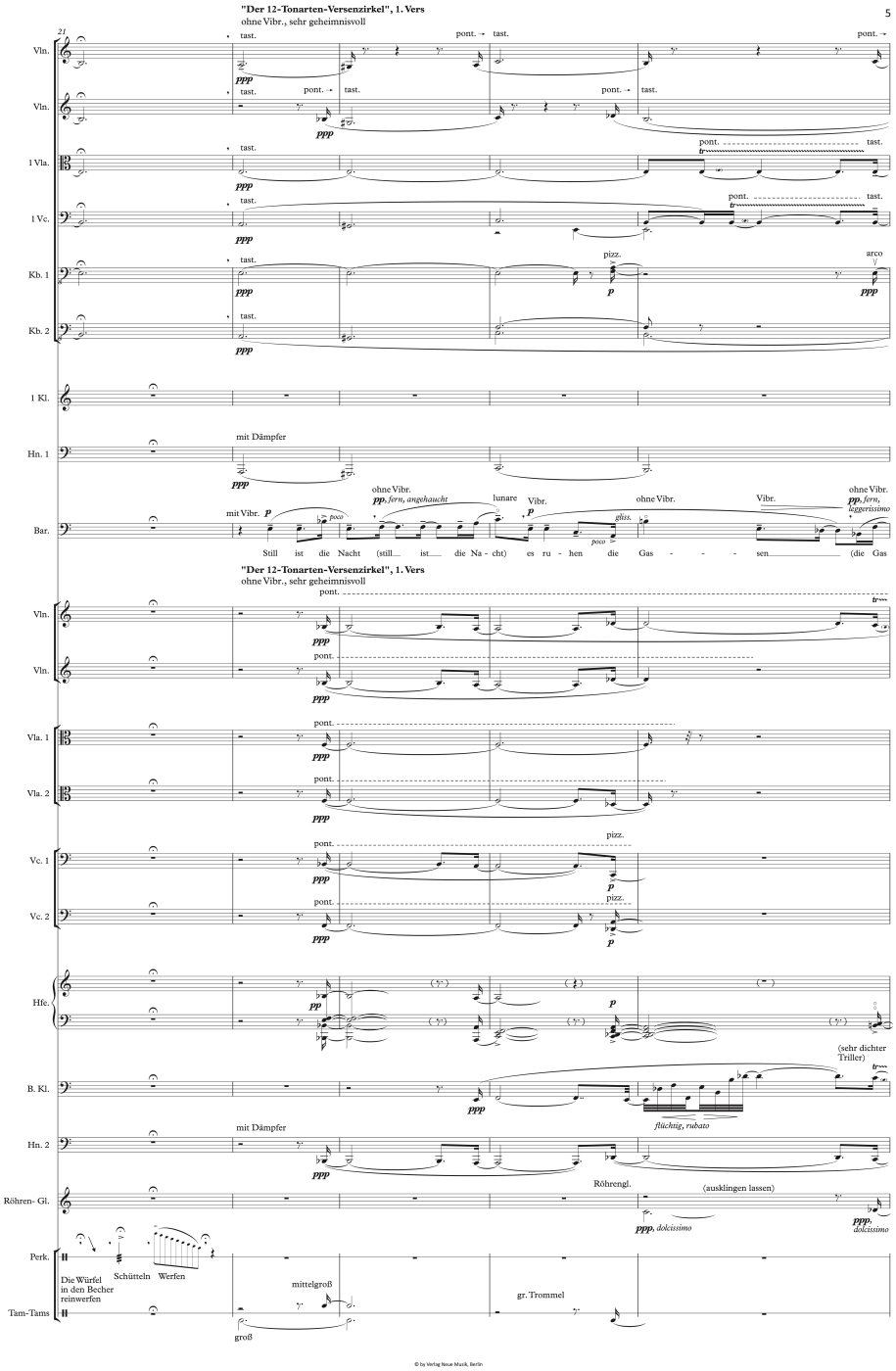


Figure 10. Nieder, *Dem Doppelgänger in memoriam,* bars 21-25

Audio 10. Nieder, *Dem Doppelgänger in memoriam,* bars 22-46, performed by Michael Nagy, baritone, and the München Kammerorchester, conducted by Clemens Schuldt:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Nieder_-Dem-Doppelganger-in-memoriam_Audio-22-46.mp3

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reflected on *Una notte*, a transcription where my aim was to further explore the possibilities of the approach I had when writing *Hortense*, which was strongly shaped by the poetic text featured in a Gesualdo madrigal.

Before directly addressing my transcription work, I considered certain ideas about possible approaches to a musical score. First, I discussed Zender's *Schuberts "Winterreise,"* especially his ideas about how it could be considered a "composed interpretation" of Schubert's famous song cycle. Zender's thoughts provided valuable insights into the practice of transcribing. His description of what reading a score could mean for a composer-transcriber sheds light on the potentialities and the freedoms of (re)reading, a practice that holds the potential to unlock the latent virtualities within a musical score. Furthermore, his consideration of the composer, the performer, and the audience as peers due to their shared practice of active and productive listening allows musical texts to be considered as unfinished entities, and thus positions the performers as co-creators of the work. Zender's perspective, which resonates with Barthes's ideas of the reader as a co-creator as expressed in "The Death of the Author," allows transcriptions to be perceived as composed interpretations.

Second, in line with the idea that brings transcribers and performers together, I examined the radical approaches to music performances of Amaral and D'Errico, two performers and artistic researchers who have actively explored innovative performance practices for Western notated art music and have challenged the boundaries of freedom for classically trained musicians. Amaral and D'Errico position themselves outside a traditional paradigm of reproducing and reiterating past musical works. In their practice, the works serve as points of departure and sources of inspiration to explore a broader and divergent musical experience, rather than being the goal or endpoint of an artistic journey.

Third, I reflected on my transcribing process in *Una notte*, my transcription of Schubert's Lied "Der Doppelgänger" for voice and orchestra. As happened in *Hortense*, the poetic text of the musical work strongly informed my practice, but in a different and unforeseen way. Transcribing Schubert's Lied – a nineteenth-century piece for voice and piano, and distinctly different from the Renaissance polyphonic works that I transcribed before – I deliberately placed myself in a new situation to observe how my creativity would react. Initially, I found that the absence of a polyphonic space to inhabit and to rearticulate – as I had learned to do in my previous transcriptions – was an obstacle. Subsequently, I decided to look for different texts to set to music, and Heine's poem guided my choice of Dickinson's verses that deal with the theme of duality and the unsettling encounter with another self. This theme is central to Schubert's Lied, and, as I mentioned before, a transcription can serve as a double of an original work, revealing and actualizing some of its unexpressed virtualities.

In addition to the theme of the double, the night is another central element of my transcription. As Schubert's Lied unfolds entirely in one night, the dramaturgy of *Una notte* is constructed around the waiting and arrival of the night during which the encounter with the double takes place. Mirroring this encounter, and at the core of *Una notte*, Dickinson's words and Schubert's music converge. At that point, the constant but ghostly presence of Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger" becomes more explicit.
After reflecting on my working process and discussing some more technical aspects of my approach, I concluded this chapter by examining Nieder's transcription of the same Schubert Lied. This allowed me to position my work within a broader context and provided a noteworthy instance of a distinct approach to transcribing the same musical work by another composer.

In conclusion, in this chapter, I have explored more radical possibilities of utilizing a poetic text within a musical work to influence its transcription on different levels. Compared to my previous transcriptions, *Una notte* also stands out in my research as the transcription that is the most free in terms of its relation to the original. In the next chapter, I will discuss *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, my transcription for string quartet of "Nymphes des Bois – La déploration sur la mort de Johan Ockeghem," by Josquin Desprez (1450-1521).
Every transcription – and each subsequent chapter of this thesis – has been a step further in my exploration of the practice of transcribing. In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I aimed to harvest the fruits of these explorations and take yet another step forward in a practice that has the potential to connect contemporary artistic expression with our cultural heritage, transforming our relationship with history into a creative and relational process. With *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, a listening experience centered around memory's power to alter, preserve, and destroy recollections, I created a musical dramaturgy based on the text used by Desprez, alternating different approaches to the musical work. In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, Desprez's "Nymphes des Bois" resonates as a reference and as an apparition. Or as a palimpsest – i.e., a manuscript from which the original text has been erased but traces of it are still legible.

Chapter 5
Tutto chiudi negli occhi
Dreaming the Other

Alone, I cannot be –
The Host – do visit me –

Emily Dickinson, "Alone, I cannot be"

I shall be the other
I am without knowing it, he who has looked on
that other dream, my waking state.

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Dream"

When discussing *Una notte* in chapter 4, I explored more radical possibilities in the utilization of a poetic text within a musical work to shape its transcription, making a step forward in the approach that I first experimented with when writing *Hortense* (see chapter 3). In this fifth chapter, I will discuss *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, my transcription for string quartet of Josquin Desprez's *Nymphes des bois, or La déploration sur la mort de Johan Ockeghem* (1497). In transcribing this work, I aimed to collect the results of my research by using the findings and insights from my previous transcriptions while also diving deeper into the theme of the relationship between otherness and the double.

Audio example 1 presents *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* in its entirety.

Audio 1. Bracci. *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, performed by the New European Ensemble:
https://soundcloud.com/giulianobracci/tutto-chiudi-negli-occhi
Complete score in pdf:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Bracci_Tutto-chiudi-negli-occhi.pdf

Throughout this thesis, I have reflected on the theme of otherness – on the concepts of self and other – and I have described the practice of transcribing as a form of listening and creating a new relation to an existing musical work. This (doubly) transformative relation between the transcriber and the other work establishes itself in the transcriber's musical imagination. I have argued that, in the transcribing process, both the original work and the transcriber's language

are contaminated and transformed by each other. Indeed, transcribing has the potential to transform a work in a number of ways. First, the practice of transcribing transforms a musical work into an original, the copy thus preceding the original. Second, this practice yields a transcription that is a performable and audible transformation of a musical work that actualizes some of its inherent virtualities. Finally, transcribing alters the manner in which a work can be experienced from that moment onward. As I have argued and demonstrated through my practice, the language of the transcriber is influenced by the encounter with the original. In earlier chapters, I employed the metaphor of a chemical experiment to characterize the process of transcribing as an exploration of the transcriber's musical invention. This invention is indeed activated differently by each original musical work, and the resulting interactions produce unique and unexpected responses.

In chapter 4, I presented and reflected on my process of transcribing Franz Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger," where I was prompted to consider the concept of "otherness" in light of the theme of the double. The practice of transcribing produces doubles that have the potential to give rise to hidden aspects of musical works, and to actualize some of their unheard virtualities: Musical works reappear, familiar and different at the same time. This perspective encourages a consideration of the other not as something distant, but as something intimate yet simultaneously foreign. The double is perhaps the other within the self, the most nearby other.

The double

Before delving into *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, and providing a more nuanced exploration of the theme of the double where the other resides within the self, I find it helpful to consider the significance of this topic in literature and psychoanalysis. This understanding will help to contextualize and offer a broader perspective on the theme. Subsequently, I will revisit the poetic texts that I have used as a guide in my transcriptions, reflecting on their relationship with the theme of the double. Finally, I will discuss Raymond Queneau's novel *The Blue Flowers* and explore the concept of dreaming as a potential model for the relationship with one's double.

The motif of the double recurs frequently throughout Western literature, expressing the idea of an intrinsic duality within a human being, often portrayed through the presence of an alter ego or twin, whether real or imagined. With the rise of Romanticism and, later, the advent of psychoanalysis, the double becomes a central symbol in the relationship with one's self, and in the exploration of its individuality and integrity, as well as its contradictory drives and impulses.

In his book *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study* (1925, originally written in 1914), Otto Rank, an early psychoanalyst and also Sigmund Freud's disciple and later close colleague, aimed to "trace back the developmental and semantic history of an old, traditional folk-concept which has stimulated imaginative and thoughtful writers to use it in their works" (Rank 1971, 3).
According to Rank, the double represents the projection of a self which has been repressed and hidden, and in *The Double*, inspired by Hans Heinz Ewers's silent film *The Student of Prague* (1913), Rank addresses the literary, psychological, mythical, and ethnological sources and illustrations of the double, applying this "new psychoanalysis most extensively and diligently not only to patients […], but also to various facets of culture" (Tucker 1971, xxi). He considers appearances of the double in poetry, drama, and prose fiction, reflecting on works such as Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Shadow" (1847), Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double* (1846), Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" (1839), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

Drawing on some of Rank's insights, Freud explores the theme of the double in his essay "The 'Uncanny'" (1919). As the psychoanalyst Valérie Bouville synthesizes, Freud's "analysis of the 'double' leads to what has come to be known as the uncanny. The complex connection between an externalized ego […] and the conscious ego make[s] the double uncanny, as it represents the imagined personification of impulses which have been overcome, suppressed or even dissociated" (Bouville 2020, 28). According to Freud, the uncanny "is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud 1955, 220) and which "has been repressed" (247). In his essay, Freud also references Friedrich Schelling's definition of the uncanny as "something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light" (Freud 1955, 224). In light of these reflections, the double is both familiar and unfamiliar, appearing as a repetition – a return or recurrence – while also manifesting as the appearance of something else, another entity. Transcribing could then mean listening to the other who inhabits oneself – not perceiving the other as an entity opposed to and external to the self, but preparing instead an opening in one's language for the other to come.

In a footnote to his essay, Freud recounts a famous anecdote about a personal experience set in a wagon-lit, in which he does not recognize his own image reflected in the mirror of the adjacent bathroom door, and mistakes himself for an(other) old man.

> I was sitting alone in my wagon-lit compartment when a more than usually violent jolt of the train swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-gown and a travelling cap came in. I assumed that in leaving the washing-cabinet,

> which lay between the two compartments, he had taken the wrong direction and come into my compartment by mistake. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking-glass on the open door.
> (Freud 1955, 248)

Freud's anecdote about the sudden recognition of another as himself resonates with some of the most significant poetic fragments I have used in my research on transcribing. The text of Carlo Gesualdo's madrigal "Languisce al fin" and its English translation read:

> *Languisce al fin chi da la vita parte*
> *E di morte il dolore*
> *L'affligge sì che in crude pene more.*
> *Ahi, che quello son io,*
> *Dolcissimo cor mio,*
> *Che da voi parto e per mia crudel sorte*
> *La vita lascio e me ne vado a morte.*
>
> The one who is departing life languishes in the end,
> And the suffering of death
> So afflicts him, that he dies in cruel pain.
> Alas, that person is me,
> My sweetest heart
> I leave you, and, my cruel fate is such
> That I leave life for death.

As I discussed in chapter 3, the madrigal's central line "Ahi, che quello son io" (Alas, that person is me) marks a formal turning point as the text shifts suddenly from a narration in the third person to the first person. Gesualdo emphasizes this line significantly, and similarly, in my transcription *Hortense*, it also corresponds to a sudden change: Opening a window into my music, I inserted a (reverse) quotation from another of my own works, *Un giardino chiaro*. As happens in Freud's anecdote, in an abrupt shift, the other – another musical work – can reveal itself to the transcriber as a mirror that reflects their own image.

The sudden recognition of the double as one's mirrored self also echoes the narrative of Narcissus, the archetype of all doubles. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus, in love with his own reflection, initially addresses, unaware, his mirrored image in the water, employing the following words (book III, verses 454-455):

> *Quisquis es, huc exi! Quid me, puer unice, fallis?*

Quove petitus abis?

Whoever you are, come forth hither! Why, O peerless youth, do you elude me? Or whither do you go when I strive to reach you?

(Ovid, 1971, vol. 1, 156-157)

Subsequently, he suddenly recognizes himself (book III, verses 463-464):

Iste ego sum! Sensi, nec me mea fallit imago.
Uror amore mei, flammas moveoque feroque!

Oh, I am he! I have felt it, I know now my own image.
I burn with love of my own self; I both kindle the flames and suffer them.

(Ovid, 1971, vol. 1, 156-157)

In Heinrich Heine's poem, set to music by Schubert in his Lied "Der Doppelgänger," which I discussed in chapter 4 as the departure point for my *Una notte*, I witnessed a similarly sudden and unsettling recognition of the other as oneself: The poet recognizes himself at the window of the house where his beloved once lived, and the unexpected sight of his double terrifies him.

Da steht auch ein Mensch und starrt in die Höhe,
Und ringt die Hände, vor Schmerzensgewalt;
Mir graust es, wenn ich sein Antlitz sehe -
Der Mond zeigt mir meine eigne Gestalt.

(Heine 1877)

Another man stands where the moon beams lace,
He wrings his hands, eyes turned to the sky.
A shudder runs through me – I see his face:
The man who stands in the moonlight is I.

(Heine 1982)

While transcribing Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger" for *Una notte*, I opted to look for a different text revolving around the theme of the double. I selected texts by Emily Dickinson, where she writes about the uncanny encounter with another self. When in my transcription the night arrives during which the encounter with the doppelgänger takes place, the voice sings "The first Day's Night had come

– I told my Soul to sing," and at that moment, Schubert's music and Dickinson's words converge. Dickinson's verses from two poems that I used (with three slight alterations indicated in square brackets) for that section read:

> And Something's odd — within —
> That person that I was —
> And this One — do not feel the same —
>
> He [She] was my host — he [she] was my guest,
> I never to this day
> If I invited him [her] could tell
>
> (Dickinson 2009, 52 and 184)

Dickinson's verses resonate with Freud's description of the phenomenon of the double, in which "the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self" (Freud 1955, 234). Dickinson powerfully depicts the ambiguous and unsettling relationship with her double, describing it – and then herself – as reciprocally being both her host and her guest. This idea of the double being host and guest simultaneously is helpful in reflecting on the other not as something entirely external and in opposition to the self, but as something that is always already present within the self. Furthermore, it enables thinking of the practice of transcribing as a productive way to host musical works from the past in one's own musical imagination and language, allowing the hosted works to (re)appear like ghosts and be virtually present in contemporary music. At the same time, transcribing could give rise to thinking of a transcription as a guest that, hosted by the original musical work, actualizes some of its infinite unheard virtualities.

In the poetic texts that I have discussed so far, the perception of oneself as if it were someone else – the perception of the other who inhabits oneself – is presented as an unsettling, uncanny experience, and as Bouville emphasizes, "only the old and long familiar has the potential to overcome the subject" (Bouville 2020, 30). The uncanniness is an important element of these texts, and it characterizes the moment of recognition of the other as oneself.
In my practice of transcribing, I chose not to focus on uncanniness as an aesthetic musical quality. Instead, I explored other features, such as the dreamlike quality in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, where the boundaries between transcribing and composing – between the self and the other – blend together, which I will discuss below.

The Blue Flowers

As I mentioned in chapters 1 and 3, Queneau's novel *The Blue Flowers* was a significant source of inspiration for both *Une petite fleur bleue* and *Hortense*. In working on *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, this novel played a central role in shaping my relation to Josquin's *Nymphes des bois, or La déploration sur la mort de Johan Ockeghem* (1497), and it influenced the entire dramaturgy of my transcription.

The protagonists of *The Blue Flowers* are the Duke of Auge and Cidrolin. One is the double of the other: In fact, each chapter ends with one of the two characters – or are they the same character? – falling asleep and beginning to dream of the other. The Duke of Auge traverses history, embarking on a journey spanning from 1264 to 1964. It is in this latter year that he finally encounters Cidrolin, whom he had only ever dreamt of, residing in a state of absolute indolence on a barge moored firmly on the banks of the Seine. Here, Cidrolin engages in complete inactivity, observing the course of history, as experienced through his double, within his dreams. This narrative is illuminated by Queneau's own summary of the novel, as presented in Vivian Kogan's "Afterword" to the work:

> In *The Blue Flowers*, I focus on a person who goes back in time – and one who merges [with the modern day] from some past era. In other words, modern and ancient. My historical character lived in the thirteenth century and reappears every one hundred and seventy-five years until he meets the other protagonist and becomes his contemporary. – There is an old Chinese saying in this connection: "I dream that I am a butterfly and pray there is a butterfly dreaming he is me." The same can be said of the characters in my novel – those who live in the past dream of those who live in the modern era – and those who live in the modern era dream of those who live in the past.
> (Queneau quoted in Kogan 1985, 228)

Each protagonist dreams the actions of the other, and the entire novel appears as a double dream. In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I drew inspiration from the alternating chapter (and dream) structure of *The Blue Flowers*, choosing to model the idea of the double dream as a mode of relation with Josquin's work. As I will discuss in detail later on, I divided the poetic text of *Nymphes des bois* alternately between myself and Josquin. Without seeking an overt contrast between these two approaches, I alternately transcribed Josquin's music and set the text to music in a more independent manner. The result of this strategy is that Josquin's music and my own alternate and intertwine, each appearing within the other, as if emerging in a dream.

The dream is an "imaginary experience" (Foucault 1984-85, 45) and can be regarded as a specific form of knowledge. In his novel, Queneau writes, "Reverie and revelation [*rêver* et *révéler* in French], they're more or less the same word" (Queneau 1985, 128). The psychoanalyst Vittorio Lingiardi describes the dream

as "a domestic but foreign depth, an elsewhere unknown and ours," in which the dreamer encounters another experience of themselves (Lingiardi 2023, 5-6). The dream, being "a conversation at the border of the self" (Lingiardi 2023, 161), is also an occasion to encounter one's double, as happens, for example, in "The Other" (1975) and in "August 25, 1983" (1980), two late stories by Jorge Luis Borges. In "The Other," Borges writes about meeting with his younger self, for whom the meeting happens in a dream many years before. The two engage in questioning the nature of their encounter, and discuss where and when it takes place, with the elder Borges saying to the younger: "If this morning and this meeting are dreams, each of us has to believe that he is the dreamer. […] My dream has lasted seventy years now, […] after all, there isn't a person alive who, on waking, does not find himself with himself. It's what is happening to us now – except that we are two" (Borges 1977b, 13-14). The short story "August 25, 1983" presents a similar situation, in which the writer meets an older version of himself on the last day of his life, each dreaming of the other. Their encounter begins thus:

> In the pitiless light, I came face to face with myself. There, in the narrow iron bed – older, withered, and very pale – lay I, on my back, my eyes turned up vacantly toward the high plaster moldings of the ceiling. Then I heard the voice […]
> "How odd," it was saying, "we are two yet we are one. But then nothing is odd in dreams."
> "Then…" I asked fearfully, "all this is a dream?"
> "It is, I am sure, my last dream." He gestured toward the empty bottle on the marble nightstand. "You, however, shall have much to dream, before you come to this night. What date is it for you?"
> (Borges 1999, 489-490)

In my research on transcribing, choosing Queneau's *The Blue Flowers* and thus the dream of a double as the model of a relation with the other – with a musical work from the past, and therefore with musical tradition – is a way to seek an approach that recognizes the other and the self not as opposites, but as one virtually present in the other. Transcribing as if dreaming of a musical work – as if the music itself is capable of dreaming – is a way to avoid seizing it, and is thus an approach different from one that seeks to possess the other as something objectifiable and absolutely external to oneself.

In this thesis, I have documented the evolution of my approach to transcription, examining each stage of development in detail. Each instance of transcription has illuminated different aspects of my musical invention. Throughout this process, I endeavored to listen not only to myself, as cautioned by Luigi Nono in the text referenced in the introduction (Nono 2018), but also to listen to and give space to the voice of the other, "opening, uncloseting, destabilizing

foreclusionary structures so as to allow for the passage toward the other" (Derrida 2007b, 45). The trajectory I have delineated extends beyond personal growth; it constitutes a meaningful contribution to the scholarly discourse surrounding important aspects in artistic and musical practice as well as in education, particularly regarding one's engagement with cultural and artistic heritage. Integrating contemporary artistic expression with one's cultural legacy holds the potential to transform our relationship with history into a creative and relational process.

Why Josquin?

In my research, the choice of the musical work to transcribe is far from a neutral or impersonal decision. On the contrary, choosing the originals to transcribe involves seeking out my own heritage. My careful choices are driven by the desire to engage in a deeper creative relationship with these works, one in which I recognize the potential for me as a composer to unfold, the potential for the works to alter, contaminate, and enhance my musical language throughout the process.

After completing *Una notte*, I aimed to revisit the process of working within a polyphonic space, reshaping and intervening as I had done in previous transcriptions of music by Girolamo Frescobaldi and Gesualdo. Concurrently, I sought to deepen the approach I had taken with Schubert's Lied and its poetic text by Heine, which had influenced my selection of texts by Dickinson and had informed the dramaturgy of my transcription. I also intended to expand upon my previous experiences with transcribing for string quartet and string trio – specifically, *Une petite fleur bleue* and *Hortense* – by undertaking a transcription for a larger string quartet, in terms of both duration and depth. In doing so, I aimed to give greater prominence to the poetic elements of a vocal work, even within the process of creating an instrumental transcription. Additionally, I sought to return to transcribing a Renaissance polyphonic piece, thereby completing the trajectory of my previous transcriptions.

I chose to transcribe Josquin's five-voice motet-chanson *Nymphes des bois, or La déploration sur la mort de Johan Ockeghem* (1497), hosting it in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*. Or was I the guest, invited by Josquin's music? Josquin composed this piece upon the death of Johannes Ockeghem, setting to music a poem by Jean Molinet and the funeral text *Requiem aeternam* as the *cantus firmus*. The motet-chanson contains a direct reference to the loss of Ockeghem, described as the musical father of Josquin and a younger generation of composers. This piece represents an early example of music consciously positioning itself within music history. Furthermore, Josquin simulates Ockeghem's contrapuntal style and cites some of the master's pupils. Thus, the point of departure for my transcription –

Josquin's musical work – was not entirely uniform, but already inhabited by various texts and voices.[1]

A recording of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* can be heard in audio example 2.[2] The text and an English translation of Molinet's poem are below.

Audio 2. Josquin Desprez, *Nymphes des bois*, *or La déploration sur la mort de Johan Ockeghem* performed by the Netherlands Chamber Choir:
https://open.spotify.com/intl-it/track/6AQSsiyGuePFFkcRm4jfU4?si=22cc147bb43246d0

A complete score can be consulted here:
http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/d/df/IMSLP479388-PMLP48546-DesPrez_D%C3%A9ploration_NympheA.pdf

Cantus firmus:

> *Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine et lux perpetua luceat eis.*
> *Requiescat in pace. Amen.*

Nymphes des bois:

> *Nymphes des bois, déesses des fontaines,*
> *Chantres expers de toutes nations,*
> *Changez vos voix fort claires et haultaines.*
> *En cris tranchantz et lamentations;*
> *Car d'Atropos les molestations*
> *Vostre Okeghem par sa rigueur attrape.*
> *Le vray trésoir de musicque et chef d'œuvre,*
> *Qui de Tropos désormais plus n'éschappe,*
> *Dont grant doumage est que la terre couvre.*
>
> *Acoustrez vous d'abitz de deuil*
> *Josquin, Brumel, Pierchon, Compère,*
> *Et plourez grosses larmes d'œil,*
> *Perdu avez votre bon père.*

[1] The same applies to every (musical) text, which, as Barthes argues, "consists of multiple writings" (Barthes 1977a, 54).

[2] The starting point of my transcription process was the Gesualdo score that was available to me at the time. I did not refer to any specific recording then. This recording is presented here to facilitate the comparison between Gesualdo's original and my transcription. While most of the available recordings are based on a version of the score that is a fourth lower than the one I used – this is also the case, for example, with Stefano Gervasoni's transcription discussed later in this chapter – this recording is the closest that I have found to the score I am referring to: It is in the same tune, but there are some small differences, such as the C♮ sung by the soprano in the first bar instead of the C♯ that appears in the score.

Requiescat in pace. Amen.

Cantus firmus:

Eternal rest give them, Lord,
And light perpetual shine on them.
May he rest in peace. Amen.

Nymphs of the Woods:

Nymphs of the woods, goddesses of the fountains,
Expert singers from all nations,
Turn your voices, so clear and high,
To rending cries and lamentation.
For Atropos, the terrible ruler,
Has seized your Ockeghem in her trap.
The true treasurer of music and its masterpiece
Learned, elegant in body and in no way old-fashioned.[3]
It is a terrible loss that the earth covers him.

Put on your mourning clothes
Josquin, Pierson, Brumel, Compère,
And weep great tears from your eyes
Gone is your great father.

May he rest in peace. Amen.

(Molinet 2012, translated by David Wyatt)

Tutto chiudi negli occhi

The title of my transcription, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, is taken from a verse of a poem by Cesare Pavese featured in his collection *La terra e la morte* (Earth and Death), written in 1945. It translates literally as "you close everything in your eyes." This phrase could allude to both death – as Pavese's poem, akin to Josquin's *déploration*, serves as a contemplation on death – and to the closed eyes of a dreamer.

As already mentioned, in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I drew inspiration from the alternating chapter structure of Queneau's *The Blue Flowers*. To transcribe *Nymphes des bois*, I divided Molinet's poetic text by assigning some verses to Josquin and others to myself. In the sections assigned to Josquin, I transcribed

[3] Wyatt has translated another version of Molinet's poem here. The verse that is in the score I used, and that I quoted above ("Qui de Tropos désormais plus n'éschappe"), could be translated as "Who has no escape from Tropos [death]."

his music in which the corresponding verses are sung. This transcribing approach recalls, from both an aesthetic and technical standpoint, the one I adopted in previous transcriptions. In the sections assigned to myself, I composed my music, drawing inspiration from and allowing myself to be guided by the corresponding poetic text. This approach builds upon what occurred in *Hortense*, where I incorporated a (reverse) quotation from my own music into the transcription to render the formal turning point of the sudden shift in Gesualdo's madrigal from a narration in the third person to the first person.
In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, this shift became a recurrent structural element throughout my entire working process, marking changes of section and aiding in the construction of the work's dramaturgy. In my creative process, these two approaches – which I could refer to as transcribing and composing – were not designed to contrast, and the division between Josquin and myself was not made to create stark differences or stylistic oppositions. On the contrary, I followed a dreamlike progression: I crafted each section with the intention of creating a musical context that would seamlessly lead into the following one. In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, the boundary between transcribing and composing thus gradually blurs, giving rise to a flow of music inhabited by different voices.

I will now discuss some concrete examples that effectively illustrate my approach and the relationship I established with Josquin's music.
Tutto chiudi negli occhi begins with a prelude (bars 1-33) that introduces and sets the musical context for a section (bars 34-52) based on the initial notes of the *cantus firmus* used by Josquin on the words "requiem aeternam." Figure 1 shows the tenor line, which features the *cantus firmus* in Josquin's composition.

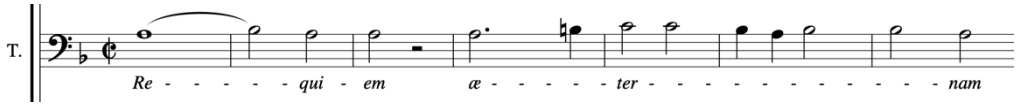


Figure 1. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 1-7, tenor part

In my transcription, these few bars from Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* are transformed into almost 20 bars that explore and repeat in various ways the insistence of the *cantus firmus* on the note A, and particularly focusing on the first word "requiem" and its interval A-B♭-A. Figure 2 and audio example 3 present the transition from the prelude to this section.

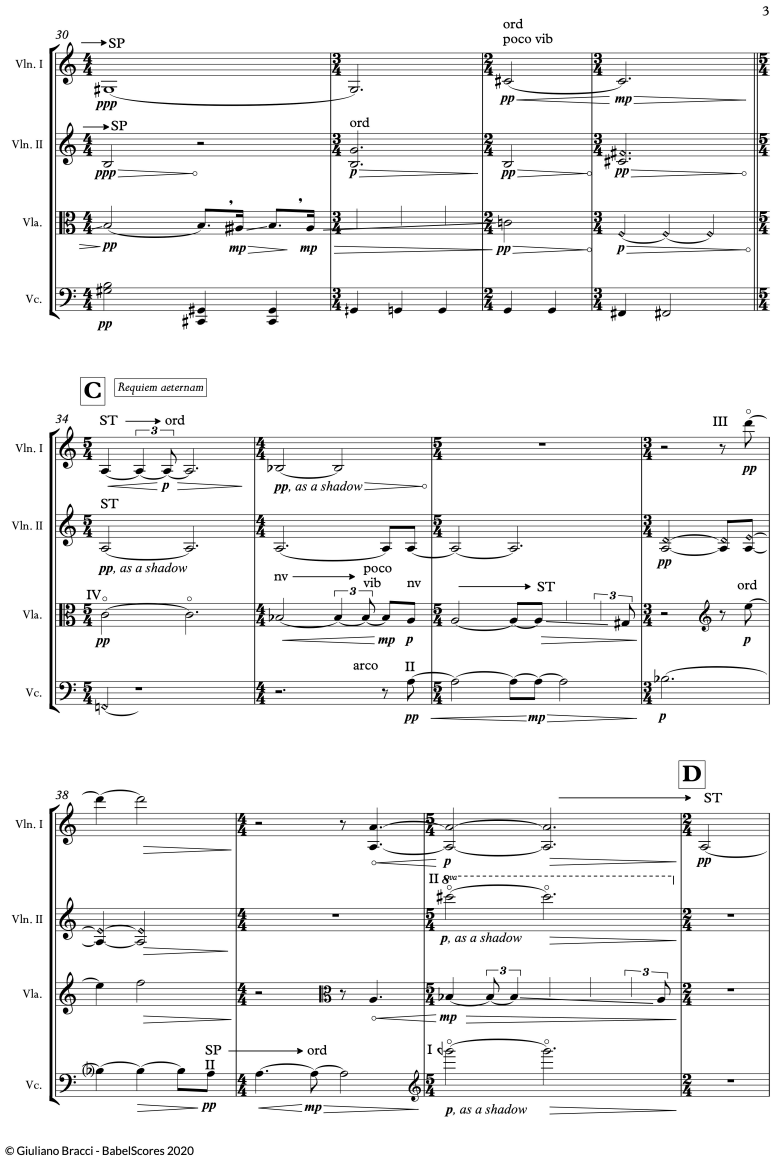


Figure 2. Bracci. *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, bars 30-41

Audio 3. Bracci. *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*. Bars 30-41, performed by the New European Ensemble:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/tuttochiudi_audio_30-41.mp3

In addition to the word "requiem," I incorporated other fragments from Josquin's work. For example, on this page, I also took the soprano line that sings the words "des bois" (D-E-F) in bar 2 of *Nymphes des bois* (highlighted in figure 3) and rendered it in bars 37-38 of *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*. There D and E are simultaneously present as harmonics in the first and second violins, while the viola plays a melodic interval one octave lower (E-F).

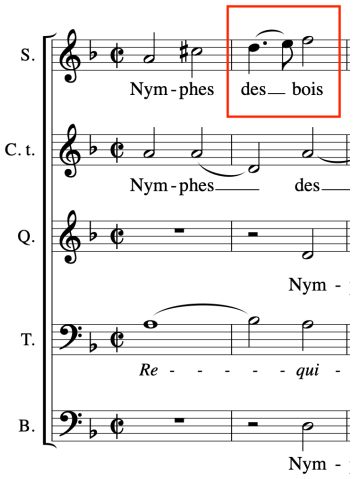


Figure 3. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 1-2

Following Hans Zender's ideas on the potentiality of reading music, as discussed more thoroughly in chapter 4, I moved around within Josquin's musical text, "repeating certain lines" and "comparing different readings of the same passage" (Zender 1999a, 18). I chose to highlight and emphasize specific passages of Josquin's work while excluding others. The initial transition from my music to Josquin's at bars 33-34 is seamless, and subsequent transitions maintain this fluidity. Creating an immersive, dreamlike flow of music where traces of Josquin's music are able to (re)appear and resonate here and there, akin to a palimpsest – a manuscript where remnants of an erased original text remain legible – rather than interrupting the musical discourse or employing sharp contrasts, I aimed to create a musical environment for hosting the other, for contaminating, and being contaminated by it.

After the bars dedicated to the *cantus firmus*, particularly focusing on the word "requiem," *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* transitions into a section dedicated to the first two verses of Molinet's poem, as set to music by Josquin: "Nymphes des bois, déesses des fontaines, / Chantres expers de toutes nations" (Nymphs of the woods, goddesses of the fountains, / Expert singers from all nations). I transcribed Josquin's musical rendition of the first two verses of Molinet's poem with the awareness that for the following verse – "Changez vos voix fors claires et haultaines" (Turn your voices, so clear and high) – I planned to shift my approach, my "voice," and write a new section of the piece that would emerge from Josquin's music as if in a dream: I wanted the listener to find themselves elsewhere – in a different place, yet connected by deep, secret ties – without exactly knowing how it happened. This way of proceeding worked well for me as a compositional strategy: On the one hand, it structured the appearances of Josquin's music and provided a clear direction for shaping the contexts in order to create a musical environment that could host the other guest, whether it be

Josquin's music or my own. On the other hand, from a more practical standpoint, it helped me to establish clear musical landmarks that I aimed to reach while composing-transcribing.

Figure 4 and audio example 4 presents the first bars of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*, while figure 5 and audio example 5 present the first part of the section in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* that corresponds to the verses "Nymphes des bois, Déesses des fontaines" (bars 50-63). In figure 4, I have outlined in Josquin's score the elements that I transcribed in bars 50-63 of *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*. In figure 5, I have highlighted the redistribution of the original voices throughout the string quartet.

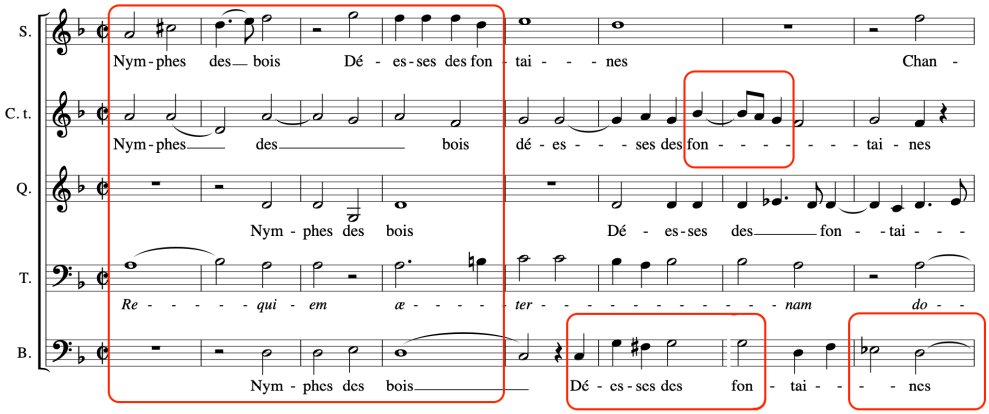


Figure 4. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 1-8

Audio 4. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 1-8, performed by the Netherlands Chamber Choir, conducted by Paul van Nevel: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/JOSQUIN_AUDIO-1-8.mp3

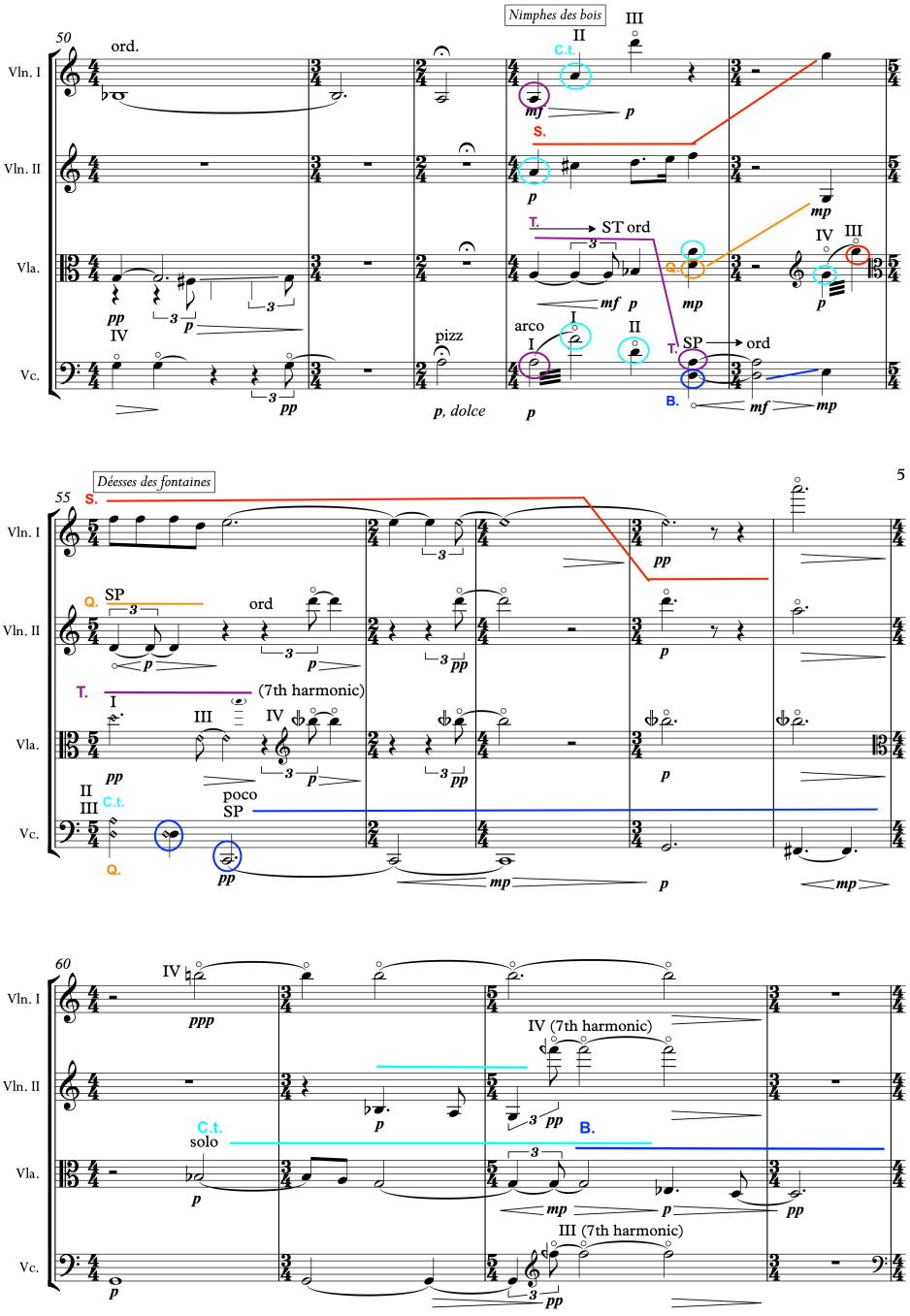


Figure 5. Bracci, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, bars 50-63
Note: The score that I am using for Josquin's piece is an edition notated in cut time. For practical reasons, I have generally halved the note values for my transcription.

Audio 5. Bracci, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, bars 50-63, performed by the New European Ensemble:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/tuttochiudi_audio_50-63.mp3

In bars 50-53, I transcribed all the original voices, as indicated by the highlighted sections, employing a similar approach to the one used in *Hortense*. The voices are fragmented across different registers and instruments, resulting in a reshaping of Josquin's original lines. Although transformed by the instruments, the chant remains recognizable, and the soprano line and harmonic relations are clearly audible, immediately evoking the presence of Josquin's music.
From the second half of bar 55, my attention shifted to the bass line (C-G-F#-G), excluding other elements of that passage. This prompted me to step back from Josquin's musical text and consider these few notes as the foundation for more complex spectral sounds. I took some (musical) time to redirect my, and subsequently the listener's, focus of attention to the cello playing the low open string (C) *poco sul ponte*, producing a sound rich in overtones. Meanwhile, the violins and viola play harmonics that, in this context, resonate as overtones of the cello's sound. In this passage, by dissecting and fragmenting Josquin's original, I was able to highlight specific details and create an opportunity for listeners – and for myself – to be immersed in the exploration of a single sound and its timbral nuances.
In the next bars (60-63), these two dimensions – Josquin's presence and a focus on the materiality of sound – coexist more manifestly: The viola, imitated by the second violin, plays a fragment taken from the line of the countertenor (Bb-A-G) from bar 7 of *Nymphes des bois*, while the cello and the first violin produce harmonics that are overtones belonging to the spectrum of a low G. In writing *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I aimed to create a musical context where this could happen; a space where the listener could perceive different and complementary perspectives and depths, and where various musical features could coexist, emerging into the foreground or fading into the background.

Finally, a clear example of a transition from Josquin's transcribed (and dreamed) music to the emergence of my own music, along with my use of the poetic text, is found in the verses "Chantres expers de toutes nations / Changez vos voix fort claires et haultaines. / En cris tranchantz et lamentations" (Expert singers from all nations, / Turn your voices, so clear and high, / To rending cries and lamentation). Figure 6 and audio example 6 present this passage in Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*, with the elements that I incorporated highlighted, while figure 7 and audio example 7 illustrate this transition in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*.

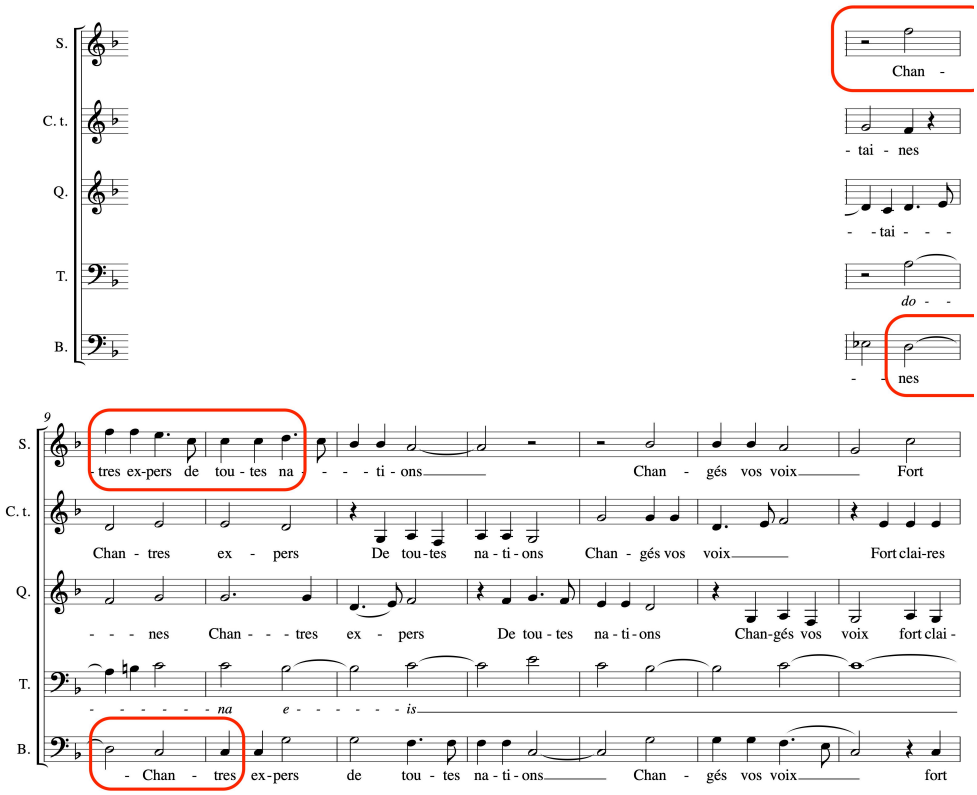


Figure 6. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 8-15

Audio 6. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 8-15, performed by the Netherlands Chamber Choir, conducted by Paul van Nevel: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/JOSQUIN_AUDIO_8-15.mp3

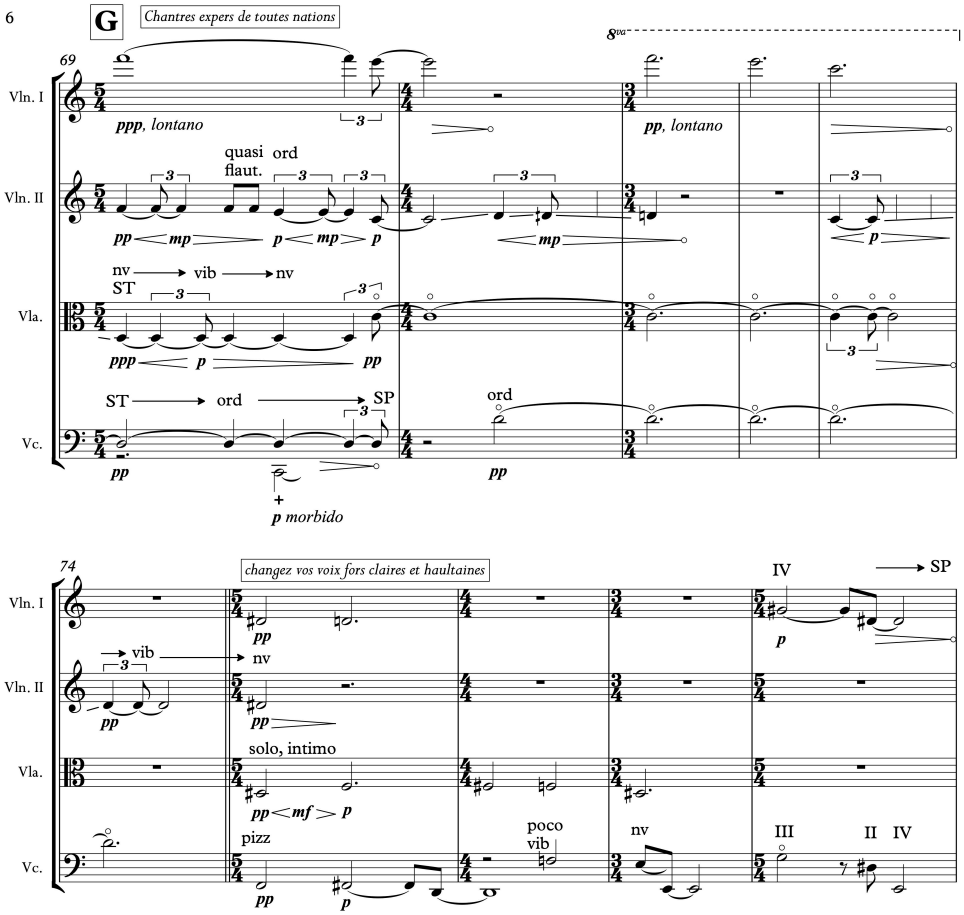


Figure 7. Bracci, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi,* bars 69-78

Audio 7. Bracci, *Tutto chiudi negli occhi,* bars 69-78, performed by the New European Ensemble:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/tuttochiudi_audio_69-78.mp3

Here, I took the phrase "changez vos voix" (turn [change] your voices) as a cue to transition to a new section, and to transform both my own voice and the voices of the nymphs. The soprano line singing the phrase "Chantres expers de toutes nations" (F-E-C-D) is played and transformed by the second violin. Above it, the first violin echoes it, distant, two octaves higher, with sustained F-E in bars 69-70, and then repeating the same phrase another octave higher (F-E-C) in bars 71-73. This extremely high line could be interpreted as a literal representation of the nymphs's "clear and high voices." The viola and cello share the bass line, initially on a D, and then simultaneously playing C and D. This melodic interval in Josquin's music is rendered in my transcription to allow for a dual interpretation: It serves both as a melodic interval that concludes the phrase of the second violin (bars 70-71 and 73-74), and as a static harmonic

interval (played by the viola and cello in bars 71-73) further explored through a slow glissando of the second violin.

After transcribing the phrase "chantres expers des toutes nations" (expert singers from all nations) in this manner, I shifted my own approach for the verse "changez vos voix" (turn [change] your voices). Instead of continuing to transcribe, I metaphorically took the baton from Josquin and freely composed my rendition of Molinet's text. The nymphs' voices changed into "cris […] et lamentations" (cries and lamentations), transitioning from the high violin chant described above (bars 69-73) to the solo viola chant in bars 75-78.

Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* as transcribed by Janssens and Gervasoni

For contemporary composers, the choice of a work to transcribe often signals a personal engagement with their own musical tradition. Further, choosing to transcribe recognizable works enables listeners to perceive the transcriber's activity more easily, comparing the transcription with the original. It is not uncommon for composers to select well-known pieces from music history, such as Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*, rather than more obscure ones. In chapter 3, for instance, I discussed the widespread interest among composers in transcribing and finding inspiration in Gesualdo's music, as evidenced by studies from musicologists like Glenn Watkins (2010) and Marilena Laterza (2017). In chapter 4, I delved into Fabio Nieder's transcription of Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger." In 2022, Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* was also transcribed by two other composers, Daan Janssens and Stefano Gervasoni. Including their transcriptions in the discussion offers a broader context for my own work and reflections.

Before looking at examples from the transcriptions by Janssens and Gervasoni, it is beneficial to revisit the final page of the original, presented in figure 8 and audio example 8. I have already highlighted the elements that appear in the subsequent example from Janssens's transcription.

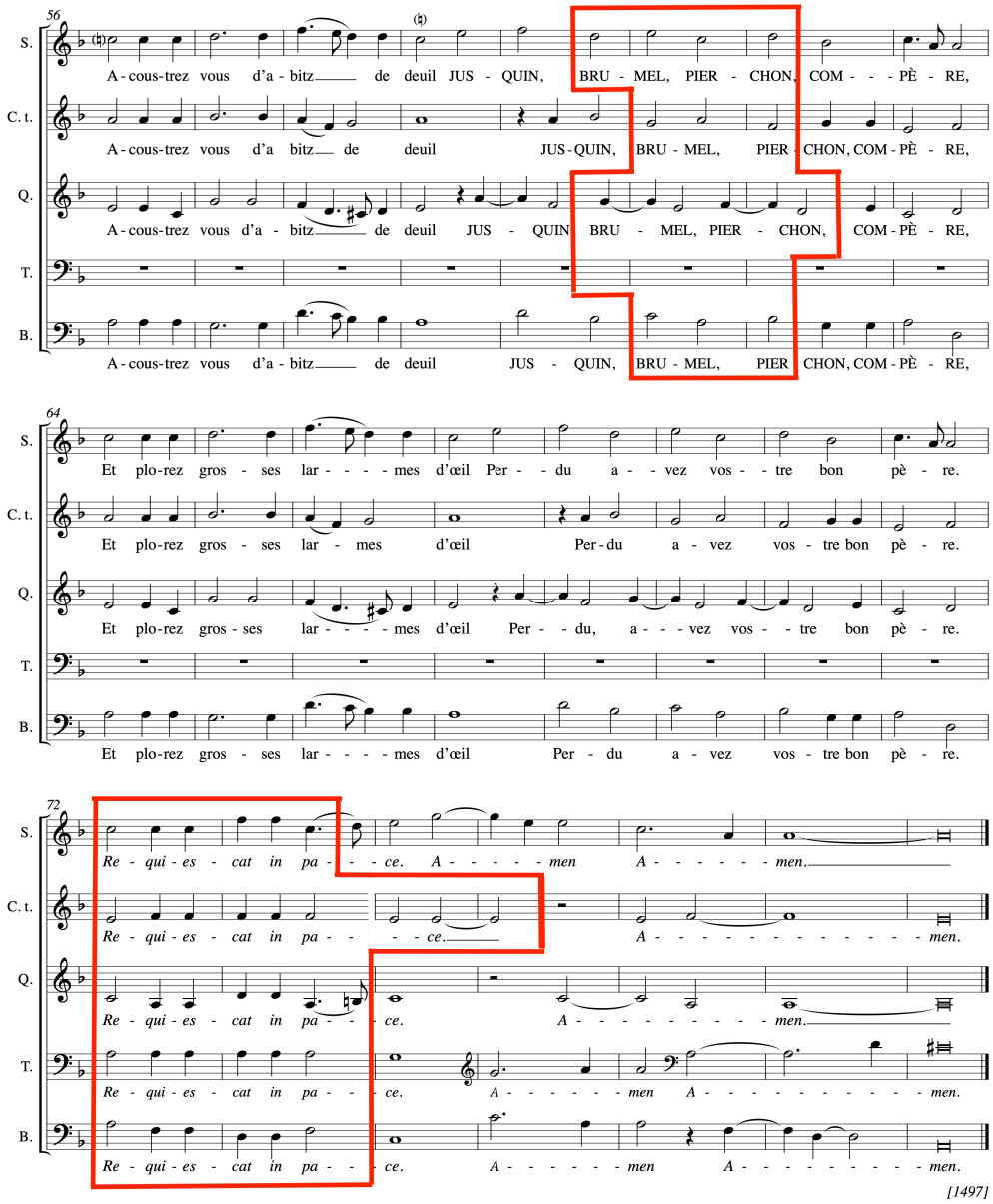


Figure 8. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 56-78

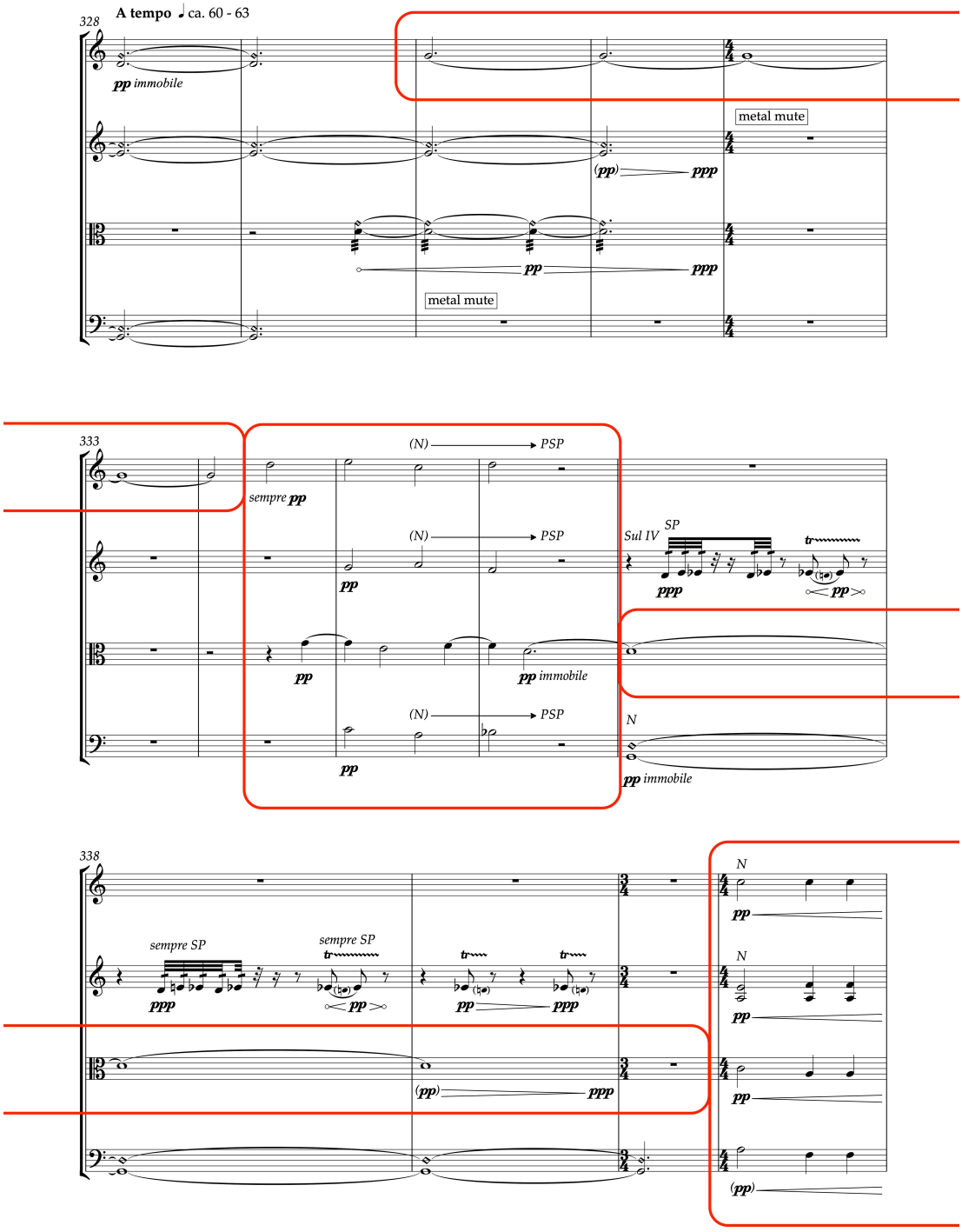
Audio 8. Josquin, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 56-78, performed by the Netherlands Chamber Choir, conducted by Paul van Nevel:
http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/JOSQUIN_AUDIO_56-78.mp3

Janssens's transcription of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* is a string quartet, like my *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*. Janssens's creative process began with a reflection on how Josquin's music positioned itself in relation to the music of the older generation and of his own contemporary peers (Janssens 2022-2024). The first part of *Nymphes des bois* is indeed written in an older polyphonic style reminiscent of the music of Ockeghem (ca. 1410-1497), with the tenor voice singing the Gregorian

chant in Latin. The second part, however, adopts a more contemporary style characteristic of Josquin, echoing the music of composers from the Franco-Flemish school of his generation mentioned in the text: Josquin himself (1450-1521), Pierre Brumel (1460-1512), Pierre de la Rue (Pierchon) (1452-1518), and Loyset Compère (1445-1518).

In his transcription of *Nymphes des bois*, Janssens reflects on the possibility of music being aware, in musical terms, of its own historicity. He maintains Josquin's division into two parts, but more importantly, he transcribes this central feature of Josquin's work – the historical awareness and positioning towards music tradition – by referring to other composers. Instead of quoting them literally, Janssens evokes the voices of different composers, such as Alban Berg, Helmut Lachenmann, Brian Ferneyhough, and Salvatore Sciarrino, along with some elements of their music. These composers and their works constitute the landscape within which Janssens positions his own music. However, Janssens's work is far from being a puzzle of quotations; rather, it is a composition in which the composer's voice engages in dialogue with other music. This reflects the awareness that "today, it is impossible anyway to write something new without referring to what is already there," especially in a time when everything is readily available (Janssens 2022-2024).
This idea of relating to history and other generations also inspired Janssens in his choice to write for string quartet, which carries, as few other instrumental combinations do, a specific historical weight (Janssens 2022-2024). As mentioned in chapter 1, writing for a string quartet inevitably forces a composer to confront a history that spans more than two centuries, from Viennese Classicism to recent masterpieces in the genre by György Ligeti, Nono, and Lachenmann.

The conclusion of Janssens's string quartet corresponds to the final page of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*. Audio example 9 showcases the final part of Janssens's *Nymphes des bois*, while figure 9 presents the very last two pages of Janssens's score, which corresponds to audio example 9, from 2'00" until the end.


328
A tempo ♩ ca. 60 - 63
pp immobile
metal mute
(pp) ppp
pp ppp
metal mute
333
(N) PSP
sempre pp
(N) PSP
pp
Sul IV SP
ppp
tr
pp
pp
pp immobile
(N) PSP
pp
N
pp immobile
338
sempre SP
sempre SP
tr
tr
ppp
pp
tr
tr
pp ppp
(pp) ppp
N
pp
N
pp
pp
(pp)

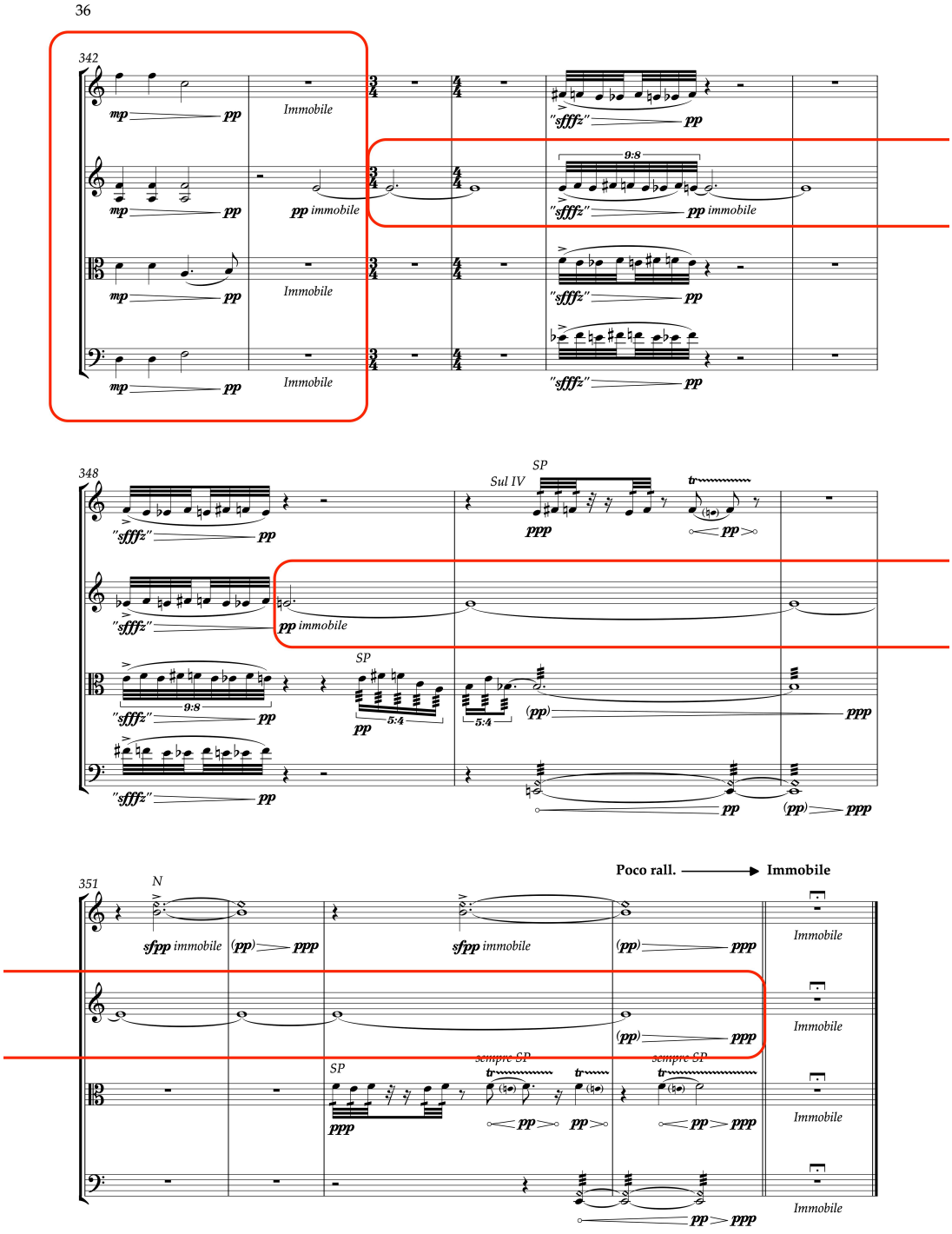


Figure 9. Janssens, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 328-355

Audio 9. Janssens, *Nymphes des bois*, bars 293-355, performed by Quartetto Maurice:
https://soundcloud.com/daan-janssens/nymphes-des-bois-2021-2022-for-string-quartet-fragment-quartetto-maurice

In the beginning of this section, vigorous gestures take the foreground, while in the background, high-pitched notes (D-E and G) emerge and alternate, always pianissimo. From this backdrop, after a long G played by the first violin (bars 330-334), Josquin's music surfaces at bar 334, precisely at the moment in the original when he mentions himself and other composers – Brumel, Pierchon, and Compère. This appearance vanishes with the D pedal played by the viola. Josquin's music re-emerges at bar 341, corresponding to the words "Requiescat in pace," and then yields to a long E played by the second violin all the way to the very end. Janssens makes a cut in Josquin's score, highlighted in Figure 8, allowing only two fragments of it to be heard. The context makes this omission possible: In the suspended time of this finale, where clear and essential elements are at play – the entire finale can be summarized as a long journey from D to E that unfolds in the final pages of Janssens's quartet – the last page of *Nymphes des bois* emerges twice, as if in an evocation.

In these pages, Janssens's musical language functions as a connective fabric, linking fragments of Josquin's music that are akin to guests visiting the transcriber. Simultaneously, Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* serves as the context from which Janssens's transcription originates, acting as the host of his string quartet. Janssens's transcription amplifies the meaning of Josquin's work and actualizes some of its unexpressed virtualities.

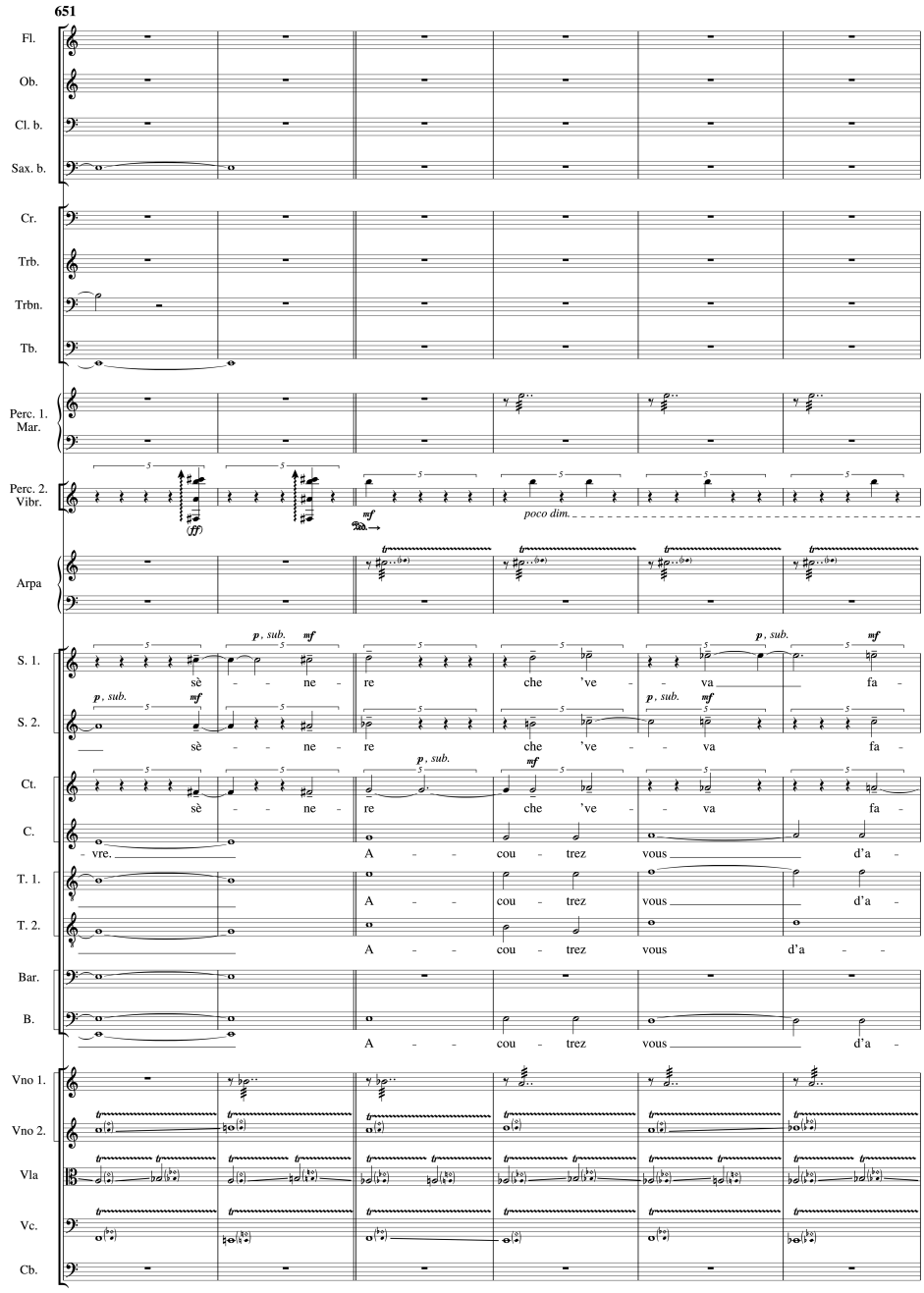
In a manner quite different from Janssens's transcription, Gervasoni's transcription also serves as a space to host other voices and expand the meaning of Josquin's music. Gervasoni's transcription of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* is part of his cantata *In nomine PPP, Cantata per Pier Paolo Pasolini*, a large composition for eight voices and sixteen instruments, accompanied by a video. Gervasoni's work is a homage to the film director and poet Pier Paolo Pasolini on the centenary of his birth. Within the cantata, Gervasoni sets to music a selection of Pasolini's poems and texts. As Gervasoni explains in the program notes, there are "three moments in which Pasolini's absurd and atrocious death in 1975 is indirectly evoked through three chansons by Josquin, rearranged with the addition of instruments and voices, including the *Déploration sur la mort d'Ockegem*, which thus becomes the 'lament on the death of Pier Paolo Pasolini' ['Déploration sur la mort de Pasolini']" (Gervasoni 2022c).

In Gervasoni's transcription, Josquin's work is sung in its entirety by five voices (alto, two tenors, baritone, and bass) out of the eight vocal parts, while simultaneously being absorbed into the ensemble's fabric. Additionally, in the second part of the transcription, Gervasoni sets to music a poem by Biagio Marin – a poet and friend of Pasolini – overlaying it onto Josquin's piece and having it sung by the remaining three, higher voices (two sopranos and a countertenor). This poem, in the dialect of Grado – a town in the northeastern Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia – is part of a litany in memory of Pasolini that "speaks with respect and delicacy about the creaking of the bones of his

shattered body" and is, in Gervasoni's transcription, "a tribute within the tribute" (Gervasoni 2022c). The two vocal groups, separated by register and rhythmic patterns, slowly converge, coming together only at the end, after Marin's poem has finished, on the words "Requiescat in pace. Amen."

In Gervasoni's "Déploration sur la mort de Pasolini," his musical language hosts Josquin's music and allows it to coexist with Marin's poetry. This coexistence amplifies the meaning of the mourning of a master that is inherent in Josquin's work, and renders Josquin's music a symbol of grief within the broader architecture of the entire *Cantata per Pier Paolo Pasolini*. At the same time, Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* transforms into a space capable of hosting other voices and different musical expressions.

Figure 10 displays two pages of Gervasoni's score, corresponding to the verses "Acoustrez vous d'abitz de deuil" (Put on your mourning clothes), while audio example 10 presents the same passage, extending to the conclusion of the "Déploration."


651
Fl.
Ob.
Cl. b.
Sax. b.
Cr.
Trb.
Trbn.
Tb.
Perc. 1.
Mar.
Perc. 2.
Vibr.
(ff)
mf
poco dim.
Arpa
S. 1.
S. 2.
Ct.
C.
T. 1.
T. 2.
Bar.
B.
p, sub.
mf
sè ne re che 've va fa
vre. A cou trez vous d'a
Vno 1.
Vno 2.
Vla
Vc.
Cb.

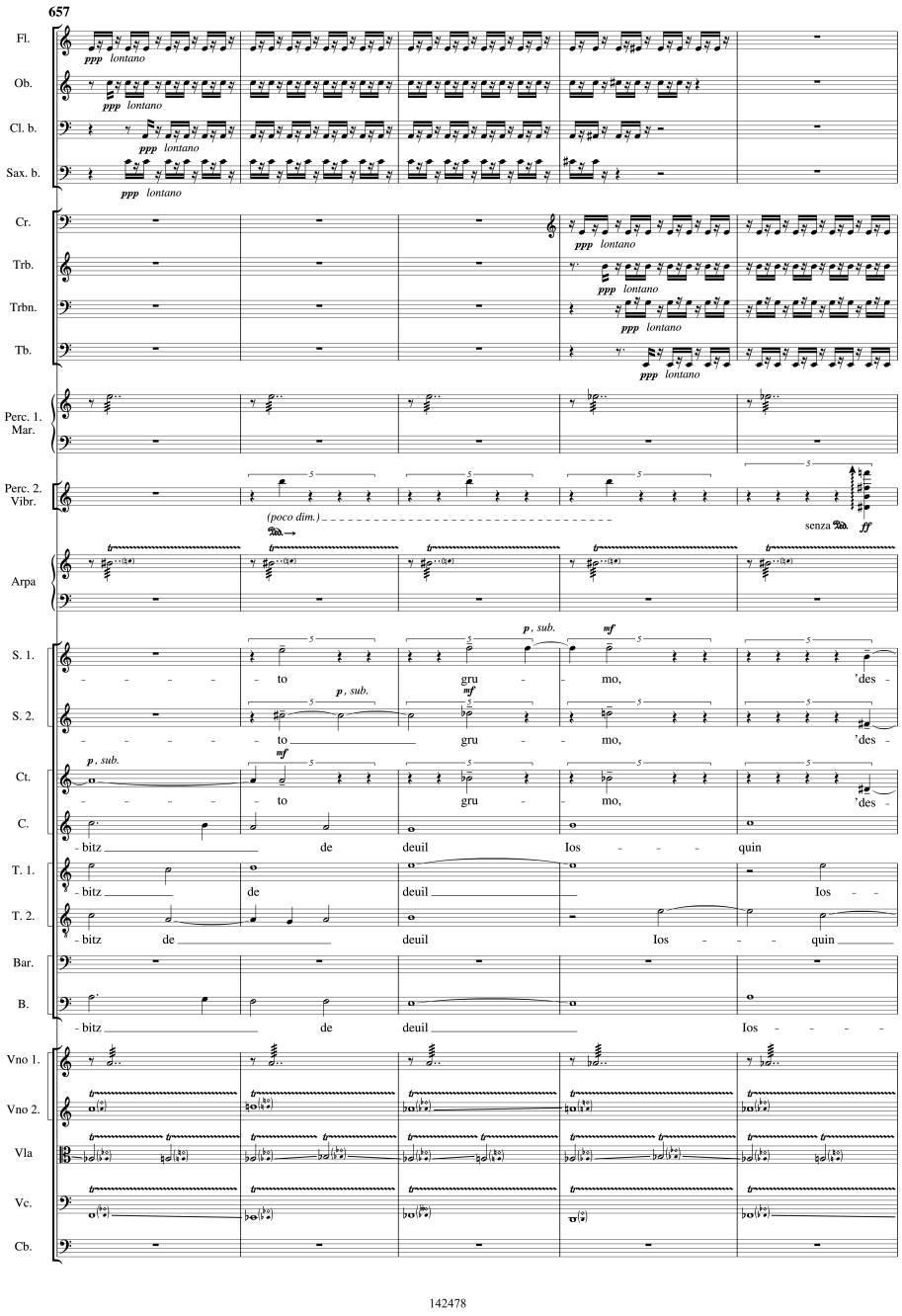


Figure 10. Gervasoni, "Déploration sur la mort de Pasolini – d'après, Déploration sur la mort d'Ockegem," bars 651-661.
Note: Gervasoni uses a version of Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* that is one fourth lower than the edition that I used in this chapter.

Audio 10. Gervasoni, "Déploration sur la mort de Pasolini – d'après, Déploration sur la mort d'Ockegem," bars 651-700, performed by Ensemble Phace and the Company of Music, conducted by Nacho de Paz: http://giulianobracci.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Gervasoni-PPP-Josquin-taglio.mp3

Both Janssens and Gervasoni engage with Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* in personal ways, making audible their relationship with the original work. Their transcriptions are as different as their musical languages with which they contaminate and transform the original.

Janssens takes Josquin's work as a point of departure and as a compass to navigate one of its central features – that is, Josquin's historical awareness and positioning within the musical tradition. Janssens transcribes the feature of evoking the voices of other composers – as Josquin did in *Nymphes de bois* – thereby reinventing his own tradition. In Janssens's transcription, Josquin's musical work emerges as recognizable only in certain passages, yet its formal structure plays a significant role. Furthermore, Janssens engages with Josquin's vocal composition while writing for string quartet, a formation with significant historical importance in music for its role in both experimenting with and confronting musical traditions and heritage.

By contrast, in Gervasoni's "Déploration," Josquin's work is sung in its entirety by five voices, and it coexists with a poem by Marin, which Gervasoni set to music for three other voices. Furthermore, Josquin's work and Marin's poem are hosted within the instrumental texture created by Gervasoni. Additionally, the "Déploration" is situated within the broader context of Gervasoni's cantata *In nomine PPP*, where it evokes Pasolini's death, and serves as a symbol of mourning, thereby amplifying one of the central meanings of Josquin's work.

In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I also engaged with Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*, transforming it and making my relation to it audible. Similar to Janssens, I transcribed Josquin's work for string quartet, and I utilized its formal structure both as a guide and as a palimpsest – i.e., a manuscript from which the original text has been erased, but traces of it are still legible. Like Gervasoni, I engaged with the text of the original and its meanings. Instead of emphasizing its overarching mourning nature, my focus was on engaging with its individual verses and words. This approach parallels my previous work in *Hortense*, where the poetic text of the original deeply informed the music and the overall dramaturgy of my transcription.

In *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I investigated the idea of dreaming as a model of a relationship with the other, and I developed a personal transcribing strategy inspired by the alternating chapter (and dream) structure of Queneau's *The Blue Flowers*. I explored the idea of transcribing as if dreaming of a musical work, and this led me to a result where Josquin's music and my own intertwine, each appearing within the other, as if emerging in a dream. The dreamlike quality of my work – where the music itself seems to dream – is part of a strategy aimed

at blending different styles and vocabularies, evoking them as ghost-like presences.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reflected on *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, a work in which I synthesized the findings of my research on the practice of transcription. Building upon the ideas discussed in chapter 4 – which focused on my experience transcribing Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger" – I further explored the notion that the act of transcription generates a double of a musical piece, and I delved into the theme of the double and its connection with the concept of otherness.

Before discussing my transcription work on *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I contextualized the theme of the double within a broader perspective by considering its significance in psychoanalysis and literature, referring to Rank's study "The Double" and Freud's essay "The 'Uncanny.'" This exploration enabled me to understand the other as something within the self, rather than in opposition to it – simultaneously intimate and foreign. In particular, Dickinson's description of the double being simultaneously host and guest is insightful when considering the other's constant virtual presence within the self. It indeed allows for a nuanced understanding of the relationship with the original musical work in the practice of transcribing: The transcription serves as the double and the guest of the original musical work, amplifying its meanings and actualizing some of its virtualities. Simultaneously, however, the original musical work becomes a guest in the language of the transcriber, contaminating it while also being contaminated by it.

I then explored Queneau's novel *The Blue Flowers*, which served as a guiding framework in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* for establishing my relationship with Josquin's *Nymphes des bois*. In particular, I reflected on the idea of dreaming as a specific form of knowledge of one's self, and as a model for the relationship with one's double – the other within the self – placing it into the context of Queneau's thoughts. Additionally, I considered two short stories by Borges where the narrator encounters his double of different ages in dreams. This approach, once more, acknowledges the other not as a distant and opposing entity to the self, but as a virtual presence within the self.

After introducing Josquin's *Nymphes des bois* and discussing some of its features, I detailed how the alternating chapter structure of Queneau's *The Blue Flowers*, wherein the main characters dream of each other, served as a blueprint for my engagement with Josquin's music. I then delved into my creative process, discussing in a more technical manner the use of Molinet's poetic text in my transcribing process, and my approach to Josquin's music, which alternated between transcribing and composing, leading to a gradual blurring of the boundary between the two.

I concluded this chapter by examining two more transcriptions of the same work by Josquin, undertaken by Janssens and Gervasoni. This enabled me to contextualize my work more extensively and also to offer a significant illustration of distinct approaches in transcribing the same musical work by different composers.
Furthermore, I considered these two transcriptions in light of my reflections on the theme of the double, testing my understanding of the practice of transcribing by looking at the works of other composers. In particular, Janssens reflects on his relationship with the music of composers from other generations and on the capacity of music to be aware of its own historicity in musical terms. Gervasoni, on the other hand, centers his focus on the expression of mourning, expanding grief for the death of Ockegem to include that of Pasolini.
In their own ways, and through their own musical language, both composers enhance the meaning of Josquin's work from within and provide a musical opening for other voices to be hosted within Josquin's musical work. Like in the transcriptions by Janssens and Gervasoni, history and tradition come to life in my own work, too. Indeed, history is not something merely from the past, but an integral element of our time, something that is – and needs to be – constantly reinvented, reorganized, and rebuilt, thereby reflecting our contemporary times and culture. In his foreword to Siegfried Zielinski's book *Deep Time of the Media*, Timothy Druckery provides a rich distillation of this perspective and argues that "history is, after all, not merely the accumulation of fact, but an active revisioning, a necessary corrective discourse, and fundamentally an act of interrogation – not just of facts, but of the displaced, the forgotten, the disregarded" (Druckery 2006, viii).

The reflections in this chapter have allowed me to take a further step in my research and in my understanding of the practice of transcription. In the conclusion to this thesis, I will revisit the path taken in my research and the thoughts, findings, and insights gained from it. I will also discuss the contribution of my research to the field of contemporary music, as well as the potential implications for the practice of transcribing as a strategy in music and musical education to bridge contemporary artistic expression with one's cultural heritage, redefining one's engagement with history into a creative and transformative process.

Conclusion

In this research project, I have investigated the process and implications of transcribing a musical work from the past – in particular, what happens to the piece and what happens to the transcriber. I have explored these issues through a close examination of my practice as a composer-transcriber, experimenting with various ways of engaging with musical works from the past. My artistic practice primarily served as a tool for investigation and reflection. I have positioned my research within a broader context, engaging my practice of transcribing in a dialogue with the work and ideas of other composers and performers, musicologists and philosophers, writers and poets. These exchanges have generated ideas, insights, and theoretical and practical reflections, which in turn have influenced my practice, thus creating a feedback loop.
I opened this thesis with the options Luigi Nono suggested of listening to oneself or to others in music, and as my research progressed, the practice of transcribing became a means of reflecting on the theme of otherness, on the relationship between self and other. Throughout this thesis, I have reflected on the practice of transcribing as a transformative relationship between the transcriber and the musical work, thus focusing on a dynamic process, instead of regarding the musical work and the transcription as static entities with predefined stable borders. I have shown how transcribing has the potential to transform both the original work and the language of the transcriber. Starting from the ideas of Jacques Derrida and Peter Szendy, I reflected on this practice as a way of listening to the other, also examining it from an ethical perspective by considering what constitutes an original musical work and what it means to respect it.

I have described the development of my research in which I investigated how far I could go artistically, but also how far I could stretch the concept of transcribing. The relationship between my transcriptions and the originals became seemingly looser with every work, but what happened was, paradoxically, the opposite: A deeper relation corresponded to a more significant transformation, both for the original musical work and for my musical language. I argued that truly paying respect indeed means operating in "absolute ingratitude," assuming the fate of an "always threatening risk of betrayal" and of contaminating the original and being at the same time contaminated by it (Derrida 2007a, 146 and 167). Derrida's ideas on paying respect, ingratitude, and betrayal helped me to distance myself from the traditional norms of transcribing, and to rethink what it means to transcribe. Thus, in this thesis, I have narrated a journey where I progressively sought to create more openings, allowing the

chosen original musical work to influence, contaminate, and transform my language as a transcriber. In this sense, this thesis narrates the transformation of my language as a transcriber (and as a composer) over the thirteen-year timespan between *Une petite fleur bleue* and *Tutto chiudi negli occhi.*

From this perspective, the practice of transcribing also investigates the relationship of transcribers with a musical heritage. Greater freedom and involvement, and thus reciprocal contamination between the musical work and the transcriber's language, correspond to new possible uses, as opposed to the musealization and sacralization of works from the past. By removing a musical work from an imaginary museum (see Goehr 1992) and exposing it to contamination, transcribing enables a new use of such a work, transitioning it from the sacred to the profane (Agamben 2007, 74-75), allowing for a creative engagement. This process challenges the impossibility of free use, and, disenchanting the musical work, it turns the transcriber's engagement with it – and therefore with a cultural and artistic heritage – into a creative, relational, and reciprocal process. Integrating contemporary artistic expression with one's cultural legacy indeed holds the potential to transform one's relationship with history into a dynamic and creative practice.

I have also discussed transcribing as the capacity to make audible the unavoidable mediation that connects (and separates) the transcriber from musical works of the past, as well as several transcribers' strategies to work with this distance. I have shown how transcribing as a practice does not (necessarily) produce mere copies of an original, but rather establishes a relationship capable of revealing some of the unheard, inherent capacities of a musical work. In this sense, more than simply returning to the musical work, transcriptions return with a gift – an "unforeseeable [and 'unforehearable'] experience" (Cobussen 2002a) – that can make us hear forward, so to speak.

The insights and reflections developed in my research can open up possibilities for future developments and new directions by other musicians and artistic researchers. My research offers both theoretical and artistic contributions that may encourage new ways of thinking about transcribing, enriching the discourse on the presence of the past in contemporary music, and revealing how transcribing also enables musical works to be virtually present in contemporary music, reappearing from the past like ghosts.

Some of the current references of this discourse include, for example, the recent research of the composers Mikel Urquiza and Daniele Ghisi. Urquiza explores in his own work and in that of other composers the practice of composing as "memory work" that involves music from the past (Urquiza 2024). Ghisi claims that composing "has more to do with 'discovering' than 'inventing,'" (Ghisi 2017, 137), and in his research he both questions the notions of authorship and originality, criticizing the composer as a solitary inventive creator facing a blank page (*tabula rasa*). As an alternative, he proposes an explorative, corpus-based approach to music "where the composer comes in contact with sets of existing

music (a *tabula plena*) and by selecting and modifying their elements creates new works" (Ghisi 2017, 17). For example, in his project *La fabrique des monstres* (2018), Ghisi developed an artificial neural network to investigate the possibilities of a musical machine capable of listening and in a sense learning from various collections of sounds, and creatively reproducing learned patterns (Ghisi, 2017, p. 136). In the end, Ghisi selected the fragments that he found most interesting and relevant from the large amount of music produced by the machine, and organized them into a musical palette. When asked whether the music produced was ultimately his or the machine's, he responded with a question: "When I gather flowers from a field to make a bouquet, do the flowers become mine? Yes and no" (Ghisi, 2018b).

At the beginning of this journey, while working on *Une petite fleur bleue,* I had started from the idea of the original work, and especially its score, as being a prescriptive source. Later, when working on *Hortense* and especially on *Una notte*, I started conceiving of the transcription as a double of the original, with the potential to reveal otherness as something already part of the self – already with us, yet still radically a stranger. I described how in my work this recognition of otherness as part of the self corresponded musically to a transition from a third-person to a first-person narrative. Finally, in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I took one step further in my reflections on the double and proposed the idea of dreaming as a model of a relationship with the other. Dreaming of something is a relationship that opposes seizing; instead, it is a way of opening the doors to otherness, recognizing it without neutralizing or domesticating it.

Repertoire

In this thesis, I have reflected on what constitutes an original, and I have argued that it is the transcriber's choices that make it original. More precisely, it is the very practice of transcribing that transforms a musical work into an original. My choice of repertoire for this research was guided by a desire to have both my musical language and imagination contaminated by some specific works. Through the process of transcribing, and thus entering into a relationship with these works, I aimed to be influenced and transformed by them: I recognized that, among the different possibilities that inhabit musical works, there was a potential for me to unfold as a composer, and, in choosing these musical works as part of my musical heritage, I also found opportunities to refine my own musical signature. My involvement and my situatedness as a transcriber were not a limit in this process, but an enabling condition for engaging with these musical works.

I focused on transcribing works from the Western repertoire, and apart from Franz Schubert's Lied "Der Doppelgänger," I chose to rework polyphonic music by Girolamo Frescobaldi, Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa, and Josquin Desprez. Frescobaldi's "Christe alio modo" was the only instrumental piece,

while in the others, the presence of voices and poetic texts played significant roles in my transcribing process.
Transcribing reveals unheard aspects of the original work, but it also reveals much about the transcriber. The choice of originals, and particularly the recognition of their potential to be expressed through one's own musical language, is a significant one. For me, this journey has been an exploration of my musical imagination, and an opportunity to become aware of and refine my own musical signature through engaging with my (chosen) musical heritage. Once more, I was not the only active agent here, the only one who could choose. These original musical works chose me too; they came to me. This happens because I cannot escape certain historical and cultural dispositions. In Derrida's words: I could (only) prepare for the other to come (Derrida 2007b, 45).

The choice of musical as well as literary and poetical examples followed the same principle: I did not seek a criterion of exhaustiveness, but rather chose examples to which I felt invited to respond with my research. While limited by my choices and desires, both in selecting the works to transcribe and in discussing the transcriptions, my research was not about the pursuit and technical description of a musical style. Of course, different musical idioms and attitudes in transcribing are entirely possible. However, recognizing (and delving deeper into) my situatedness and also limiting the repertoire has not restricted the scope of this research in its ability to provide insights and theoretical tools for thinking about this practice in new ways so that others can imagine new steps to undertake, following their own attitudes and interests.
Throughout the thesis, I have placed greater emphasis on how the musical works have been transformed in the transcribing process, and on how, through reciprocal contamination, the new music (can I actually call it "my" music? Do I own it?) gained distinctness. It is also important to note that the presence of the other work has manifested itself in my transcriptions primarily through melodic and harmonic relationships, often deeply related to the words and poetic texts present in the original musical work, while other parameters have played a more secondary role or have even been purposely overlooked. This, too, is certainly a partial choice, and, as in the example of Lucia D'Errico's work to which I referred in chapter 4, many other options are possible.

I have described transcribing as a significant learning experience and as a strategy to enter into someone else's composing workshop, considering every note as something that has been selected but that could have also been different. Thus, I proposed transcribing as a practice that allows one to deeply engage with the creative process of another composer. I have considered slowness as an important element that allows for intimacy and a qualitatively different contact with a musical work. Slowness is also a musical feature of my transcriptions, where the tempo is meant to intensify the listener's attention, enabling them to focus on the sound itself and its changes. The tempo therefore reflects my slow

and intensive listening to the originals, and it is one of the tools to make my listening experience somehow accessible to other listeners – that is, to performers as well as the audience.

As mentioned above, I have limited my transcriptions to repertoire from the Western tradition. This research has primarily been a way for me to engage with the main tradition that has shaped my background and studies in Rome, Florence, Amsterdam, and The Hague. Personally, it has been a way to come to terms with the heritage that has significantly influenced my education from university to conservatory. I graduated in philosophy with a thesis on the sixteenth-century heretical philosopher Giordano Bruno, and my conservatory education in Italy placed a strong emphasis on the study of Renaissance and Baroque polyphony alongside composition. Working and actively reflecting on my musical heritage has been a way to attempt to reconcile an often overwhelming presence of the past with the future. It has thus been a search for a way to make the past both present and active in my musical creation, without neutralizing its otherness, but instead opening a lively and critical channel of communication with it.

While the path I have followed is personal – which is inevitable in any artistic practice or artistic research project – others can benefit from and build upon the knowledge and insights produced by my research, as well as its theoretical framework, to explore new paths and perspectives. For example, my reflections on the relationship with the other in the practice of transcribing can contribute to the discourse on engaging with repertoire from musical traditions to which one does not belong. The critical reflections on what it means in transcribing to be faithful and to pay homage can be fruitfully challenged by important themes such as cultural appropriation and other post-colonial issues that I have not directly addressed in this thesis.[1]
Music has the ability to bring people, languages, and cultures into dialogue. As musicologist Giovanni Bietti asserts, "cultures have always spoken through sounds; dances, melodies, and musical instruments have traveled for centuries, interacting with the local realities they encounter along the way" (Bietti 2018, vii).

[1] Throughout this thesis, I have presented a different approach to the problematic concept and practice of appropriation. I have endeavored to rethink and deconstruct the concept of respect, particularly in a Derridean sense of "ingratitude." Furthermore, in my work, I do not regard musical works from the past as objects or as stable entities to be preserved within an "imaginary museum" (Goehr 1992). Instead, I explored the practice of transcribing as a reciprocal, transformative relationship with a musical work – one in which the work is transformed, while at the same time responding to and affecting my practice. Every choice I made was inevitably subject to a process of inclusion and exclusion: Ultimately, (artistic) decisions have to be made, even if they take place only by passing through their inherent undecidability. Paradoxically, a decision "cannot be deduced from a form of knowledge of which it would simply be the effect, conclusion, or explication" (Derrida 1995, 77).

Understanding the practice of transcribing in light of reflections on otherness, respect, and ingratitude, can offer insights into navigating a different context, where the nature of the other raises urgent and topical political and cultural questions.
A fruitful example in this direction is the music of composer Christopher Trapani. In his recent project *Noise Uprising* (2023) for the electric guitar quartet Zwerm and the singers Sofia Jernberg and Sophia Burgos, Trapani aims to uncover hidden connections between geographically distant genres and different plucked instruments, thus creating a polystylistic atlas that reveals a subterranean, cross-cultural network. The works he composed for this song cycle take as a point of departure gramophone records from the 1920s of jazz, fado, son, rebetiko, tango, and many more genres, and are intended to "call into question notions of cultural appropriation and authenticity, to challenge rather than romanticize notions of the exotic, and to draw attention to the dangers of 'overtourism' and the unreflective, superficial consumption of place" (Trapani 2023b).

The proposal in the final chapter of this thesis – a proposal which I explored in and through *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* – is to see dreaming as a model for the relationship with the other. This idea resonates with *Ludic Dreaming*, a book where the authors propose dreaming as both a method for thinking and an alternative mode of knowledge:

> […] dreams are not in competition with waking observation, and neither are they threatened by other ways of understanding how we experience the world: they are a peculiarly (post-)critical mode of knowledge that blends fact, fiction, and pragmatic effects to yield a delirious world in tension with itself and its possibilities. In this, dreams teach us how to imagine otherwise, how to imagine the world not as it *is* given but how it could *never* be given.
> (Cecchetto et al. 2017, 15)

Dreaming is indeed capable of bringing distant realities together, and dreaming the other can offer a mode of relationship distinct from the one of domination, providing a critical and intimate perspective to address the complex theme of cultural appropriation.

Beyond the score

In all the transcriptions I have presented in this thesis, the scores have been the privileged media, both in the relationship with the originals and in the realization of the transcriptions. Reading and writing have therefore been my primary ways of engaging with, imagining, and (re)inventing the other.
While the scores of the musical works I transcribed were central to my practice, in my research, I progressively moved away from the idea of the score as a

prescriptive entity, aiming to find – in absolute ingratitude – artistic freedom in an active and transformative relationship with the musical works.
Particularly with *Una notte*, as described in chapter 4, I considered the practice of transcription from a performative perspective, primarily through the ideas of Hans Zender, Heloisa Amaral, and Lucia D'Errico. From this perspective, creativity and authorship are no longer solely the domain of composers who produce autonomous works that then happen to be performed or transcribed. In this view, "Music is always at work; performances and replays are not copies of an original. Re-enactments are not returns; they point us in a forward direction" (Cobussen, 2002b). The musical work acts as both the starting point and the source of inspiration for exploring a wider and more divergent musical experience, rather than being the ultimate goal of an artistic journey.

In my research on transcribing, I argued against the conception of the score as "an authoritative grid, mainly designed to facilitate unidirectional instructions from composer to performer" (Cobussen 2017, 111). Nevertheless, the output of my transcribing process has always resulted in a new score. These new scores may be just as prescriptive – if not more so – for a performer as the original works. How does one deal with this issue? Starting with the insights from my research, new steps for me and for others could be to investigate and delve into this issue, reflecting on the openness and prescriptiveness of traditional scores, and drawing inspiration and consequences for the practice of transcribing. Potential steps in this direction might involve investigating collective practices in the transcribing process, or exploring different degrees of prescriptiveness by implementing forms of open notation.

An example that questions the role of notation and the composer's authorship through the practice of transcribing can be found in the research of composer Cassandra Miller, who compares and contrasts her approaches in creating notated and non-notated compositions. With both approaches, she uses a sound recording as the source, and mimics it in different ways, "incompletely or imprecisely, and in doing so transforms it" (Miller 2018, 15). In one of her notated compositions, *About Bach* (2015) for string quartet, Miller takes as a point of departure the recording of a short excerpt of Johann Sebastian Bach's Chaconne from *Partita 2* (1720) for violin, and she submits it to a lengthy transcription process, first converting the audio file into a MIDI file through "computer listening," and then rewriting it into a score and refining it in order to obtain a single phrase for viola that renders the exact rhythmic musicality of the live performance, also capturing accidental sound artifacts produced in the editing process. In *About Bach*, this transcribed melody is then harmonized by Miller into a chorale, repeated several times, and transformed by an almost imperceptible process of subtraction until the melody disappears (Miller 2018, 56-57). In her "post-notation practice," Miller engages in process-driven work – that is, work carried out in a way that values and prioritizes the experience of

making over the object made – inspired by the work of composers such as Éliane Radigue and Pauline Oliveros, and "challenging the dynamics of authorship and product-hood inherent in that composer-performer economy" (Miller 2018, 43-45). A central method in her practice is the process of "singing-along," in which one – Miller herself, or one of the performers with whom she collaborates – attempts to mimic in real time the recording that they are listening to through headphones. This mimic performance is then recorded, holding the potential for further soundings and listenings.
Miller's work includes the use of recordings and computer listening (which also includes microphone listening), and her research exemplifies the imprint of technology on any kind of mediated transcribing process. Since my transcribing practice primarily relies on written scores and the use of music-writing as a tool for imagining and (re)inventing, I have not addressed the role of technology as a medium for accessing the original musical works in this thesis. However, in my artistic practice, I have explored the practice of live remixing as a form of mediation to an original work – dealing with various recorded sound sources and practices such as sound-editing, remixing, and improvisation – in a dance and music performance resulting from my collaboration with the dancer Suzan Tunca, which I will discuss in the final paragraph of this conclusion.

Another example of deconstructing the authority of the composer, the transcriber, and the score is *Tenebrae* (2016), by the ensemble Blutwurst, a collective transcription which takes as its starting point Gesualdo's vocal work *Tenebrae factae sunt* (1611), a responsory for *tenebrae* (Latin for "darkness"), the Holy Week ritual in which candles are gradually extinguished to symbolize the passion and death of Jesus. Blutwurst has a background in radical improvisation and contemporary music, and in their work, they share every stage of the process as a collective. In their practice, the music score that guides their performance is thus the result of this collaborative creative effort. In Blutwurst's *Tenebrae*, Gesualdo's music is subjected to a process of extreme time-stretching, orchestrated in a way to allow for the musical exploration of long, sustained tones and slowly changing sound patterns. In addition, in some sections of *Tenebrae*, the ensemble's sound is further manipulated by analog magnetic tapes, emphasizing the mediation process through which Gesualdo's music passes and reappears as a ghostly presence.

New contexts

I began this research primarily considering myself to be in the role of a contemporary music composer engaging with my own musical heritage. However, the research itself – and especially being in dialogue with the ideas of other artistic researchers – has led me in the end to shift my perspective towards a broader horizon and a wider scope of action: It has invited me to think in a more curatorial way, allowing my work to interact meaningfully within various contexts. This approach could mean presenting contemporary (and early) music

more generously, imagining new contexts to explore its possible roles and meanings. This opening could also be described as a loss of innocence.

> But I call innocent music that which thinks only of itself and believes only in itself, and which on account of itself has forgotten the world at large – this spontaneous expression of the most profound solitude which speaks of itself and with itself, and has entirely forgotten that there are listeners, effects, misunderstandings and failures in the world outside. (Nietzsche 2011, §255)

I previously referred to this aphorism by Friedrich Nietzsche in my master's thesis about childhood and new music (Bracci 2012, 24), considering it as a reference for thinking about the enchanting autonomy of music, and relating the oblivion of the outside world to the image of children playing among themselves, unaware of the existence of an audience. I connected this image with Simone Weil's thought of seeing "a landscape as it is when I am not there" (Weil 1947, 53), and I imagined music to listen to as it is when I am not there.
Today, I read the same aphorism as an invitation to step out of the musician's "deep solitude" and investigate what happens to music in different contexts, what questions it raises, what new understandings or misunderstandings, what new ideas and reactions. In fact, I believe that today it is important for musicians to be able to think of themselves not only as composers and performers who address the *outside* world, but to go beyond these roles and think of themselves as artists and artistic researchers creatively caring for music *in the world*, thus also creating and shaping its contexts. This feeling resonates with the idea that "the autonomy of art music and musical works, can today be perceived as an obstacle to connecting music makers with society" (Craenen 2024, 96).

Another possible development of this research, which focused primarily on the transcriber's relationship with the musical work, is to make the results engage within different contexts. For example, presenting these transcriptions at early music festivals could help raise productive and unexpected issues, especially since discussions of authenticity and interpretation have been central to early music discourse in the recent past. Moreover, transcribing could be a way of establishing fruitful collaborations and exchanges with performers and programmers who are not (only) specialists in contemporary music. I expect that interactions with performers who are specialized in early music would also generate new ideas, questions, and reflections, as well as perhaps resistance and misunderstandings, and therefore possible further developments of this practice.

As mentioned before, in this thesis I discussed the capacity that transcribing has to compose the distance and make audible the mediation that connects the transcriber to a musical work from the past. I also mentioned how transcribing can make musical heritage (virtually) present in contemporary music. The

reverse is also true: Transcribing can make contemporary music (virtually) present in the music of the past – thanks to the contamination between the transcriber's language and the musical work – and can actualize unheard virtualities of musical works of the past. These theoretical reflections can help to concretize, from a curatorial perspective, the relationship of transcribers, musicians, and audiences to the music of the past, which could be a way to critically contextualize it in contemporary culture.

Among musicians and researchers there is a growing interest in linking early and contemporary music. The Italian ensemble Azione_Improvvisa, for example, has as part of their vision the explicit goal of "combining the knowledge from the ancient music world with the most actual research in contemporary music" (Azione_Improvvisa 2024). Its lineup combines modern and early music instruments: It is a quartet consisting of accordion, theorbo, electric guitar, and electronics. "Anamorphosis," one of their recent programs, "was created with the desire to actualize an increasingly necessary dialogue between contemporary music and the music of the past" (Berlanda 2023), and it features transcriptions of Claudio Monteverdi's music by composer Daniela Fantechi alongside new compositions that rethink Monteverdi's use of word and gesture (Azione_Improvvisa 2023).

Another example of this approach is the program "La Lontananza: 21st Century Cori Spezzati," realized at the Venice Music Biennale in 2013, which utilized Wave Field Synthesis (WFS), a sound production technology capable of simulating and synthesizing virtual acoustic environments using 192 speakers arranged in a square formation of 10x10 meters (The Game of Life Foundation, 2024). The program combined music by Monteverdi and Nono, which was spatialized using WFS, along with a new work by Ji Youn Kang composed specifically for this technology.

Yet another example is the work led by the composer and artistic researcher Carlo Diaz (Diaz 2024a), who proposes a cross-pollination between theoretical reflections around early and contemporary music. Diaz takes as a point of departure for his theorization two complementary analyses and considers them alongside each other: "[...] critiques of the authenticity of historical performance on the one hand, with Richard Taruskin providing the classic example, and critiques of the possibility of artistic originality on the other, especially by Rosalind Krauss" (Diaz 2024b). Diaz's research aims to overcome the impasse faced by these two criticisms, viewing both early and contemporary music as "fundamental syntheses of mimesis and invention, memory and imagination" (Diaz 2024b). Furthermore, he explores strategies to make music out of fragments – that is, materials bearing the historical weight of damage, loss, or incompletion – in order to be challenged to "imagine beyond what's actually there" (Diaz 2024b), thereby investigating and interweaving the concepts of recovery and musical invention.

Education

My research on transcribing may also contribute to the critical discourse on aspects of classical music education, specifically on musicians' creative engagement with their musical heritage. In recent years, the focus of the discourse on curriculum design in classical music education has shifted towards a new profile of musicians who are more creative and socially engaged. In the influential article "Musicians as 'Makers in Society': A Conceptual Foundation for Contemporary Professional Higher Music Education," Helena Gaunt et al. identify "engaging with music as the preservation of cultural heritage and music as an art form creating new work" as one of the axes of "partnering values" on which they propose constructing the profile of the professional musician as a "maker in society" (Gaunt et al. 2021, 8), thus aiming to move beyond the traditional dichotomy of preservation versus creation.

The practice of transcribing can be an effective educational tool that enables students to engage in a creative process and develop a transformative relationship with a musical heritage, following musicologist Nicholas Cook's proposition of shifting the focus from the musical score as the representation of music to the study of music as performance (Cook 2014).

In his analysis of nearly three hundred research proposals from music performance students at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, Paul Craenen has observed a growing interest in practices related to making arrangements and transcriptions. These practices are particularly valued as tools for exploring and realizing connections to a repertoire and to the students' cultural backgrounds and heritage (Craenen 2024, 108 and 112). Furthermore, Craenen notes that what emerges from the students' proposals is "foremost a desire to connect their musical practice to the world they live in, and a realisation that the traditional classical music format prevents them from doing so" (Craenen 2024, 112). Craenen's analysis and reflections confirm the validity of the profile of the performing musician as a "maker" and accurately describe "the complex position of many students, attempting to find a balance between tradition and modernity, the local and the global, preserving heritage and opening up to other musics" (Craenen 2024, 121). The practice of transcribing can be one of many valuable tools for students to navigate their complex position in between several (musical) worlds.

So far I have conducted two seminars on transcribing: one in 2020 at the Italian Accordion Academy in Amsterdam, and another in 2024 at the Conservatory of Fermo. I observed a greater interest in this practice among students who had prior exposure to contemporary music and those who were interested in music pedagogy. Moving forward, I intend to propose seminars and workshops on this topic at higher education music institutions, exploring transcribing as a teaching and learning tool.

Dancing

Transcribing is a practice that allows a musical work to be adapted to new contexts, thereby bridging different realities. In the introduction, I described remixing as another way of thinking about transcribing. Throughout this thesis, this approach has diverged from the initial research trajectory I had set, and I focused on the practice of transcribing written music, which in turn has led to new scores. However, in my artistic practice during the same years that I was working on my doctorate, I explored the practice of remixing in my collaboration with the dancer Suzan Tunca, as mentioned above. We worked on *SEI*, a project that culminated, after several stages, in a dance and music performance on the border of improvisation and choreography, blending immediate intuitive and predetermined acoustic and choreographed movements. This performance then constituted the artistic component of Tunca's doctoral defense, "Spiritual Corporeality: Through a Dance Language towards Embodied Gnosis."

Tunca's research focuses on searching for a dance language that originates from a state of being suspended between the physical sensory and the metaphysical supra-sensory. In her research, the gap between non-verbal corporeality and verbal, analytical discourse is bridged by the key concept of embodied gnosis, "a radical opening toward the unknown, with trust" (Tunca 2023a, 27). In Tunca's work, dance serves as a medium to explore and communicate this embodied gnosis, with music playing a crucial role in a quest for a specific quality of corporeal consciousness and dimensions of knowledge within the danced experience.

Tunca aimed to conduct this exploration in dialogue with Bach's Chaconne from *Partita 2* for violin, a musical work to which she felt a profound connection. In the first part of our collaboration, which resulted in an initial version of the performance, I remixed live two different recordings of the Chaconne. I spread these recordings across several tracks running simultaneously, some of which were slowed down, pitch-shifted, or modified using various sound filters. During the performance, I was able to open and close each track, move it within the space surrounding the dancer (and the audience), and control some of the sound filters applied to the individual tracks, maintaining a constant dialogue with Tunca's dance. My role was to support Tunca's exploration of inhabiting multiple layers of corporeality, allowing her to respond to music that was simultaneously well-known and significant from an artistic and spiritual perspective, yet also unpredictable. This unpredictability provoked the dancing body's immediate intuitive reactions, disorientation, and consequently, unexpected reorientations.

In subsequent stages of the research, we explored various other approaches and interactions. Ultimately, the music for the performance, which had started with the Chaconne, came to include many more sound sources, including my own electronic music, modified recordings of excerpts from some of Bach's other

works, and field recordings. The improvisational nature of live remixing allowed for real-time interaction with the dancer.
Tunca's research is thoroughly documented in her dissertation. The video excerpts and reflections that constitute her instances of retrospective dance writing are particularly valuable and are available online in the Research Catalogue (Tunca 2023b). Notably, in April 2022, we collaborated during a two-week residency at the University Theater of the University of Amsterdam to integrate all the parts of our collaboration into a single performance. In video example 1, there are three fragments from one of the performances at the University Theater.

Video 1. SEI, performed by Suzan Tunca and Giuliano Bracci, 16 April 2022, at University Theater of the University of Amsterdam.
https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/520371/2129758?c=8

From the perspective of my research, a crucial point is that my practice of transcription – in this case, the live remix – enabled Tunca (and myself) to engage with Bach's Chaconne in continually renewed ways. Through remixing I made the mediation with a musical work audible. My role as a transcriber transformed the bilateral relationship between Tunca and the Chaconne into a triangulation that could be renewed with each performance. The musical dimensions created through remixing supported Tunca's exploration of a polyphonic body: a multilayered resonating space that integrates physical and metaphysical layers of being, seeking to unite dichotomies between gravity and levity, and between matter and spirit.
The artistic and theoretical insights from my own research proved to be useful in guiding my collaboration with Tunca, particularly in reflecting on and making decisions about the introduction of extraneous musical materials, and in constructing a musical dramaturgy where everything blossomed from the relationship with Bach's Chaconne, serving as a means to explore its depths and unheard aspects. Concurrently, collaborating with Tunca has been a profoundly enriching experience that has, in turn, deeply inspired my research on the practice of transcribing.

In this conclusion, I have discussed the contributions of my research across various contexts, outlined potential new steps to undertake, identified different directions to explore, and suggested new interlocutors to engage with. These efforts aim to be useful for myself and others – composers, performers, researchers, teachers, philosophers, musicologists, dancers, and more – in continuing to investigate and reflect on this practice and its theoretical and artistic implications in the field of contemporary music and beyond.

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Summary

Transcribing has a long and varied history in Western (art) music. It does not have one single meaning, as it is a transversal and polyhedral practice that responds to several different needs in different eras and contexts; today, it testifies to many composers' deep engagement with the musical past and their desire to establish a creative relationship with cultural heritage.

This research investigates the process and implications of transcribing a musical work from the past, and aims to expand the knowledge and understanding of this creative practice. I have conducted this research through experimenting with various ways of engaging with musical works from the past, closely examining the results, and reflecting on my practice as a composer-transcriber. I have also placed my research within a broader context by putting my practice into dialogue with the work and ideas of other composers and performers, musicologists and philosophers, writers and poets.

Starting from Peter Szendy's ideas, I looked at the practice of transcribing as a form of listening, as an active and critical relationship with musical works that has the potential to transform both the original work and the transcriber's musical language. From this perspective, transcriptions are not mere repetitions of musical works or different ways of saying the same thing, but written traces of acts of listening: On the basis of my research, I claim that transcribing should be regarded as a dynamic and transformative relationship between the transcriber and the musical work, thereby challenging the idea of regarding the musical work and the transcription as static entities with predefined stable borders. In this thesis, the practice of transcribing becomes a means of reflecting on the theme of otherness, on the relationship between self and other. Reflecting on transcribing as a way of listening to the other, I also examine this practice from an ethical perspective: Following Jacques Derrida's ideas, I argue that truly paying respect to a musical work indeed means operating in "absolute ingratitude," assuming the fate of an "always threatening risk of betrayal" and of contaminating the original and, at the same time, being contaminated by it.

Greater freedom and involvement, and thus a reciprocal contamination between the musical work and the transcriber's language, means the invention of new possibilities, as opposed to the musealization and sacralization of works from the past. By removing a musical work from its "imaginary museum" (Lydia Goehr) and exposing it to contamination, transcribing enables a new relation to such a work, transitioning it from the sacred to the profane (Giorgio Agamben)

and allowing for a creative engagement. This process challenges the impossibility of free use, and by disenchanting the musical work, it turns the transcriber's engagement with it – and therefore with a broader cultural and artistic heritage – into a creative, relational, and reciprocal process. Integrating contemporary artistic expression with one's cultural legacy indeed holds the potential to transform one's relationship with history into a dynamic and creative practice.

This thesis is divided into five chapters, each dealing with one specific experience of transcribing that I had between 2005 and 2022, with the exception of chapter 2, which is dedicated to Webern's *Fuga Ricercata* (1935), his orchestration of Johann Sebastian Bach's "Ricercar a 6" from the *Musikalisches Opfer* (1747). I focused on transcribing works from the Western repertoire, and apart from Franz Schubert's Lied "Der Doppelgänger," I chose to rework polyphonic music by Girolamo Frescobaldi, Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa, and Josquin Desprez. Frescobaldi's "Christe alio modo" was the only instrumental piece, while in the others, the presence of voices and poetic texts played significant roles in my transcribing process.

The thesis narrates a journey where I progressively sought to create more openings, allowing the chosen original musical works to influence, contaminate, and transform my language as a transcriber more and more. Each chapter outlines a further stage in the progression of my research and presents a different approach to transcribing, along with various issues and strategies for engaging with a musical work. Additionally, each chapter offers reflections and remarks that consider and develop concepts and ideas from the literature and other transcriptions that I have studied.

At the beginning of this journey, while working on *Une petite fleur bleue,* I started from the idea that the original work, and especially its score, is a prescriptive source. Later, when working on *Hortense* and especially on *Una notte*, I conceived the transcription as a double of the original, with the potential to reveal otherness as something already part of the self – already with us, yet still radically a stranger. Finally, in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi*, I took one more step in my reflections on the double and proposed the idea of dreaming as a model of a relationship with the other. Dreaming of something is a relationship that opposes seizing; instead, it is a way of opening the doors to otherness, recognizing it without neutralizing or domesticating it.

This thesis discusses transcribing as the capacity to make audible the unavoidable mediation that connects (and separates) the transcriber from musical works of the past, as well as several transcribers' strategies to work with this distance. Throughout the thesis I discuss transcriptions by composers such as Richard Barrett, Stefano Gervasoni, Daan Janssens, Fabio Nieder, Dieter Schnebel, Salvatore Sciarrino, Anton Webern, and Hans Zender, and the work of

performers and researchers such as Heloisa Amaral and Lucia D'Errico. Besides the aforementioned musicians, and the philosophers Szendy, Derrida, Goehr, and Agamben, I have also entered into dialogue with the ideas of, among others, Roland Barthes (the listener as a co-author); Samuel IJsseling (transcribing turns a work into an original); Jorge Luis Borges, Emily Dickinson, Sigmund Freud, Heinrich Heine, Ovid, and Raymond Queneau (the transcription as a double, and the idea of the other as something both intimate and foreign, already virtually present within the self); Walter Benjamin, Luciano Berio, and Morton Feldman (slowness gives access to a qualitative relation with a work); and Ludwig Wittgenstein (the meaning of a musical work is the use that one makes of it).

My research offers both theoretical and artistic contributions that may encourage new ways of thinking about transcribing, both enriching the discourse on the presence of the past in contemporary music and revealing how transcriptions also enable musical works to be virtually present in contemporary music, reappearing from the past like ghosts.

Samenvatting

Transcriberen heeft een lange en gevarieerde geschiedenis in de westerse (kunst)muziek. Het heeft niet één enkele betekenis, aangezien het een transversale en veelvormige praktijk is die inspeelt op verschillende behoeften in verschillende tijdperken en contexten. Vandaag de dag getuigt het van een diepe betrokkenheid van veel componisten met het muzikale verleden en hun streven om een creatieve relatie aan te gaan met hun eigen culturele erfgoed.

Dit onderzoek verkent het proces en de implicaties van het transcriberen van een muzikaal werk uit het verleden, en heeft als doel de kennis en het begrip van deze creatieve praktijk te verruimen. Ik heb dit onderzoek uitgevoerd door te experimenteren met verschillende manieren van omgang met muziekwerken uit het verleden, de resultaten daarvan grondig te bestuderen, en te reflecteren over mijn praktijk als componist-transcribent. Ik heb mijn onderzoek in een bredere context geplaatst door zowel mijn artistieke als meer theoretische overwegingen in dialoog te brengen met het werk en de ideeën van andere componisten en uitvoerende musici, musicologen en filosofen, schrijvers en dichters.

Uitgaande van de ideeën van Peter Szendy, heb ik transcriberen benaderd als een vorm van luisteren, als een actieve en kritische relatie met muzikale werken die de potentie heeft om zowel het oorspronkelijke werk als de muzikale taal van de transcribent te transformeren. Vanuit dit perspectief beschouwd, zijn transcripties niet louter herhalingen van eerder gemaakte muzikale werken of verschillende manieren om hetzelfde uit te drukken, maar genoteerde sporen van luisterhandelingen: op basis van mijn onderzoek stel ik dat transcriberen gezien moet worden als een dynamisch en transformerend proces tussen de transcribent en het muzikale werk. Ik betwist daarmee het idee dat zowel het muzikale werk als de transcriptie statische entiteiten zijn met vooraf gedefinieerde stabiele grenzen. In dit proefschrift wordt de praktijk van het transcriberen een middel om na te denken over het thema van het anders-zijn, over de relatie tussen het 'zelf' en de 'ander'. Reflecterend op transcriberen als een manier om naar de ander of het andere te luisteren, beschouw ik deze praktijk ook vanuit een ethisch perspectief: voortbouwend op de ideeën van Jacques Derrida beargumenteer ik dat respect tonen voor een muzikaal werk ook kan inhouden dat men handelt in 'absolute ondankbaarheid', daarbij een 'altijd dreigend risico van verraad' aanvaardend, van het besmetten van het origineel en, tegelijkertijd, van het zelf besmet worden.

Meer vrijheid en betrokkenheid, en daarmee een wederzijdse besmetting tussen het muzikale werk en de taal van de transcribent, betekent het uitvinden en inpassen van nieuwe mogelijkheden, in tegenstelling tot het louter musealiseren en sacraliseren van werken uit het verleden. Door een muzikaal werk uit zijn "denkbeeldig museum" (Lydia Goehr) te halen en bloot te stellen aan besmetting, maakt transcriberen andere relaties met zo'n werk mogelijk, daarbij overgaand van het sacrale naar het profane (Giorgio Agamben); transcriberen maakt dus een creatieve betrokkenheid mogelijk. Dit proces onderstreept het belang van een vrij gebruik van muziekwerken. Door het muzikale werk te ontwijden, maakt het de betrokkenheid van de transcribent met het werk – en tevens met een breder cultureel en artistiek erfgoed – tot een creatieve, relationele en wederkerige praktijk. Hedendaagse artistieke expressie integreren met cultureel erfgoed heeft de potentie om de relatie met de geschiedenis te transformeren tot een dynamische en creatieve praktijk.

Dit proefschrift is opgedeeld in vijf hoofdstukken, die elk een specifieke ervaring met transcriberen behandelen die ik had tussen 2005 en 2022, met uitzondering van hoofdstuk 2, dat gewijd is aan Weberns *Fuga Ricercata* (1935), zijn orkestratie van Johann Sebastian Bachs "Ricercar a 6" uit het *Musikalisches Opfer* (1747). Ik heb me gericht op het transcriberen van werken uit het westerse repertoire. Naast Franz Schuberts lied "Der Doppelgänger" heb ik ervoor gekozen om polyfone muziek van Girolamo Frescobaldi, Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa en Josquin Desprez opnieuw te bewerken. Frescobaldis "Christe alio modo" was het enige instrumentale stuk, terwijl in de andere werken de aanwezigheid van stemmen en poëtische teksten een belangrijke rol speelden in mijn transcriptieproces.

Het proefschrift vertelt over een reis waarin ik geleidelijk meer openingen zocht, zodat de gekozen oorspronkelijke muzikale werken steeds meer mijn taal als transcribent konden beïnvloeden, besmetten en transformeren. Elk hoofdstuk beschrijft een verdere fase in de voortgang van mijn onderzoek, presenteert een andere benadering van transcriberen, en gaat in op verschillende problemen en strategieën om met een muzikaal werk om te gaan. Bovendien biedt elk hoofdstuk reflecties, opmerkingen en een doordenken van concepten en ideeën uit de literatuur en andere transcripties die ik heb bestudeerd.

Aan het begin van deze reis, bij het werken aan *Une petite fleur bleue*, ging ik uit van het normatieve karakter van het oorspronkelijke werk, en in het bijzonder de partituur. Later, bij het werken aan *Hortense* en vooral aan *Una notte*, zag ik de transcriptie als een dubbelganger van het origineel, met de potentie om 'andersheid' te onthullen als iets dat al deel uitmaakt van het 'zelf' – iets dat al met ons, maar toch radicaal vreemd is. Ten slotte ging ik in *Tutto chiudi negli occhi* nog een stap verder in mijn reflecties over de dubbelganger en stelde ik dromen voor als een model van een relatie met de ander. Dromen van iets is een relatie

die zich verzet tegen toe-eigening; in plaats daarvan is het een manier om de deuren naar andersheid te openen, het te erkennen zonder het te neutraliseren of te domesticeren.

Dit proefschrift bespreekt transcriberen als de capaciteit om de onvermijdelijke bemiddeling hoorbaar te maken die de transcribent verbindt (en scheidt) van muzikale werken uit het verleden, evenals verschillende strategieën van transcribenten hoe met deze afstand om te gaan. Doorheen het proefschrift bespreek ik transcripties van componisten als Richard Barrett, Stefano Gervasoni, Daan Janssens, Fabio Nieder, Dieter Schnebel, Salvatore Sciarrino, Anton Webern en Hans Zender, en het werk van uitvoerders en onderzoekers als Heloisa Amaral en Lucia D'Errico. Naast de eerder genoemde musici en de filosofen Szendy, Derrida, Goehr en Agamben, ben ik ook in dialoog getreden met de ideeën van onder anderen Roland Barthes (de luisteraar als co-auteur); Samuel IJsseling (transcriberen maakt van een werk een origineel); Jorge Luis Borges, Emily Dickinson, Sigmund Freud, Heinrich Heine, Ovidius en Raymond Queneau (de transcriptie als een dubbelganger, en het idee van de ander als iets wat zowel intiem als vreemd is, al virtueel aanwezig binnen het zelf); Walter Benjamin, Luciano Berio en Morton Feldman (traagheid geeft toegang tot een kwalitatieve relatie met een werk); en Ludwig Wittgenstein (de betekenis van een muzikaal werk is het gebruik dat men ervan maakt).

Mijn onderzoek biedt zowel theoretische als artistieke bijdragen die nieuwe manieren van denken over transcriberen kunnen stimuleren, en zowel het discours over de aanwezigheid van het verleden in de hedendaagse muziek verrijken als onthullen hoe transcripties ook mogelijk maken dat muzikale werken virtueel aanwezig zijn in de hedendaagse muziek, als geesten opnieuw opduikend uit het verleden.

Biography

Composer and artistic researcher Giuliano Bracci (born in 1980 in Rome, Italy) graduated cum laude in philosophy from "La Sapienza" University of Rome in 2004. Bracci studied composition with Rosario Mirigliano at the Conservatory of Florence, where he graduated with full marks in 2010. In the same year, he moved to the Netherlands, in 2012 obtaining a master's degree in composition under the guidance of Richard Ayres at the Amsterdam Conservatory. Bracci also completed the one-year Sonology course at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, and in 2015, he joined the docARTES doctoral program at Leiden University, the Orpheus Institute in Ghent, and the Amsterdam Conservatory.
In 2018, Bracci won the Concorso Evangelisti – Nuova Consonanza. He was awarded the Orgelpark Commission prize at the Young Composers Meeting in 2010, and received an honorable mention at the Gaudeamus Prize that same year. In 2011, he was a finalist for the Premio Reina Sofia in Madrid.
His music is published by BabelScores, Donemus, and Ars Publica, and it is regularly performed throughout Europe as well as in North and South America. As an assistant of the Freon Ensemble, he is one of the organizers of the Atlante Sonoro XXI music festival in Rome. He regularly gives composition masterclasses, and he has taught at the Scuola Popolare di Musica di Testaccio in Rome, and the conservatories of Potenza and La Spezia.