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THE LIBRETTO AND ITS MUSICAL SETTING IN ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI'S MUSIC DRAMAS DERIVED FROM LITERARY SOURCES

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg 1984

D E C L A R A T I O N

I hereby declare that

this thesis entitled THE LIBRETTO AND ITS MUSICAL SETTING IN ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI'S MUSIC DRAMAS DERIVED FROM LITERARY SOURCES is my own unaided work except to the extent indicated in the acknowledgments, notes and bibliography;

no part of it has been submitted in the past or is being or is to be submitted for a degree in any other university;

no information used in this thesis has been obtained whilst employed by, or working under the aegis of, any person or organization other than the University of the Witwatersrand.

Signed
Yucci maria orsini-duse
Yucci Maria Orsini Duse

A B S T R A C T

THE LIBRETTO AND ITS MUSICAL SETTING IN ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI'S MUSIC DRAMAS DERIVED FROM LITERARY SOURCES

The aim of the research is to investigate Pizzetti's highly individual approach to problems of a formal, musical, ethical and aesthetic nature connected with the music drama.

Theoretically, the composer's individuality will be supported by means of references to his musical writings and essays. He will be seen to emerge as a revolutionary writer and critic who did not hesitate to challenge the 'burgeois' Verismo trend in the name of a loftier and more sophisticated, as well as ethically orientated form of music drama - from both the musical and literary points of view.

Musically, the composer's individuality will be supported by means of attention to those peculiarities that constitute the unmistakeable physiognomy of his musical language: the thematic construction used in his operas; his use of themes as leitmotives (often of symbolic implication) to describe or interpret characters, events or dramatic situations; his highly personal declamatory style; his mastery in polyphonic choral writing; his use of various modes and other elements drawn from Medieval church music.

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Of Pizzetti's thirteen operatic works five are to be investigated in this thesis. These are those derived from pre-existing literary sources. They have been chosen because of their comparatively outstanding

literary merit and satisfactory musical realization:

FEDRA	- G. D'Annunzio
IFIGENIA	- Euripides
LA FIGLIA DI IORIO	- G. D'Annunzio
ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE	- T.S. Eliot
CLITENNESTRA	- Aeschylus , Sophocles .

Each music drama will be evaluated in the light of the composer's theories and aesthetic ideals, and considered from the point of view of :

The libretto : tracing of literary and historical background; treatments of the same subjects at the hands of other dramatists and librettists; comparison of the libretto with the original literary texts pointing out similarities or deviations in plots and detail aimed at furthering the composer's particular views and requirements;

The musical setting: analyses of the scores with special attention to the above mentioned peculiarities constituting the composer's highly individual musical language.

This procedure will make it possible to evaluate, assess and demonstrate:

> the extent to which Pizzetti succeeds, or fails to realize his theories and ideals, and the manner in which the musical setting or interpretation changes the literary text by adding either psychological depth to the characters (as in FEDRA and LA FIGLIA DI IORIO), or newer dimensions to the stories, sometimes lending a more universal aspect (as in IFIGENIA, ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE and CLITENNESTRA).

The above is intended to be the main idea and the unifying element of the thesis. As it will run through the Introduction (devoted to Pizzetti's theories and aesthetic views), the five chapters constituting the main body of the thesis (each dealing with one music drama) and the

Conclusion (summarizing the main point of consideration dealt with in the thesis) it should refute the possible criticism of 'compartmentalization' that may be motivated by the division of the thesis into five chapters.

—— oOo ——

To my brother Arturo

PREFACE

Whilst Ildebrando Pizzetti (1880-1968) is recognized as a leading twentieth century Italian composer his output, especially in the operatic field, has not been as a whole subjected to exhaustive and detailed study, especially in the English language. Italian writers and researchers, who have for the most part dealt with aspects of his work which have already received fairly full attention, seem to have neglected some of his best music dramas. Further, Guido M. Gatti's ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI[1], published by Dennis Dobson, in English translation, brought forth[1], among others, the following comments:

> The author has made no attempt to cater for a specifically English audience, and the translator, David Moore, has magnified the omission by an unidiomatic fidelity to the original, leaving the thought still in Italian beneath the surface of English words, and incorporating, for the sake of this fidelity, a number of unhappy neologisms. What Guido Gatti has written is a defence of Pizzetti's conservatism addressed to those who know and dislike it. This is wasted on English readers, who are not so much unreceptive to an ignorant of Pizzetti's music. True, they will learn something of the composer, but it amounts to little more than could be summed up in a few lines: that his most important contribution has been in the sphere of opera; that he has a highly individual attitude to opera (only hazily defined in this book...) .....[2]

> Pizzetti at seventy is still little known to us. Much of his work has been upon opera and sacred music-drama; he has written more works in these forms than in the purely orchestral ones. Mr. Gatti's explanations of his old friend's principles are sometimes rather difficult to follow; but the books makes one eager to hear more of the the music of this deep student of operatic problems, an experimenter (who appears to have been more successful than, for example, Busoni.)[3]

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1. Gatti, Guido M., ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI, Turin: Paravia, 1934; 2nd Italian edition, Milan: Ricordi, 1954. English ed. (Tr.D. Moore), London, 1951.
2. Mason, Colin, 'ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI.By Guido M. Gatti' (Review), Music and Letters , vol. XXXII, 1951, p.287.
3. W.R. A., 'ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI.By Guido M. Gatti' (Review), The Musical Times, vol.92, May 1951, p.213.

A more recent book, ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI:CRONOLOGIA E BIBLIOGRAFIA (Parma, 1980), compiled and edited by Pizzetti's son, Bruno Pizzetti, is a factual documentation of Pizzetti's life and work and an invaluable first-hand source of information which also contains some criticism. It does not however concern itself primarily with critical appreciation or musical analysis.

The aim of this research is to investigate Pizzetti's concept of the music drama and his highly individual approach to this form of musical expression. Examination of his scores reveals intelligence and artistic sensitivity. I have tried to assess these qualities in the light of the aesthetic theories propounded by Pizzetti in his critical and other writings. I have little doubt that he shows an absolute mastery of his medium. An evaluation of him as a composer rests however on our own emotional reaction to his music, on our own sensitivity in appreciating his art. Like the majority of twentieth century operas, Pizzetti's have not succeeded in attaining positions in the standard repertoire. In fact, his reputation appears since his death, to have suffered even something of a decline. We are still too close to Pizzetti, his work still too recent for us to tell whether they will stand the test of time. Many composers who are famous today, were little appreciated and seldom performed during their lifetimes and in the years immediately after their deaths.

Pizzetti was a prolific composer and I have confined myself to a study of five of his music dramas.

In order to assist English readers I have provided English translations of quotations of text in foreign languages. All translation are my

own work, unless otherwise stated.

Whenever a page number is underlined, it refers to the score and not to the thesis.

I wish to thank:

Miss Ann Binet, formerly Head of the Performing Arts Library of the University of the Witwatersrand, for her untiring assistance in tracing rare books and articles;

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Maestro Natale Gallini, for providing material from his private collection;

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Maestro Giuliani, of Curci, for permission to quote from the manuscript of IFIGENIA, the copyright of which is held by the House of Curci;

my supervisor, Professor U.V. Schneider, Professor Emeritus of the University of the Witwatersrand.

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PIZZETTI'S CONCEPT OF MUSIC DRAMA

The importance of Pizzetti's contributions in the field of operatic reform can only be fairly assessed if seen in relation to the musical situation prevailing in Italy during the first decades of the present century. The vogue of 'verismo' which, in the wake of the success of Mascagni's CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA (1890) and Leoncavallo's I PAGLIACCI (1892) had firmly established itself, frustrated the efforts of Busoni, Martucci, Sinigaglia, Sgambati and others who, in the 1880s, dreamed of resurrecting the lost tradition of Italian instrumental music, now influenced by the German. When the main figures of the 'generation of the eighties' - Respighi, Pizzetti, Malipiero and Casella - came of age, the Italian cultural, artistic and musical scene had very little to offer. Respighi, Casella and Malipiero went to foreign countries to study, to work, or seek contacts with exponents of the most recent trends of European music and thought. Pizzetti remained in Italy. His teacher, Giovanni Tebaldini, a pioneer in the field of Italian musicological research, had revealed to him the incomparable beauty of the Gregorian chant and the values of long forgotten works, especially those belonging to the Renaissance and early Baroque periods. The lesson of Tebaldini was never forgotten. The study of the great models of the past had shown to the young Pizzetti not only the technical, but also the infinitely expressive possibilities of both monodic and polyphonic

vocal music. This lesson was to bear conspicuous fruit in years to come. It also inspired in Pizzetti a keen interest in the revival of the Italian culture of the past, a passion which he shared with the other members of the 'generation of the eighties'. Actually this was one of the very few grounds on which Respighi, Pizzetti, Casella and Malipiero met. The 'generation of the eighties' was neither a group nor a school. Each composer followed his own direction determined by artistic formation, cultural background, aesthetic ideals and fields of preference. In Pizzetti's case, the main concern was, from the very beginning, opera and he was soon able to formulate his principles concerning the role of music in the 'dramma latino dell'avvenire', to be opposed to both the Wagnerian drama of the future and the 'debased' Italian opera of the present. Reduced to the essentials, Pizzetti's theories of opera are not far removed from those of the Florentine Camerata - via Gluck, Wagner and Debussy -, plus a particular emphasis on the ethical aspect of the music drama. Pizzetti's main preoccupation was the fusion of music and words in a well-balanced entity consisting in the main of a highly expressive, flexible recitative 'à la Monteverdi', moulded to the rhythm and inflections of the Italian language and capable of carrying the weight of the drama as well as of opening into moments of lyrical expansions. A continuous orchestral décor , unified by motivic and thematic material , provides descriptive or atmospheric effects and mirrors dramatic happenings. Pizzetti's

theorizing on operatic problems was to remain a life-long concern and was to be expounded in pages and pages of critical writings. Pizzetti's critical output, produced over a period of more than fifty years, is impressive in size and outstanding in cultural and human interest. Much of it is of primary importance in attempting an evaluation of Pizzetti, both the man and the artist, and of his aesthetic ideals. Some of Pizzetti's most significative writings - critiques, musical polemics, articles and essays - have been included in the four volumes entitled Musicisti Contemporanei [1], Intermezzi critici [2], La musica italiana dell'Ottocento [3] and Musica e dramma [4]. These papers are distinguished by literary skill, sound scholarship, deep understanding and uncompromising individualism. Musical and aesthetic evaluations are always acute and competent, although, at times, a too subjective ethical approach impairs the validity of the final judgment. An instance is the case of Debussy: referring to PELLEAS ET MELISANDE, Pizzetti defines it as "a drama in which the human and emotional content has been overcome by a content of perception" [5] and observes:

> ...the music, extraordinarily rich in colours and nuances, in marvellously evocative and suggestive sonorities, is extremely poor in vibrations of feeling. However, if we leave

1. Milan : Fratelli Treves ed., 1914.
2. Florence: Vallecchi, 1921.
3. Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1930, 1.st ed.; Turin: Edizioni Palatine, 1947, 2,nd ed.
4. Rome: Edizioni della Bussola, 1945.
5. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Intermezzi critici , op.cit., pp.125-6.

> out of consideration all those matters concerning the values and meaning of the work of art... we cannot but admit that, in this kind of musical intonation of the poetic text, in which all melodic purposes have been renounced without regret, in this subdued instrumentation, almost reduced to a murmur, where the few moments of emotion seem to be carved out as in a high-relief the musical drama exists and lives, not only better than in other works richer in melody and lyricism, but it exists and lives for the first time in the history of French musical art[1].

Not complying however with the ethical exigencies lying at the roots of Pizzetti's conception of art, PELLEAS ET MELISANDE is rejected on moral grounds:

> Debussy's music has the prodigious faculty of stifling the will to live; it has, according to Schopenhauer's precept, the faculty of immersing our spirit in the Nirvana. Is this however what Art is supposed to give us? Is this what we are supposed to demand of it? Should not Art, instead, be the exaltation of life and humanity? Let our spirit be carried away by the wave of life created by the work of art, but only in order to allow its substance to be enriched, its energy to be invigorated. Let Art not be annihilation, but experience fortifying the will and generative of love and humanity[2].

Time and again Pizzetti insists on the necessity of raising the ethos of Italian music, opera in particular, by conferring upon it higher aesthetic and ethical values. With vehemence and passion he had tilted not only at the prevailing 'verismo' but also at all for which it stood: emotional excesses, primitive eroticism, brutal situations, lack of sophistication and, especially, that commonplace

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1. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Intermezzi critici, op. cit., pp.125-6
2. ibid, pp.130-1.

pathos which so much appealed to the culturally unenterprising and anti-idealistic bourgeoisie. Unlike Malipiero[1], Pizzetti never rejected the greater representatives of the tradition of Italian opera of the nineteenth century. He wrote:

> If Rossini, the creator of such immortal masterpieces as IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA and GUGLIELMO TELL, the Jupiter of music, can be regarded as the renewer of the form and the spirit of the eighteenth century musical theatre; if we must give recognition to Donizetti's incomparably prodigious facility of invention; if Verdi can be termed the greatest of the great, because of the impetuous, overwhelming power of his dramatic expression, we can well say that Bellini is unrivalled and unique as creator of melodies of admirable design and melancholic suavity[2].

The music drama, with all its problems of a formal, musical, ethical and aesthetic nature, was to remain the focal point of Pizzetti's critical and creative interest. Pizzetti's search for the kind of music drama capable of answering to his desiderata was carried on through tireless experimentation and by means of the critical study of the solution proposed by other composers. We can trace the development of Pizzetti's music drama conception in his Introduction to Intermezzi critici. His first operatic attempt was SABINA (1897), to a libretto by Annibale Beggi. In the composer's words, it was "full of naivetá and formal incoherence, of magniloquence and pretentious emphasis"[3]. The following work, ROMEO E GIULIETTA (1899-1900, libretto by Pizzetti) in spite of many technical and stylistic flaws, shows a certain organic unity and a more coherent method of procedure,

1. See Pizzetti's open letter to Gian Francesco Malipiero: L'infezione musicale ottocentesca, in Il Pianoforte, 1922, pp.7-10.
2. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Intermezzi critici, op. cit., p.35
3. ibid, p.11.

obviously the result of two further years of study and reflection. The next step was IL CID (1902-3), to a libretto by Beggi derived from Corneille and Guillen de Castro. This work had as its model the melodramma in the tradition of Rossini, Bellini and Verdi, but enriched with "a newer and more varied vocal and instrumental technique. The same kind of opera, but brought up to date by means of the avoidance of strophic periodicity, or better, by a new form of lyricism endowed with the strength, the impetus and the beauty of that of the old Masters, but rhythmically and metrically more free and flexible"[1]. In 1904, Pizzetti and Beggi had discussed the possibility of writing a rustic drama of contemporary setting to be called LENA , revolving around characters taken from the lowest strata of society. This project was however abandoned because the crude realism of the story on which the libretto (only tentatively sketched) was based, prevented a translation into satisfactory aesthetic terms. Never again did Pizzetti's thought direct itself towards 'realismo'; his successive works were derived from Virgil (AENEAS, 1904, libretto by Beggi) and Puškin (MAZEPPA, 1905, libretto by Beggi). AENEAS and MAZEPPA represent the last of the composer's experimental works for the stage.

During this period of hesitancy and uncertain experimentation Pizzetti was however able to formulate his, admittedly not entirely new, theories on 'the latin music drama of the future':

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1. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. INTERMEZZI CRITICI, op. cit., p.16.

> For music drama I mean ... not only the one in which music is asked to make every episode, every moment of the action, every gesture and every word of the characters intelligible to the spectator, but also the one in which music is given the possibility of continuously revealing the mysterious profundity of the soul beyond the limitations which poetry cannot and will never be able to exceed. The object of poetry in a drama intended for music is to provoke and determine those revelations, to translate musically those inner feelings. 'Musicabilità', in a dramatic text, must be synonimous with 'traducibilità'[1].

This is very similar to Debussy's statement that, in a music drama "music would take over at the point at which words become powerless, with the one and only object of expressing that which nothing but music could express"[2]. We may also recall Nietzsche's theory in which he, proclaiming the origin of the tragedy from the spirit of music, believes that when the words are exhausted and no longer able to convey the artist's sentiment, they turn again into music thus coming to full circle, or Wagner's opinion that "music begins where the language ends"[3]. One of Pizzetti's major concerns was, of course, the problem of the libretto and the consequent, perennial and practically insoluble one of the weight to be given to music and drama respectively. He considered that an ideal operatic libretto could only be realized by a poet capable first of condensing the story into the few essential

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1. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Ariane et Barbebleu. Rivista Musicale Italiana, XV, 1907, p.73.
2. Myers, Rollo H. DEBUSSY, p.55.
3. Lang, Paul Henry. MUSIC IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION, p.744.

episodes necessary to the logical unfolding of the plot and, further, of reducing the verbal expression of the characters to those words capable of conveying their fundamental states of emotion. Music should then not predominate but merge with the words in a new entity, richer in musical substance and emotional vibrations. The avoidance of too lengthy passages of an introspective or self-analytical nature (an obvious allusion to Wagner's verbosity) was considered the chief prerequisite for the flexible structure of the literary text. Given these principles we can ask ourselves why Pizzetti, after preparing part of a libretto drawn from Euripides' HIPPOLYTUS- which he started to set to music, in 1907- should have agreed to D'Annunzio's suggestion to set instead his own FEDRA, a drama on the same subject[1]. The heaviness of D'Annunzio's dramatic conception, the opulence and extravagance of his inflated literary style was the very antithesis of what Pizzetti required. We may conjecture that the idea of a further and stricter collaboration with the most eminent poet of Italy (for whom Pizzetti had already written the incidental music for LA NAVE)[2], greatly appealed to the comparatively unknown musician. Perhaps, however, it was the personage of Fedra, 'the unforgettable Fedra' who, in the name of a 'personal, arcane law' overthrows the sacred laws of the ancestors, who had set fire to the composer's imagination because of the analogy

1. According to what Pizzetti writes in a passage quoted by his son Bruno in ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI: CRONOLOGIA E BIBLIOGRAFIA, at p.65, it seems that D'Annunzio decided to write FEDRA expressly for the composer. I have however been unable to find support for this in the other sources.
2. LA NAVE (1905-7) was first performed at the Teatro Argentina, in Rome, in 1908. In 1902 Pizzetti started writing the incidental music for D'Annunzio's LA PISANELLE, performed in Paris, in 1913.

between the human and divine creature, as delineated by the poet, and the heroines who were taking shape in Pizzetti's mind. This collaboration between D'Annunzio and Pizzetti was more successful than any of the various attempts by other Italian composers to set the poet's works as operas. FEDRA is, in spite of a few weaknesses, a positive result (the same applies, in my opinion, but perhaps more arguably to the later D'Annunzio-Pizzetti LA FIGLIA DI IORIO), whilst Franchetti's LA FIGLIA DI IORIO (1906); Mascagni's LA PARISINA (1913); Zandonai's FRANCESCA DA RIMINI (1914); Montemezzi's LA NAVE (1918) must be considered as either partial or total failures[1]. D'Annunzio's eulogistic remark that in the score of FEDRA "not only is there not a single note contrasting the spontaneous rhythm of the verse, but every note increases the expressive intensity of all the verbal and rhythmic elements without ever changing, or distorting them"[2], seems to me, paradoxically, to point out the limitations imposed upon the composer by the literary text rather than to emphasize the qualities of the work. In spite of wide divergencies in matters of artistic and moral principles D'Annunzio thought that he had found in Pizzetti (whom he had nicknamed Ildebrando da Parma)an ideal collaborator. He therefore consented to Pizzetti's request to be allowed to set to music LA FIACCOLA SOTTO IL MOGGIO - one of D'Annunzio's most forceful dramas. In 1914 Pizzetti embarked on the composition of this work,

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1. At different stages of his life Puccini contemplated the idea of a collaboration with D'Annunzio. Many subjects were considered: IL CECCO D'ASCOLI, or L'ALCHIMISTA (1900); PARISINA (1905); LA ROSA DI CIPRO (1906) and LA CROCIATA DEGLI INNOCENTI , but nothing materialized.
2. Quoted by Guido M. Gatti in ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI, 2nd Italian ed., op.cit. p.18.

which was to be entitled GIGLIOLA (after the main character) only to realize that the path he was following would lead nowhere, and that no poet or librettist other than himself, could in fact realize his own vision of the music drama.

A few decades earlier, a young musician in his early twenties, a debutant composer who had stirred the unimaginative and apathetic world of the eighteen-sixties with a daringly revolutionary opera called MEFISTOFELE, had embodied in Italy the Wagnerian ideals of the poet-musician. This was Arrigo Boito, librettist and composer, who not only wrote the librettos of his own two operas MEFISTOFELE and NERONE but was destined to become Verdi's splendid poet-collaborator for OTELLO and FALSTAFF. To Boito Pizzetti had dedicated one of his most passionate and enthusiastic essays. He had recognized in him "the artist who, more than anybody else, was to be regarded as an example, and who, more than anybody else, had proved, with his work, the vital importance of being in possession of a deep and historical culture"[1]. As one of Boito's "most ardent followers", he was eager "to make the most of his admirable lesson"[1]. Boito's influence upon Pizzetti was profound and consistent. Inexplicably, it seems to have escaped the attention of the critics. In the similarly-minded Boito Pizzetti saw the pattern of the militant critic-musician almost fanatically devoted to the cause of his art; of the artist restlessly pursuing the loftiest of ideals. Pizzetti had, in common with Boito, the passion for brooding over problems of artistic and philosophical nature, the depth and breadth of cultural interest,

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1. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Musicisti contemporanei, op. cit., p.58.

an uncompromising moral attitude and a certain pretentiousness with regard to the choice of the subjects for his music dramas. Like Boito, the culturally minded Pizzetti had soon, and inevitably, come to the conclusion that the elaboration of both the musical and literary text of the music drama should stem simultaneously from the same creative impulse. Of the twelve music dramas which appeared in fairly regular succession after FEDRA, seven were set to librettos written by the composer himself. They are: DEBORA E JAELE (1918-21); LO STRANIERO (1923-25); FRA GHERARDO (1926-27); ORSEOLO (1933-35); L'ORO (1939-42); VANNA LUPA (1945-47); CAGLIOSTRO (1952). Another four librettos were derived by Pizzetti from pre-existing literary sources: IFIGENIA (1950); LA FIGLIA DI IORIO (1953-54); ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE (1956-57) and CLITENNESTRA (1962-64). Pizzetti's only comedy, IL CALZARE D'ARGENTO (1959-60) was set to a libretto commissioned by the composer to the novelist Riccardo Bacchelli.[1] LA SACRA RAPPRESENTAZIONE DI ABRAM E D'ISAAC, which started life as incidental music for the performance of Feo Belcari's homonymous work in Florence in 1917, was revised (with the addition of two further musical episodes) in 1926 and had the recitative set to music in 1928. John C.G. Waterhouse suggests in his catalogue of Pizzetti's works placed at the end of his article on Pizzetti in INTERNATIONAL CYCLOPEDIA OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS (1975, p.168) that it be considered a one-act opera. As however observed by Pizzetti's associate Guido M. Gatti,

1. The dates of composition of Pizzetti's music dramas are those given by Bruno Pizzetti in ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI, op. cit., in Bibliografia/A. I have however discovered a few discrepancies in the musical setting of some of the works. As concerns DEBORA E JAELE, for instance, the date given in the text is, in one instance, 1916 (p.255), in another, 1917 (p.159).

LA SACRA RAPPRESENTAZIONE DI ABRAM E D'ISAAC remains, even in the 1928 final version, "a series of lyrical fragments...showing, in the lack of a well-defined musical rhythm and of a proper dramatic structure" [1] (the lack of the latter can be inferred from the examples given in the following pages) the nature of the form for which it was originally conceived. That Pizzetti did not consider this 'sacra rappresentazione' as an opera is supported by the fact that we do not find it mentioned at all in the text of a speech written by Pizzetti in 1935 - "From FEDRA to ORSEOLO" [2] - for a radio broadcast, in which the composer deals at length with the music dramas he had written between 1909-1935 in relation to his aesthetic tenets. Back to the Boito-Pizzetti comparison, we note that Pizzetti, again like Boito, believed in great themes taken from history or from the realms of legend and myth in which, as Wagner had taught decades before, life can be seen in its most purely human form. For DEBORA E JAELE and LO STRANIERO Pizzetti found inspiration in

> that wonderful world in which...we can find ourselves, people of all the world, with our passions and aspirations, with our vices, sins and faults as well as with our sadness, misery and hope. [3]

FRA GHERARDO, ORSEOLO and VANNA LUPA were based on more or less

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1. Gatti, Guido M. ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI, op. cit., pp.65-6.
2. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Da FEDRA a ORSEOLO, in: Bruno Pizzetti, ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI:CRONOLOGIA E BIBLIOGRAFIA, op. cit., pp.253-58.
3. Gatti, Guido M., op. cit., p.23.

3.

La Rapresentatione di Abraam & Isaac suo figliuolo.



Lochio si dice che la prima porta
per laqual lintelletto intrede, e gusta
la seconda e ludit la uoce scorta
che fa lu mente nostra esser robusta
però uoi udirete quanto importa
recitare una storia santa & giusta
ma se uolete intendere un misterio
state deuoti & con buon desiderio

Nel Genesi la santa Bibbia narra
come dio uolse prouar lubidienza
del Patriarcha Abram ipso di Sarra
& per un Angiol gli parlo in presenza
allhor Abram gli suoi orecchi sbarra
ingenochiato con gran riuerenza
hauendo il suo dissio certo disposto
di uoler far quato dio li haueßi ipposto

Dipoi gli disse togli il tuo figliuolo
unigenito isac liqual tu ami
& di lui fammi sacrificio solo
& mostrerotti il monte perche brami
saper il luogo & non menar lo stuolo
ma chio tel mostri ero senza mi enfiami
cammina per la via aspra & deserta
& fammi sol del tuo figliuolo offerta

A

First page of the libretto of "La Rapresentatione di Abraam & Isaac suo figliuolo," 1588, by Feo Belcari (1410-1484); first performed at the Chiesa di S. Maria Maddelena di Castello in Florence, 1449.

questo precetto a tutti tiene occulto
Abraam di fanta ubidienza fonte
mi meno fegò fanza dirmi questo
ma quando fumo falici in tal monte
mi fe fi diuin precetto manifesto
& con buon modo, & con parole prõte
a questa morte mi disposi presto
& legomi le man cudo spogliaro
e in fu le legne mhebbe echiocato
Alzando il brazzo per volermi dare
di questo gran coltello in su la testa
langiolo di Dio li comincio a parlare.
prendendo la sua man, dizendo questa
morte, non uoglio che tu faccia fare
al tuo figliuol. E non gli dar molesta,
alhor mi sciolse, & con gran riuerenza
rendemo laude a Dio di tal clemenza
Volosi Abraã, & vide un bel montone
posto tra prun miracolosamente
ilqual offerse con gran diuotione
sopra del fuoco, per me innocente
di nuouo Idio gli fe promessione
di molti beni, e come tutta gente
sarebbe nel suo seme benedetta
dunque felice fei madre diletta.

Sarra marauigliandosi dice.

Pel tuo parlare io son tutta smarrita
che li spiriti miei sento mancare
al mondo non fu mai tal cosa udita
& stupefatta flo pure a pensare
quel chai parlato, & tutta impaurita
fol de laudire, tu mifai tremare,
& vrggio ben che condretta d'amor
hebbi ragion di star in gran dolore.
Miracolosamente i t'acquistai
con miracol maggior sei ritornato,
perche finiti son tutti i mie guai
con tutto il cor il signor sia laudato
per satisfare al dolor chio portai
uo che si balli, & canti, in questo lato
ciascun in compagnia de langioli buono
ringratii Dio di questo magno dono

Abraã, & quelli dui Angeli, luno che an
nũtio la festa, & laltro che gli appari in
sul monte, & tutti insieme fanno un bal
lo cantando questa laude.

Chi serue a Dio con purita di core
Viue contento, & poi saluato more

Se la virtu dispiace un poco al senso
nel suo principio, quando e esercitato
lalma che sente uero gaudio immenso
dentro dal cor, e tutta confortata,
la mente sua si truoua radiata
da quella luce del sommo splendere,
Quando ordinati son tutti i sumi
dentro, e di fuori, al nostro . . no Dio
alhor si veggon quelli eccelsi lumi
che fanno diuer lhuom col core giulio
cantando uan per un santo disio,
le gran dolcezze del perfetto amore
Van giubilando, e dicon gente sciolta,
cercando pace ne mondan diletti
se uoi volete hauer letitia molta
seruite a Dio con tutti e uostri effetti
eglie quel sonte di virtu perfetti
che fa giocondo ogni suo seruitore.
Chi serue a Dio con purita di core
Viue contento, e poi saluato more.

Fatto il ballo Langiolo licentia il po
polo, & dice.

Chiaro cõpreso hauete il magno frutto
del obseruar tutti i diuin precetti
pero chel nostro Dio Signor del tutto
ha sempre cura de suoi serui eletti
se disporrete trarne buon construtto
terrete e uostri cor da colpe netti,
e inamorati di santa obedienza
ciascun si parta con nostra licenza.

EL FINE.

In Fiorenze. M. D. LIII:

Last page of the libretto. Attention is called to the third and fourth lines from the top second column, in which directions are given regarding the dancing of a "ballo" and the singing of a "laude."

fictitious episodes projected against authentic historical backgrounds (Medieval Parma; seventeeth century Venice and Medieval Florence, respectively). Also of historical derivation was ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE, enriched however with overwhelming religious overtones transcending the mere historical facts. From the fertile source of Greek mythology were taken the subjects of FEDRA, IFIGENIA and CLITENNESTRA. CAGLIOSTRO, based on the adventures of the well-known eighteenth century adventurer, remains the most atypical of Pizzetti's music dramas. The delightful comedy IL CALZARE D'ARGENTO was derived from a 'chanson de geste' full of charm and pathos.

Pizzetti did not altogheter discard subjects offered by ordinary life provided that, like LA FIGLIA DI IORIO and L'ORO (both placed in timeless contexts) "they would appear in eternal and universal aspects and not in the realistic light of temporal and transient existence"[1]. This tendency to consider life from the cosmic and universal aspects, together with that of considering it as a conflict of anthitetical forces (an obvious derivation from those romantic ideologies which, in Italy, had found in Boito a most fervent supporter) is evident throughout Pizzetti's work. It is well illustrated in his article Musica e dramma, the special interest of which lies in the identification of drama with life:

> To live - what does it mean? Is it perhaps to breathe, walk, eat, drink and sleep? Certainly not. To aspire to a state which is not material, to put forth your efforts to attain it: this certainly means to live. Love for an individual, for greatness and glory, may be devoid of egotism. Higher still is the love of humanity,

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1. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Musica e dramma (English translation) in The Musical Quarterly, vol. XVII, 1931, p.424.

> the aspiration to an activity for the happiness of others, any effort productive of good and consolation to others; highest of all stands the will and strength to make sacrifices for others, the joy of giving for no other reason than to dedicate one's self to a noble cause. This certainly means to live. Now when we realize that all efforts to do good are constantly in danger of being frustrated by the forces of evil, those mysterious, obscure, and manifold agencies of deception and temptation which are awake and active in every man, then we will understand the drama of life. Therefore all that pertains to the life of man can be made the subject of the dramatist's art[1].

This concept is then translated into aesthetic-philosophical principles according to which the conflicting elements of dramatic music are nothing but the reflection, the manifestation of the antagonistic forces inherent in human nature:

> Dramatic music should express life in action - conflicts of matter and mind, of instincts and aspirations, of egoism and moral duty; and lyrical music should express the transcendence, the overcoming of these conflicts. There is no music other than these two types, not even outside the music for the stage. There is no true or great art, which is not the expression of a conflict and its resolution, of a drama in which individuals or sentiments, or ideas are involved, and its catharsis. Symphonic music obeys the same laws, even though it be without words; it must have dramatic life to be music at all, that is, it must have a content born of conflict, lest it be a mere juggling with sound and noise[2].

In Pizzetti's music dramas we find conflicts and divisions of every kind: the grand-scale ones derived from biblical and mythological stories; those at work in the soul of an individual at war with himself or with the outside world; the external conflicts resulting

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1. Pizzetti Ildebrando. Musica e dramma (English translation), op. cit. pp. 424-25.
2. ibid, pp.426.

from clashes of moral, social, political and religious ideologies. DEBORA E JAELE depicts the antagonism between the prophetess Debora, as unyielding as the law of the God whom she represents, and Jaele who, having fallen in love with the enemy king tries to oppose the law of duty and tradition, and succumbs. In both ORSEOLO and VANNA LUPA the main dramatic conflict results from resistance to a new order on the part of the representatives of a world on the verge of collapse. L'ORO deals with a socio-ideological struggle, in which materialistic considerations play a great part, between groups and individuals, whilst ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE presents an opposition of temporal and spiritual values. IL CALZARE D'ARGENTO concerns itself with the polarity between the artist and the indifferent world. CLITENNESTRA portrays a gigantic clash of the powers of evil, paradoxically pitted against each other. In the 'love-redemption' dramas of LO STRANIERO, FRA GHERARDO and LA FIGLIA DI IORIO, as well as in IFIGENIA (as concerns Agamennone), we are shown conflicts "of instincts and aspirations, of egoism and moral duty"[1] taking place in that field of human battle which is the human soul.

Pizzetti was conscious of the fact that in the case of the traditional opera "a hedonistic means to a social end"[2], dramatic shortcomings could be ignored in view of the entertainment offered, but this state of affairs was incompatible with the exigencies of the new cultural world. Wagner with his reforms Mussorgsky, Debussy,

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1. See p. 17 in this thesis.
2. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Musica e dramma (English translation), op. cit., p.425.

Bloch (whose MACBETH Pizzetti took as a model), and Boito as well as the Verdi of the last period, had pointed the direction of a more dignified conception, a more consistent musico-dramatic realization of the lyrical drama. From the example of these composers is derived Pizzetti's artistic principle and some elements of his musical language. This last however is enriched and given its particular and unmistakeably individual physiognomy by elements drawn from the rich sources of Medieval church music - which influenced his melodic and harmonic idiom - and of sixteenth and seventeenth century Italian music - which determined the severe grandeur of his polyphonic choral writing and the plastic expressiveness of his declamatory style. Pizzetti's declamation is generally recognized as one of the most interesting elements of his musical technique. In Guido M. Gatti's definition, Pizzetti's is not "the declamation of Gluck which, although well articulated still retains a certain pomp and solemnity which at times cools down its expressive fervour...; nor Wagner's 'Wortermelodie' which, although shaped according to the rise and fall of the tonic accent is so much bound to the orchestra as to sound as a part of it. It is not the recitative of Debussy, adhering to the rhythm of the words but tending too much to repose, thus creating a vague and mysterious, suggestive, halo around the word"[1]. Pizzetti's is rather a sung declamation, "a melodic

1. Gatti, Guido M. ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI, op. cit., pp.33-4.

organism with strong rhythmic vitality, born of the word , the emotional values of which it intensifies and exalts. It seems to me that, if there is a type of declamation that presages that of Pizzetti more than any other, it is that of Monteverdi. In both composers the verbal values, although maintaining their integrity, acquire from music a new, more vigorous life and a more accentuated dramatic relief. Of Monteverdi's music Pizzetti wrote:

> It is a music truly conceived in the spirit of drama (or, if you prefer, drama truly conceived in the spirit of music). Music which is not merely associated with the words, but which is born of them according to the constantly changeable exigencies of the life of the drama [1].

It is no wonder that Pizzetti, steeped as he was in the great tradition of the past, could never bring himself to accept the most extreme innovations introduced by the revolutionary techniques of the Viennese school, or of Stravinsky (admirer though he was of The Rite of Spring and of the Symphony of Psalms). Schoenberg, he never understood. If Stravinsky had proclaimed that music, incapable of expressing human feelings and aspirations had to remain a disinterested play of lines and sonorities, Schoenberg, more arrogant, had, in Pizzetti's words, affirmed that

> music, not only should not have any relationship with passions and feelings, but not even a relationship with the 'concrete' world. No more forms, therefore, because their geometrical definition could suggest associations with other tangible, and too material forms [2].

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1. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Favellar cantando. MUSICA E DRAMMA, p. 108.
2. Quoted by Andrea della Corte in Appunti sugli scritti critici di Pizzetti. La Rassegna Musicale, 1940, p. 374.

This kind of art in which the thought, by means of a process of sublimation and rarefaction volatilizes into the empirean region of abstraction, was defined by Pizzetti as "the unnatural manifestation of a sterile cerebral libido - the libido of pure thought"[1]. Pizzetti's attitude towards music can be compared to that of ideologico-ethical composers like Wagner, Friedrick Klose, Hans Pfitzner and Paul Hindemith. Like them, he believed in the supreme, ethical significance of music, and wrote:

> I have faith in Art, expression of humanity and eternal beauty,...revealer of truth, as in a form of religion[2].

To turn the soul towards all that is pure and noble, to help man to understand, suffer and accept life, to console him for the tremendous ineluctability of suffering, - this should be the aim of the true artist -:

> the artist who, in his own language, brings to his fellow-men a word of goodness; or is capable of provoking or stimulating goodness; who can induce his fellow-men, even in the most terrible, most tragic and darkest hours to look around at the beauty of the world - this artist, be he a poor man, an humble person resembling millions of others is like a priest, almost like a saint[3].

The music drama, expression of life in all its fullness, was considered by Pizzetti not only as the supreme form of art, but the only one capable of carrying the burden of ethical concepts

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1. Quoted by Andrea della Corte in Appunti sugli studi critici di Pizzetti, p.374.
2. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Introduction to INTERMEZZI CRITICI, op.cit., pp.30-1.
3. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Introduction to MUSICA E DRAMMA , op. cit., p. 22.

and ideals. To serve such a noble purpose, it had however to be drastically removed from the too-restricting sphere of melodramme, rather trying to emulate that model of all perfections represented by the drama of classical antiquity. History, the Bible, the realms of legend and of Greek myth in which "the fabulous can touch the human with its wing"[1], provided the framework of Pizzetti's dramatic stories. We find stories of love, of hatred, of war and of death conjuring up the image of a hostile, pitiless world, the desolation of which is sometimes counteracted by the power of love and enlightened - in one instance - by the smile and songs of the minstrel Giuliano, the gentle protagonist of Pizzetti's only comedy IL CALCARE D'ARGENTO.

The principles on which Pizzetti's "highly individual attitude to opera"[2] is based, are, in Colin Mason's opinion, "only hazily defined"[2] in Guido M. Gatti's book ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI. This is, however, to the best of my knowledge, still the most exhaustive, if somewhat out-dated, work on the composer. Throughout his life Pizzetti was to remain basically faithful to his tenets, as musical, ethical and aesthetic approach was concerned. From the point of view of operatic dramaturgy, we find him however very often contradicting himself in matter of clarity, terseness and dramatic viability. Some of Pizzetti's works, especially those belonging to his middle period (ORSEOLO, ORO, VANNA LUPA and CAGLIOSTRO) are marred by uninspired and faulty librettos showing Pizzetti's

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1. Brereton, Geoffrey. A SHORT HISTORY OF FRENCH LITERATURE, p.147.
2. See p.vi in this thesis.

limitations as a librettist-creator. (His ideals on the combined librettist-composer were fully realized only in DEBORA E JAELE and, to a lesser extent, in LO STRANIERO and FRA GHERARDO). As a librettist-adaptator, Pizzetti revealed a much more remarkable talent. This is shown in the works to be investigated in this thesis. All are derived from pre-existing literary sources and chosen because of their comparatively outstanding literary and dramatic merits, so satisfactorily musically realized as to support any claim to Pizzetti's greatness.

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CHAPTER I

FEDRA

Pizzetti's penchant for classical culture went back to the years of his early youth. What it was to remain a constant feature of his intellectual and artistic make-up is witnessed by the many works derived from this personal source of inspiration to be found among his compositions. It is therefore not surprising that Pizzetti should-for his first dramatic work- have focused his attention on a Greek tragedy - Euripides' HIPPOLYTUS. After himself preparing part of a libretto derived from Euripides's tragedy, Pizzetti however agreed to D'Annunzio's suggestion that he set to music the latter's FEDRA, a text hardly answering the composer's dramatic ideals but containing a fascinating version of the story of Hippolytus which Pizzetti found of absorbing human and dramatic interest.

The incident of Phaedra's incestuous love for her step-son Hippolytus is, as Robert Graves' opinion, borrowed either from the Egyptian Tales of the Two Brothers or from a common Canaanite source[1]. It has also several Greek parallels, such as the story of Biadice's love for her nephew Phryxus or that of Phylonome's attempted seduction of her step-son Peneo. The first dramatic treatment of the myth comes from Euripides who seems to have written two tragedies on the subject. The first, THE VEILED HIPPOLYTUS, was condemned by the dramatist's contemporaries on the ground of immorality. The text has been lost. The surviving HIPPOLYTUS (distinguished by the ancient grammarians

1. Graves, Robert, THE GREEK MYTHS:1, Penguin Books, 1977, p.359.

as THE CROWNED HIPPOLYTUS) the over-sexed Phaedra of the first version had been transformed into a modest and chaste woman, victim of the machinations of the goddess Aphrodite. Euripides story runs as follows: offended with Hippolytus (son of Theseus by Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons) for refusing to worship her and favouring instead Artemis, Aphrodite contrives a series of circumstances destined to lead to inevitable catastrophe. Thus Phaedra falls in love with Hippolytus, fails to seduce him and, before hanging herself, she leaves to her husband Theseus a letter in which she accuses Hippolytus of having tried to violate her. Theseus confronts Hippolytus and, refusing to believe his protestations of innocence, places upon him a curse. A marine monster, sent by the Sea-God Poseidon at Theseus' request, frightens the horses of Hippolytus's chariot, thus causing his death. He lives however long enough to be reconciled with his father who is shattered by self-reproach after Artemis' revelation of the truth.

Other dramatists had re-told the mythological tale according to their own sensitivities, dramatic instinct or in the spirits of their own times. Sophocles' PHAEDRA seems to have resembled Euripides' works in subject, although differing in treatment. Placed chronologically between Euripides' two versions of HIPPOLYTUS, Sophocles' drama has come down to us so incomplete as to preclude a fair judgement.

The Phaedra presented by Seneca in the play named after the heroine, is a lecherous woman, a kind of maenad overwhelmed with sensuous desire seemingly modelled after the Phaedra depicted by Ovid in his HEROIDES (poetic letters by mythological figures). But the Senecaean

Phaedra who, without restraint, discloses her love by confronting Hippolytus directly, is not altogether deprived of a sense of guilt and dignity. When,in the last speech pronounced over the body of the dead Hippolytus she says:

> Into this wicked heart I'll thrust the sword
> That shall set Phaedra free from life and sin[1]

and later welcomes death , the "sole remedy for errant love..., lost honour's only ornament"[1] as a liberating force, she becomes tragically human. Even in death she retains that "desperate pride of her passion"[2] which, according to Ettore Paratore, is the distinctive and most original feature of Seneca's heroine.

During the sixteenth century two works derived from the myth of Phaedra - Zara's IPPOLITO (1558) and Garnier's HIPPOLYTE (written before 1572) - enjoyed a certain popularity. It was not however until Racine produced his tragedy a century later that a work on this subject approached the purity of manner and dramatic vigour of the classical sources. The French dramatist's PHEDRE was first performed on January 1, 1677, a few days before Pradon's PHEDRE ET HIPPOLYTE. In spite of its success being at first threatened by a rival clique supporting Pradon's much inferior play, Racine's PHEDRE was soon to win the favour and acclaim of critics and audiences alike and become one of the most frequently performed plays of the French stage. The various derivations from classical (Euripides, Virgil, Ovid, Seneca and Plutarch) and French authors (Garnier, La Pinelière, Quinalt and Thomas Corneille) do not

1. Seneca, Lucius Annaeus. PHAEDRE, in FOUR TRAGEDIES AND OCTAVIA (Tr. E.F. Watling), p.146.
2. Paratore, Ettore, La morte di Fedra in Seneca e nel D'Annunzio, in STUDI D'ANNUNZIANI, p.48.

diminish the originality of Racine's PHEDRE, defined by Voltaire as "the masterpiece of the human mind"[1]. As far as the plot is concerned, the most conspicuous departure from the classical version of the story is Racine's introduction of the character of Aricie[2], the only survivor of the former ruling house of Athens destroyed by the usurper Thesée and with whom Hippolyte falls in love. Phèdre's jealousy of Aricie thus becomes one of the motivating forces of the drama. The true novelty is however to be found in Racine's delineation of Phèdre, whose passion, anguish and feeling of guilt are explored and analyzed with unprecedented perception and psychological insight.

It is only with Miguel de Unamuno (after the nineteenth century treatment of the subject at the hands of Marbach, Swinburne, Konrad and Momerie) that Christian feelings - already present in the typically Jansenist obsession with sin characterizing Racine's Phèdre - are again attributed to Phaedra. In Unamuno's FEDRA (1911) the myth is interpreted in the light of the author's principles of religious existentialism according to which anguish is a positive feeling which can lead to a personal discovery of God. Unlike Racine's Phèdre, for whom "the universe is ..., in every region, nothing but a place of expiation and torture"[3], Unamuno's Fedra will learn through error and sin, pay for them, and eventually win over to peace.

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1. Quoted by J. Cairncross, in Introduction to PHAEDRA, in Racine PHAEDRA AND OTHER PLAYS (Tr. J. Cairncross), p.129.
2. This character is not however "Racine's invention" as Remo Giomini affirms in ENCICLOPEDIA DELLO SPETTACOLO (p.124). In the AENEID (Book VII) Virgil mentions a girl named Aricia who had married Hippolytus after he had been brought back to life by Aesculapius, a view shared by the first-second century A.D. writer Philostratus. Racine himself admits, in his Preface to PHEDRE, having borrowed the character of Aricie from Virgil and 'certain authors'.
3. Quoted by J. Cairncross, op. cit., p.138.

D'Annunzio's FEDRA, a three-act play in verse, was begun in 1908, two years before Unamuno's drama of the same name. Adhering fundamentally to the classical myth, although drawing extensively from his predecessors (Euripides, Seneca and, to a lesser extent, Racine) D'Annunzio re-created the story in his own terms, also changing characters at will. One of his most felicituous innovations was the idea of opening the play with a scene almost entirely derived from Euripides' THE SUPPLIANT WOMEN[1]. This scene in which Etra, the aged queen mother of Teseo together with the mothers of the Seven Heroes who fell at the Cadmean Gates in Thebes, are heard lamenting the loss of their sons whilst awaiting the return of Teseo's expedition aimed at the recovery of the dead for honourable burial, has great dramatic relevance. It not only sets the atmosphere of the first 'nocturnal' act from which the drama takes its impetus, but immediately conjures up vistas of a world of legend and of heroic and supernatural deeds - a world in which men and Gods are still interrelated and in which Fedra, incandescent with passion, jealousy, vehemence and exaltation fits naturally. The character of the Theban Slave was probably intended as the counterpart of Racine's Aricie; the incident of Fedra stabbing the slave with her hair-pin was however most probably inspired by the mythical episode according to which Phaedra, whilst secretly observing Hippolytus training in the gymnasium would jab, in frustrated passion, the leaves of a nearby myrth-tree with her jewelled hair-pin. Ippolito's planned abduction of Elena, in Act II,

1. Eurito's account of Teseo's expedition in Act 1 is also almost entirely taken (but much shortened) from the analogous scene in Euripides' THE SUPPLIANT WOMEN.

is an arbitrary deviation from the myth. It was Theseus who, after Phaedra's death, abducted Helen, then but a child (and afterwards celebrated as the cause of the Trojan war) from Sparta, with the aid of his friend Pirithous. Here again, as in the case of the episode of the Theban Slave, D'Annunzio was exploiting the motive of jealousy as an added incentive to Fedra's desire for revenge. One of the most original aspectsof D'Annunzio's FEDRA is that the heroine does not atone for her crime by committing suicide. She is in fact depicted as an arch-rebel who allows herself, in a world dominated by Fate, the liberty of choice (certainly not in a Christian sense, as Guido M. Gatti seems to suggest)[1] and obeys no laws but those dictated by her own passion, of the illicit nature of which she is perfectly aware. One may well wonder why the following lines (found in Act III) so essential to the definition of the personality of the D'Annunzian's Fedra were not retained in the libretto:

> Il mio nome è ineffabile
> come il nome di chi sovverte antiche
> leggi per porre una sua legge arcana
>
> (My name is ineffable like the name
> of those who overthrow ancient laws
> to establish a mysterious law of their own.)[2]

When, after Ippolito's rejection, she plans to have him in death, she challenges first the all-powerful Aphrodite:

> O dea
> tu non hai più potenza.
> Spenti sono i tuoi fuochi. Un fuoco bianco

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1. Gatti, Guido M. ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI (English edition), p.21.
2. D'Annunzio, Gabriele. FEDRA, in TRAGEDIE, SOGNI E MISTERI, p.375.

io porto all'Ade. Ippolito
io l'ho velato perchè l'amo. E' mio
là dove tu regni. Io vinco.
(O Goddess ,
you have lost your power.
Your fires are out. I will carry
to Hades a purer fire. I have veiled Hippolytus
because I love him. He will be mine there
where you do not reign. I win.) [1]

Then she defies Artemis, again proclaiming her victory

E giungere col dardo
non puoi l'altra mia vita. Ancora vinco! [1]
(Your arrow cannot reach me
in my coming life. I win again!)

before dying struck by the unfailing arrow of the bloodless Artemis symbolized, with happy poetic invention, by the lucent bow of the crescent moon. Fedra's triumphant defiance of death is much like Isolde's erotic catharsis, with a tinge of the necrophilism of Salome. The ego-flattering pleasure of winning over mortals and immortals is however only, and exclusively a feature of this D'Annunzian heroine. The dramatic structure of FEDRA is unquestionably faulty. Too many lengthy passages of descriptive, narrative or simply eruditely informative nature hinder the pace of the dramatic action, moreover unnecessarily complicated by the introduction of episodes such as that of the ritual killing of the Theban Slave (of purely decadent stamp) or the essentially decorative one of the Phoenician Merchant. Nevertheless D'Annunzio gives us some memorable scenes: in the 'cyclically' constructed Act I, the opening dirge of the Suppliants, among whom Fedra, her flame-coloured robe strikingly contrasting with their mourning garbs, makes a sensational first appearance and the closing scene, in which the Suppliant Women,

1. D'Annunzio, Gabriele. FEDRA, op. cit., p.380

carrying the urns containing the ashes of their sons, silently file past Fedra, standing motionless at the altar of Zeus in the glow of the fire of the nautical holocaust after the sacrifice of the Theban Slave. Also splendidly theatrical is Act III, in which everything seems to be enwrapped in the aura of magic and splendour surrounding the mythological deeds - from the setting (representing a deep ravine on the margin of the sea behind which the woods of the Saronian Artemis and the hills of Troezen are seen in the crepuscular light) to the action - beginning with Eurito's narration of Hippolytus ' death and ending with the death of Fedra, who, 'smiling upon the stars', enters the kingdom of perennial night, eternal life, immortal longins and sublimated passions. Poetically, FEDRA is one of D'Annunzio's finest works: the style is lofty, lyrical, epic, solemn or impetuous according to situations and the imagery, born of a mind nurtured on classical poetry, is sophisticated and evocative. Considered in its entirety FEDRA could hardly have represented Pizzetti's "realization of his visionary musing on the tragedy of Euripides"[1], as assumed by Guido M. Gatti. The composer's imagination may however been stimulated by the characters "fundamentally the same as in the myth but re-interpreted, re-created, re-animated by the poet who, perhaps better than any other modern poet, could confer a feeling of actuality upon their sensitiveness, crude, morbid and exasperated, and yet tragically human and worthy of pity"[2]. These words by the composer seem to me however to

1. Gatti, Guido M. Gabriele D'Annunzio and the Italian Opera-Composers. The Musical Quarterly, 1924, vol. IV, p. 285.
2. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. IL TEATRO ALLA SCALA, 1956, p. 360.

convey more Pizzetti's than D'Annunzio's approach to characterization. As concerns the FEDRA libretto, it is nothing but a much compressed version of the play, of which it retains the division into three acts and , practically, all the episodes (the only exceptions being the omission of the scene between Fedra and the Aedo at the beginning of Act II and slight changes at the opening of Act III).[1]

— oOo —

The Prelude to the opera is an extended instrumental section marked 'Appassionato, ma molto sostenuto' which resembles the Preludes to TRISTAN UND ISOLDE in its restless wavering motion, tonal ambiguity, $\frac{6}{8}$ time, conspicuous chromaticism and increasing and decreasing tension. It lacks however Wagner's textural and harmonic richness. The FEDRA Prelude, rather than giving a synthesis of the plot, anticipates it by setting the emotional and psychological background for this story about the destructive force of passion and the cathartic power of death. From the very opening bars we are taken into the world of Fedra's tortuous passion, musically symbolized by a well-articulated phrase outlined by the unaccompanied violas:

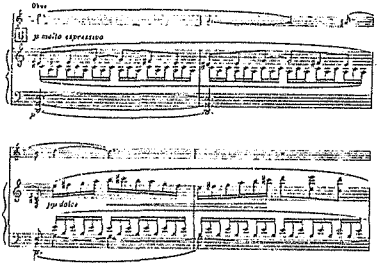
Exs. 1A, 1B, 1C, p.1



1. As a matter of interest, other composers who set the story of Phaedra to music are: Rameau (HIPPOLYTE ET ARICIE, 1733); Gluck (IPPOLITO, 1744); Tretta (IPPOLITO ED ARICIA, 1759); Paisiello (FEDRA, 1788); Orlandi (FEDRA, 1820); Mayr (FEDRA, 1820); Massenet (incidental music for Racine's PHEDRE, 1900); Auric (music for the ballet PHEDRE derived by Cocteau from Racine, 1949); Maurice Ohana (SYLLABAIRE POUR PHEDRE, 1967) and S.Busaotti (LE RACINE, PIANOBAR POUR PHEDRE,1981).

The salient features of it are: the opening falling and rising interval of the perfect fourth (Ex.1A); the swaying motive of Ex.1B and the descending quintuplet figure, Ex.1C. During the process of thematic build-up various orchestral instruments, notably the woodwind, add their voices to those of the violas and in the new textural and harmonic context the motivic elements of Ex.1 gain greater relief and stronger dramatic and emotional impact. The second theme is stated by the violins over slow-moving second violas and cellos and a rippling movement in the first violas over a pedal-point of super-imposed fifths:

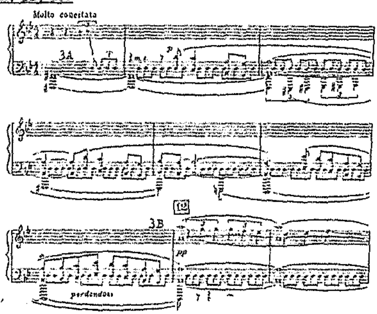
Ex.2, p.4



Above this structure the oboe hints at a somewhat modified Ex.1A, flutes and clarinets tracing modal scale passages (E Dorian, b.3-4; F Lydian, b.8-10; D-flat Lydian, b.12-13, pp.4,5) over the very light orchestral structure. Noticeable is the strong resemblance of Ex.2, associated, in the course of the opera with Aphrodite, to Ex.1B (one of the motivic elements of the theme of Fedra's passion) but, Fedra's lust having been aroused by Aphrodite's curse, it is quite natural that the two musical

ideas should possess similar connotations. The silver tones of harp and celesta add piquancy to the languor of the 'Lento, dolcissimo' passage (p.6) in which all the motives and themes so far heard combine and entwine in a fine network of sound slowly expanding into a fortissimo orchestral statement of Ex.1B with its original shape modified by the downward movement. As the climactic tension subsides the tempo changes to 'Molto concitato' (and the time signature to $\frac{4}{4}$) for the last section of the Prelude introducing the important theme of the Suppliant Women which does not however extend beyond Act I. This theme consists of two melodic phrases:

Exs. 3A, 3B, p.8



the first announced by the violins, the second by combined oboes and clarinets, moving lugubriously with a sombre effect over an insistently reiterated *D* pedal rhythmicized in triplets in muted violas, irregularly supported by sustained notes and melodic motives in the bass, and suggestively exploiting the plaintive quality of the

Phrygian scale (D, in our case) upon which it is based. The curtain rises during the last bars of the Prelude to reveal the atrium of the royal palace of Pittheus in Troezen, on the outer threshold of the Peloponneses. Etra opens the music drama with a stately speech "Alzate il capo, o donne" (Lift up your head, o women, p.10-) followed by the insistent questioning of the Suppliants, anxious for news. At Etra's mention of the arrival of a ship with black sails 'already fatal to her'[1], they break into lament bewailing the death of Teseo and the loss of their sons. The function of this opening scene, punctuated to great dramatic effect by off-stage interjections (Gorgo's invocation of Fedra's name and various utterances from women preparing for the burial rites) and climaxed by the crashing sound of a metal shield struck by one of the attendants, is to establish both the oppressive atmosphere of Pittheus'palace and the mood of tension and neurosis which is more or less maintained throughout the act.

The choral episode, typically Pizzettian in its austere intensity, is skilful handled. The modally constructed vocal lines, given to four sopranos and three contraltos singing in unison, in alternation or free imitation, are set to a Gregorian-like syllabic declamation

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1. An allusion to one of the most celebrated adventures of Theseus: his victory, with the help of Ariadne (Phaedra's sister, abandoned by him in favour of Phaedra) over the Minotaur, in the Cretan Labyrinth. On approaching home Theseus forgot to change the black sails for white, as promised to his father Aegeus in case of his returning victorious. At the sight of the black sails Aegeus (Aethra's husband) drowned himself.

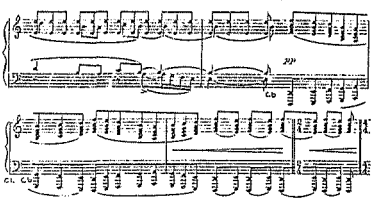
pivoting around a few central notes. The vocal part stems from the instrumental ones and we note that, with the chromatic lowering of the E, tonic of the Phrygian mode in which the opening of the choral section is set, the first three notes of the vocal line assumes the shape of a motive which Pizzetti was to exploit in later works in association with grief, distress and emotionally charged situations:

Ex. 4, p. 11



The supporting structure is almost entirely derived from the melodic motives of the Suppliants' theme (Exs. 3A, 3B) variously transformed, as in the following passage of parallel triadic chords in F Lydian set against the contrary motion of the bass line:

Ex. 5, p. 12



or in this other version of Ex.1A, played by the violins, first in unison and then divided, in a Phrygian mode on F emphasized both by the traceries woven by the woodwind above the theme and by the tremolando scale ascending in the bass:

Ex.6, p.27



The changes rung upon Ex.33, characteristically associated with woodwind, are mainly in the nature of melodic expansions:

Ex.7, p.26



Interesting are the clarinet passages in the pentatonic scale on C-sharp (the E in the second bar could be considered as a 'foreign' pedal component)

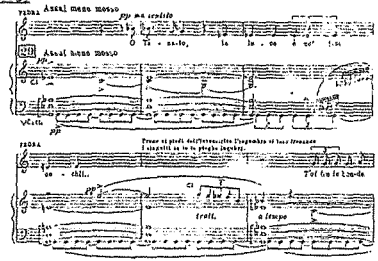
Ex.8, p.17



which underlines Gorgo's first invocation of Fedra. The Suppliants' dirge still rings through the atrium when Fedra makes her dramatic appearance emerging from the sombre palace clad in a flame-coloured robe contrasting strikingly with the dark garb of the mourning women (a visual

counterpart of the passion-death elements musically symbolized, in the Prolude, by Exs.1 and 3). Fedra's first words "O Tànato, la luce è nei tuoi occhi" (O Thanatos, the light is in your eyes) addressed to the terrible divinity of Death, are set to steady, slow-moving music of narrow range. They have an almost trance-like quality enhanced by the sparse orchestral accompaniment made up of well-spaced, long held string pedal chords enriched by reiterated syncopation of the lower tone (G), rapid C A [illegible] les [illegible] harps, and clarinet recalls of the descending quintuplet figure [illegible] Ex.1C:

Ex.9, p.35



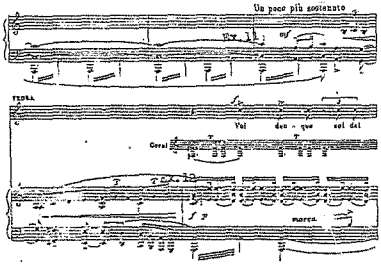
Out of the three-note figure first heard in the cellos under Fedra's "Le vostre grida udii" (I have heard your cr[illegible])

Ex.10, p.37



develops a well-shaped melodic phrase (Ex.11) which, often combined with the strongly rhythmicized, persistent ostinato-like figure occurring in various orchestral registers(Ex.12)

Ex.11, 12, p.40



features prominently during the episode in which, by means of sarcastic remarks,Fedra betrays her aversion for her 'immortal' husband, Teseo ("O gridatrici forsennate, udiste?"- O frenzied women, pp.41-). If the vocal setting of this speech fails perhaps to illustrate the variety of expressive nuances conveyed by the words, the subsequent episode - Fedra's apostrophe to one of the Suppliants, Hippomedon's mother - is a masterpiece of dramatic declamation. In this'solo' Fedra lays bare her troubled soul "loaded with the weight of a mythical sadness and the anguish of her latent desire"[1]. In what may perhaps be best described as an emotional crescendo, aptly conveyed in the setting, she expresses tender sympathy (almost a self-identification):

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1. Gavazzeni, Gianandrea. ALTRI STUDI PIZZETTIANI, p.157

(Sostenuto e triste) Tu sei paga,
madre d' Ippomedonte,
paga nella tua doglia. Tu darai
al tuo figlio la parte sua d'unguenti,
la sua parte di fiamma,
e le vittime, e il canto, e l'alto tumulo;
e parlerai con l'Ombra.

(You are content,
content in your sorrow,
mother of Hippomedon. You will give
your son his share of ointments
and purifying flame,
and the victims, the dirge and the high mound;
and you will talk to the Shadow.)

This is followed by a nostalgic desire for blessings now denied to her:

e il tuo cibo e il tuo sonno e il tuo silenzio
avrai, l'acqua per dissetarti, l'ombra
per temperar l'arsura,
e nella tua memoria i dì felici

(you will have your food and sleep
and rest at night, water to quench your thirst,
shadow for burning days,
memories of happy times)

The revelation of hidden torments,

(Appassionato) Ne l'anima tua stride
penata in ogni stilla del tuo sangue;
né il vento, che rinfresca l'erba strazia
il tuo corpo deserto

(Your soul does not cry in pain
in every drop of blood;
nor the wind which refreshes the grass
torment your forsaken body)

as devastating as the fire of passion which had cursed her mother ends the monologue:

(Largamente) né tu odi, né tu odi,
irta d'orrore, né tu odi dentro
di te mugghiare il mostro
fraterno...

(you hear not , you hear not
frozen with horror, you hear not
within you the fraternal monster roar..)[1]

This tri-partite speech, now and then interrupted by Gorgo's commentary, falls almost naturally into the three well-defined musical sections marked 'Sostenuto e triste', 'Appassionato' and 'Largamente'. The recitative, punctiliously following the natural rhythm and accent of the words, without however losing sight of their expressive value, moves in a continuous flow, now condensed into a nervous syllabification matching the urgency of the poetic rhythm,

Ex.13, p.50



now expanding into broader, more sustained and assertive lines, as in the final outburst "Ma Fedra, Fedra indimenticabile" (But Phaedra, unforgettable Phaedra):

Ex.14, p.53



1. Phaedra was the daughter of Minos, King of Crete, and Pasiphae. Aphrodite inspired Pasiphae with a monstrous passion for a bull and from this union the Minotaur, half man, half bull was born. This explains Phaedra's allusion to the 'fraternal monster', symbol of the lustful and insane passion raging within her.

Each of the three sections of Fedra's 'solo' relies on its own accompanimental figure. In the 'Sostenuto e triste' (p.47) a theme of considerable importance which has, however, but little connection with any other portion of the opera, is sounded, in F-sharp Dorian, in flute and bass clarinet

Ex.15, p.48



over a sustained tonic pedal in the lower strings and a wavering motion in the violins. In the 'Appassionato', a triplet figure supports the frequent oboe and violins allusions to Fedra's characteristic rising and falling fourth:

Ex.16, p.51



whilst Ex.1B, appearing in cellos and violas in augmented time value, is carried to a climax in the first two bars of the 'Largamente'(p.52). After its fortissimo orchestral enunciation (again in the downward version already heard in the Prelude in a similar context) the horns enter with a new pattern, exploiting typical horn fi..the progression (p.52) which, slightly modified, provides the background to the

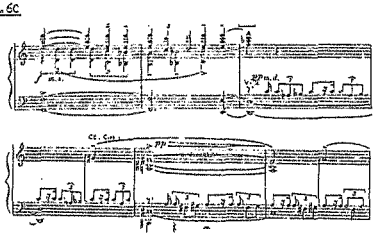
concluding part of Fedra's speech (see Ex.14). It also persists, reduced to its essential shape, during the dramatic recitative section in which Gorgo tries to excuse the distressed queen, victim of 'a burning anguish verging on delirium' (pp.53-4). New thematic material is introduced in the subsequent scene. A heavily stressed motive in the lower strings, in C Mixolydian:

Ex.17, p.55



heralds the arrival of Eurito, Ippo...'s charioteer who, acting as a Messenger, brings the unexpected news of the return of the victorious Teseo. Another motive of the rhythmo-melodic sort, almost Wagnerian, is proposed by the violas:

Ex.18, p.60



It is sequentially repeated, always at a lower pitch, under the Suppliant Women's anxious enquiries, eventually leading into Eurito's factual account of Teseo's honourable undertaking. This is swiftly

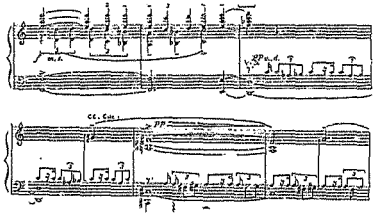
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dealt with in a near-declamatory manner:

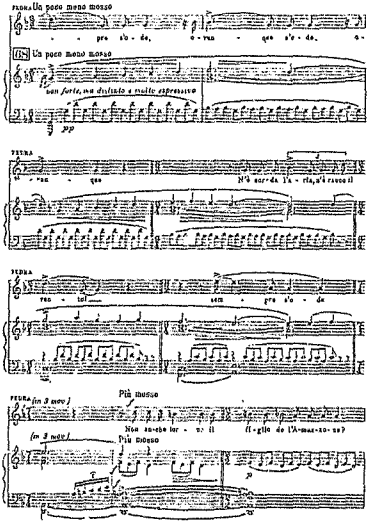
Ex.19, p.62



dramatically punctuated by timpani, with trombones and bass tuba stating pianissimo an arpeggio phrase over sustained orchestral chords, and ends with the Suppliants' strictly homophonic "Onor c egli sia da tutti gli uomini" (May he be honoured by all men) supported by Ex.3A, here appearing as an extended cadential progression of triadic chords in the Mixolydian mode on A dowed with a strong Debussian flavour, and underlined by the continuing figure in the timpani:

Ex.20, pp.62-3




TENOR Un poco meno mosso
pre sto - de, o - ve - que sto - de, o -
Un poco meno mosso
con forte, ma distinto e molto espressivo
pp
TENOR
- ve - que
TENOR
ve - ni
sen - pre sto - de
Più mosso
TENOR (in 3 note)
Non so-che ter - ri - bil (i - gli de l'A-mor-to-re?
(in 3 note)
Più mosso
p

Ex.21, p.70

Two 'solos', one from Fedra,"O mirabile fato!" ('O portentuous fate, p.64-) again charged with sarcastic undertones, and one from Etra, "Fedra, Fedra, deliri..." (Phaedra, delirious Phaedra..., p.65-) are followed by a dramatically important conversation between Fedra and Eurito, left on the stage with Gorgo after the departure of Etra and the Suppliant Women. Eurito has brought three gifts sent by Adrastus, king of Argos, to Ippolito. Among them there is a Theban slave-girl 'with red sandals', symbol of royalty. At Eurito's mention of Ippolito's name, the orchestra assumes a concitato character, seething with swift triplet quavers which form a continuous accompaniment to the whole scene. When, at the beginning of this episode, Fedra tells of her obsession with the barking of the hounds of the hunting Ippolito, perpetually resounding around her and within her but heard by her alone, a passionate phrase, worthy of Puccini in its lyricism, softly s' ala into the orchestra (in G Dorian) disclosing the still hidden truth of her passion for Ippolito (Ex.21). Ex.21 is recalled a number of times for this same purpose during the remainder of this scene, culminating in Fedra's "Ah, nutrice..." (Ah, nurse..., p.80-), an impressive passage born out of the pains of jealousy aroused in her by Eurito's description of the 'royal virgin' destined for Ippolito. Fedra's exacerbated feeling is expressed by a tense declamation alternating reiterated notes with intervals never exceeding that of the sixth. The orchestra provides a dramatic background with flute and bassoon (then oboe and cello) restating motives from the Prelude

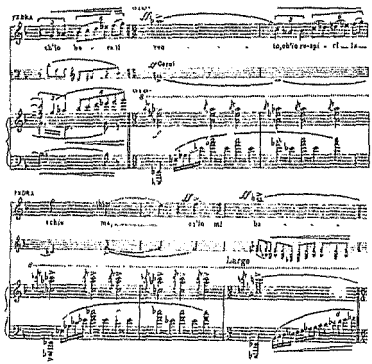
(Exs.1A, 1C) over ascending scale-wise passages

Ex.22, p.80



...eventually introduced into the vocal part when Fedra, in a state almost ...ous control, cries her desire to go towards the sea 'to drink the ..., to breath the foam, to refresh her body' - to find an escape from ... maddened heart:

Ex.23, p.81



As Fedra's voice hysterically leaps to the high B-flat held for two bars

before dropping to the lower octave) the horns enter with a fortissimo hunting-call, tellingly uttered against the ascending figure of 'escape' now in the shape of a rapid B-flat Mixolydian scale (see Ex.2b, last bar). Fedra, the absolute protagonist of the drama, is allotted yet another important 'solo' - the apostrophe to Aphrodite "Dea, che vuoi tu dunque da Fedra?" (Goddess, what do you want from Phaedra?, p.86-). This soliloquy, throwing light on both the nature of the heroine and of her tormenting love, is concise and violent, emotionally intense and yet never melodramatic or unduly rhetorical. Marked by a profusion of tempo and time-signature changes, it is commented upon by Exs.1B and 2, dramatically emphasizing Fedra's changeable emotions ranging from humility to pride; from fearful submission to the Goddess' will: "Ti cedo...Invitta sei" (I surrender...you are invincible, p.88-) to challenging rebellion: "Io sono una Titanide" (I am a Titaness, p.90-). The Fedra who emerges from this all-revealing speech is a much more complex character than that depicted either by Euripides or Racine. She is neither a plaything in the hands of Fate, as in HIPPOLYTUS ; nor a guilt-ridden woman, as in PHÈDRE. What makes her so different from them is that the elements derived from those prototypes are combined in her to appear subdued to an indomitable will which, as we can anticipate, will eventually prevail. The final episode of Act I, built up and brought to a dramatic and musical climax with consummate effect, is devoted entirely to the confrontation of Fedra and the Theban slave, her first actual antagonist. All the characters which have so far appeared (with the possible exception of Etra) have merely

served as a foil to her, as catalysts to the dramatic action. The whole scene takes place against the reverberation of the flames of the funeral ship burning in the bay as a sacrificial offering to the sea. The slave-girl, Ipponoe, is brought in by Gorgo who, to a dotted figure frequently occurring during the first part of the scene:

Ex.24, p.92



and supported by a chordal pedal enlivened by a trill on the lowest note, comments on the ominousness of the night 'full of portents'. Ipponoe is initially described by a couple of short motives of which the first, 'dolce' and almost apprehensive:

Ex.25, p.94



has already been heard at Eurito's allusion to the 'royal virgin, flower of the prey' (p.74,b.2-3). The second, nervous and more incisive:

Ex.26, p.95



accompanies the girl's first answer to Fedra's deceptively alluring questions. Ex. 11, which seems to be particularly associated with Fedra's bitter sarcasm and also with her determination pervades the tissue of the score for several pages as Fedra, anticipating the joys of love in store for Ipponoe, works herself into a paroxism of jealousy. Although at first reacting to Fedra's delirious exaltation with fearful amazement and then with increasing terror, the slave remains a fundamentally lyrical character and her evocation of the places of her childhood "O fonte di Dirce!O mia Tebe" (O fountain of Dirce! O my Thebes) is tender and nostalgic, tinged with the sadness of the Phrygian mode (on G):

Ex.27, p.108



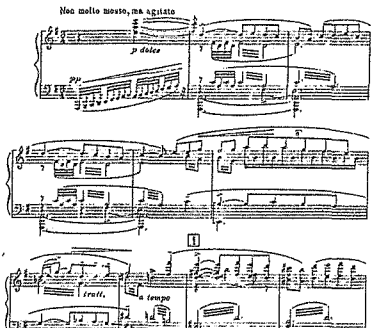
Almost touchingly lyrical is the plea for mercy "O pari a un'iddia" (You are like a goddess, p.114) addressed to Fedra who, after placing a crown of poppies on Ipponoe's head, claims her as a sacrificial victim. The incident of Fedra stabbing the maid with her hair-pin , dealt with with extreme conciseness, is simply, almost unemotionally underlined by triplet quaver C minor chords(p.120). The very last scene is

remarkably effective, from a musical as well as from a theatrical point of view. Her arms uplifted, Fedra stands at the altar of Zeus, her red robe blazing like a flame in the 'holy light' of the holocaust. After breaking into the dramatic outburst "O furore d'Efesto divorante" (O devouring fury of Hephaestus, p. 122-) she purifies her hands with the lustral water offered by Gorgo. She then announces to the Suppliant Women, now entering muffled in their dark mantles, that she, the 'unforgettable Fedra', has immolated the slave to 'the obscure Powers, the grave Shadows, the surviving Sorrow' and to the sleepless goddess of the underworld, Hecate.
With these words the act ends whilst the music thrice recalls the thematic fragment (Ex.10) which had provided the melodic substance of the concluding section starting with 'Lento, grave' (p.123), each time a fourth higher, and the last time truncated. This section, leaning towards G Dorian and made up of slowly shifting orchestral chords supported by an oscillating dominant pedal in the strings, is dramatically enlivened by an allusion to the Fedra-Ipponoe conflict, musically symbolized by a single restatement of the slave-girl motive (Ex.25) preceded by a quotation of the theme associated with Fedra's determination (Ex.11, taken back, in E Dorian by the woodwind entering in imitation) and followed by quiet recalls of its fragmentary form. This eventually gives way to the three final G Dorian chords, again sustained by an oscillating pedal shifting from dominant to tonic in

the very last bar.

The second act, rich in episodes and intense in its music no less than in its drama, introduces several new themes and motives, the majority of which are not however exploited with the same dramatic aptness as those of Act I. Two of these themes are heard in the introduction 'Non molto mosso, ma agitato', an orchestral section punctuated by the distant cries of Fedra's slaves invoking their mistress's name. The first theme is a flexible A Dorian phrase:

Ex.28, p.129



framed by rapid ascending modal scales (perhaps again aimed at recalling the idea of 'escape') and, as suggested by its appearance in later dramatic contexts, seemingly symbolic of Fedra's inner torments. The second, of a more restless and nervous nature, and especially suggestive in the dark timbre of the bassoon (Ex.29):

Ex.29, Pa.131



is the motive of Fedra's insomnia. Exs. 28 and 29 constitute the thematic substance not only of the instrumental introduction but also of the opening scene . Surrounded by her attendants Fedra, wearily lying on a couch and no longer able to conceal the misery of her mind and soul, implores the women who try vainly to reassure her, to find a remedy for her malady. The cries of the slaves indoors, commingling with the exclamations of those on stage, provide a background of tension heightened by continuous quotations of Ex.29 (nearly always used with fragments of Ex.28, Fedra's insomnia being the result of her inner torments). It is emphasized by bassoon, muted violins in octaves and double basses in turn, occurring, with unmistakable meaning, under Fedra's allusions to her obsessive thought: the barking of Ippolito's hounds imagined, in her troubled mind, to be the dreaded call of the dog of the Underworld, Cerberus. When Eurito, Ippolito's charioteer, enters, a theme built on a rising B Dorian hexachord:

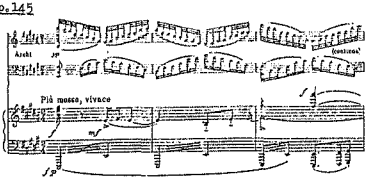
(Ex.30)

Ex.30, p.143



is introduced in the bass and is repeated over and over, first in the same mode, then in the whole-tone scale (p.144, b.4-5) then three times in A Dorian (p.144, b.8-), underlining Eurito's account of the struggle of his young master with his new horse, Arione. Before appearing on the stage Ippolito is first heard off-stage, repeatedly calling Eurito. This device of having a character heralded by his own voice before his entry (well-known to Puccini) and based, according to Mosco Carner, on "the universal urge to see a person whom we hear speak or sing in the distance"[1], is, in this particular case, aimed not only at making the hero's entrance more dramatic, but at heightening, in an almost tantalizing manner, Fedra's expectancy as well. All the motives associated with Ippolito are short, vigorous and incisive, as that which first appears against swift passages in the strings in contrary motion, in the pentatonic scale on E Lydian:

Ex.31, p.145



1. Carner, Mosco. PUCCINI, p.269.

Those which follow:

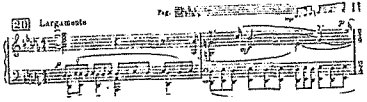
Ex.32, p.146



Ex.33, p.147



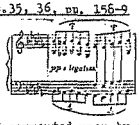
Ex.34, p.152

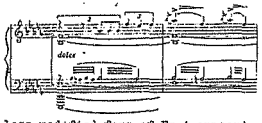


very similar, are mainly assumed by the brass and evoke a world of manly, sporting and unsophisticated pleasures widely contrasting with that of Fedra's sensual passion and irrational fancies and desires. To a steadfast, and yet exultant line of recitative in C-sharp Dorian, Ippolito announces his victory over the fiery horse. During the re-evocation of his hard-earned conquest the three-note Pizzettian motive of Ex.4 softly steals into the orchestra (see also Ex.34) alternating or mingling with Exs.34 and 30 and also entering the vocal part to strike a note of foreboding. The crucial scene of the plot - Fedra's disclosure of her love for Ippolito - is slowly reached through a series of deftly conceived episodes during which Ippolito is depicted as a character and in his relationship to his step-mother. His transition from one

mood to another is shown in various utterances. In heroic vein he expresses his desire for military glory and power; then regret for the loss of the Theban slave, followed by elation at the thought of the abduction of Elena (Helen), offered to him by *Teseo as compensation.*[1] His cold reverence towards Fedra changes to suspicion when she offers him 'one thousand ships with scarlet bows' and 'the kingdom of the Islands'. It eventually gives way to open aversion at her excited reaction to his mention of Elena. All this occurs over an inessantly changing play of the main motive associated with Ippolito (Ex.31), joined by those symbolic of Fedra's power:

Exs.35, 36, pp. 156-9

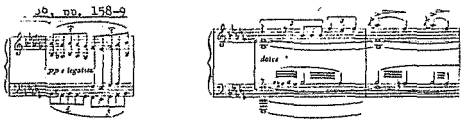




and commented upon by a more or less modified form of Ex.4 appearing in diverse instruments (notably clarinet, flute and horn). Ex.4 intrudes, with an insistence which appears both inevitable and intensely disturbing during the ensuing episode of the Phoenician Merchant and of Ippolito's account of his dream of Artemis. It recurs, with decreasing frequency, during the reminder of the act. The excessive compression of the scene of the Phoenician Merchant, rather extended in D'Annunzio, has made unintelligible, to those not familiar with the play, the Merchant's allusion to the 'aconite', which is the key to the understanding of the musical and dramatic implications of the

mood to another is shown in various utterances. In heroic vein he expresses his desire for military glory and power; then regret for the loss of the Theban slave, followed by elation at the thought of the abduction of Elera (Helen), offered to him by Tesec as compensation.[1] His cold reverence towards Fedra changes to suspicion when she offers him 'one thousand ships with scarlet bows' and 'the kingdom of the Islands'. It eventually gives way to open aversion at her excited reaction to his mention of Elena. All this occurs over an incessantly changing play of the main motive associated with Ippolito (Ex.31), joined by those symbolic of Fedra's power:

Ex. 30, pp. 158-9



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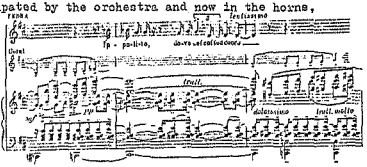
whole [illegible]. The aconite, the poisoning drug brought by the Merchant together with the nepenthe, the potion which causes oblivion, is in fact destined for Fedra. This explains why the apparently colourful episode of the Merchant displaying his exotic merchandise, seemingly introduced for the sake of relief, should open with the two main themes from the introduction to Act II (Exs.28,29):

Ex.37, p.168



associated with Fedra's inner torments and insomnia (respectively) and be spiced with continuous references to Ex.4. The scene of Ippolito's relating his dream of Artemis asking him to sacrifice a white bull to Poseidon and his imparting orders to Eurito (inserted within the episode of the Phoenician Merchant and treated in a declamatory style), does not bring in elements of fresh musical interest, but serves as an anticipation of the drama to come. With the departure of the Merchant and Eurito, Fedra is left alone with Ippolito who, overcome with tiredness, falls asleep. Fedra's words "Ippolito, dove sei tu col tuo cuore?"(Hippolytus, where are you, where is that heart of yours?) are framed by a new motive which, anticipated by the orchestra and now in the horns,

Ex.38, p.188



[illegible] motivic elements derived from the opening phrase [illegible] the Prelude to the opera and symbolic of Fedra's torturous passion. [illegible] dominates this all-important scene. Another theme, a D-flat [illegible] clarinet, [illegible] interest with the unusual $\frac{15}{8}$ time [illegible]

Ex. 39, p.191



[illegible] wandering in different combinations and heard over rippling [illegible] strings and harp, accompanies the words which Ippolito, [illegible] voice 'veiled as if coming from mysterious depths and as gentle [illegible] whispered song' speaks of his sleep of his vision of Elena, the [illegible] child of immortal beauty. In the concluding part of Ippolito's [illegible] 'Calme' section in A Mixolydian underlined by a rhythmic [illegible] figure in the timpani, the first three notes of Ex.39 appear in [illegible] augmentation on the flute.

Ex. 40, p.192



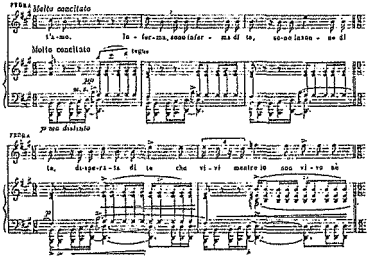
[illegible] derivation of this theme from Ex.4. Affected by the [illegible] the ensuing episode, Fedra gives vent to her passionate

feeling in the recitative "O nudo volto che languisci riverso" (O naked face drooping in languor, p.195, b.2-). Continuous changes in tempo, expression and dynamic details, almost Wagnerian chromaticism, lead to the crucial moment when Fedra (in D'Annunzio's stage directions) 'bends towards the youth and, clasping between her hands his backward-drooping head," her fingers buried in his violet ringlets,"[1] she kisses him with a desperate thirst, pressing her mouth to his as if she were crushing and breaking and commingling the fruit of two lives into death'. The fundamental probity of Pizzetti's music mitigates , perhaps excessively, both the incandescence of D'Annunzio's verse and the heavy sensuality of the whole scene, conveying a sense of morbid languour and the exasperation of frustrated love, rather than passion. During the first part of Fedra's speech the horn motive of Ex.38 is made much of in the orchestra. The same motive also appears, over a tonic A major pedal, in the guise of a twice repeated progression of chords (p.195, last bar, p.196, b.1-3). The theme of Fedra's inner torments (Ex.28), elaborated by violins over repeated recalls of Fedra's perfect fourth (Ex.1A), emphasizes the prophetic symbolism of her words "Ma non te bacio...Bevo lo Stige, bevo il sorso che solo è dato al mio amore" (It is not you whom I kiss,.. I am drinking the bitter water of the Styx, which alone is granted to my love, p.197). Ex.38 is again much in evidence in the following duet between the indignant Ippolito and Fedra, who, in answering his wild questioning, discloses her passion for him. Fedra once more dominates the stage in a highly dramatic 'solo' opening with the challenging words "Non io ti

1. The original is : "profondate le dita nei riccioli di viola," see libretto, p.49.

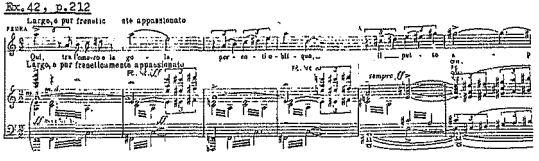
sono madre" (You are not born of me, p.201-) and continuing with the almost merciless confession of her true feeling: a blind urge, an intoxication of the mind which gives her no rest, which makes her painfully aware of the fact that he is alive whilst she is 'neither alive, nor dead':

Ex.41, p.202



The declamation which at first proceeds by small, insistently recurring intervals (never exceeding that of a fourth) moulds itself according to the exigencies of the dramatic situation. It becomes assertive and persuasive as she offers Ippolito 'not the love, but the power of Fedra' (to orchestral quotations of Exs.35 and 36), and frantically passionate as she begs to die at his hand if he cannot love her:

Ex.42, p.212



The ascending figure taken over from the vocal line by piccolo, flute and violins over a chordal pedal in the lower strings seems to be again associated with the idea of escape, in this case, of final liberation. In a paroxism of rage Ippolito repels her before rushing off the stage. With a supreme effort Fedra regains self-control and in the words which she addresses to Gorgo: "Non piangere. La cosa è tra Fedra e le Dee" (Do not cry. The matter is between Phædra and the Goddesses, p.220-), there is a ring of cold determination. The remainder of the act, taken up by the scene in which Fedra addresses to Teseo (who has silently entered the stage at the end of her speech) false accusations that Ippolito has tried to outrage her is somewhat anticlimactic. The action which, at least in this act, has moved fast, becomes suddenly static. The orchestra, so far supporting the voices beautifully with its richness, variety and dramatic aptness is, probably intentionally, confined to a subservient role and the drama is concentrated in the vocal writing without however achieving the emotional intensity which has marked the majority of the previous episodes. Teseo is scantily characterized by reiterated *staccato octaves in the trombones:*

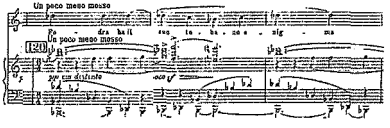
Ex.43, p.224



His declamation, harsh and energetic, violent at times, conveys however the ruthless temerity and boldness associated with him, the legendary hero,

victor over the *Minotaur* and *conquerer of the Amazons*. *Fedra's speech*: "Anche Fedra ha il suo Tebano enigma" (Phaedra also has her Theban enigma) is accompanied throughout by a curiously graphic, angular figure, actually derived from a B-flat minor chord (with the E however suggesting a Hungarian minor scale):

Ex.44, p.233



which, transposed to F minor and then to F-sharp, is meant to convey (as in the 'word painting' technique of Baroque music) the implications of the words "Morire debbo...purificarmi giù nel nero fiume" (I must die... and purify myself down, in the black river). Apart from numerous quotations of Fedra's fourth (Ex.1A) which often appears inverted (a perfect fifth) and a couple of allusions to the motive of Fedra's determination (Ex.11) none of the important themes or motives previously heard plays a role of importance in this final episode. Conventional figures such as triplets, strings or orchestral tremolandos and rhythmic pedals of reiterated minor triads are used to suggest a sense of urgency and agitation. When towards the end of the act, Teseo, in sentences of tragic solemnity calls down, to Fedra's horror, the vengeance of Poseidon upon Ippolito the music assumes a 'Largo e maestoso' character. His monologue "O Re truce del mare" (O King of the sea) is set to slow-moving, diatonic lines (Ex.45):

Ex.45, p.257



and culminates in the vehement "Che innanzi a sera egli discenda all' ombre" (Before night comes, let him descend among the shadows, p.258-). The accompaniment to the recitative contains some descriptive music with the undulating movement in the strings suggesting an association with the Sea-god of Teseo's curse. Insistent pedal points held by double basses and bass clarinet, to which bassoon and trombone successively add their voices, serve the double purpose of creating a sense of 'frozen' suspense and of asserting the prevalent mode (from the initial B Phrygian, to the E Dorian starting at the last bar of p.257 and maintained until B Aeolian is established, from the third bar of p.259). The orchestral structure is replete with quotations of Fedra's intervallic figure (Ex.1A, in its inversion) alternating, from the eight bar of the 'Largo e maestoso', with an ostinato pattern:

Ex.46, p.258



Both motives, variously intertwined, are asserted by woodwind and brass above the general orchestral background which becomes a five-note

Ex.45, p.257



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Ex.46, p.258



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figure the upper part of which runs in contrary motion to the bass. This figure is given alternately in chords of superimposed fourths and fifths (or fifths and sixths) and in an almost bare two-part version. It finally comes to rest on the tonic of B Aeolian, firmly given out fortissimo by the orchestral tutti.

The 'Trenodia per Ippolito morto' which, sung behind the curtain by divided 'a cappella' chorus, provides the poignant opening to the third and last act, is among Pizzetti's most celebrated choral compositions. As pointed out by John C.G. Waterhouse, it is actually one of "the first clear instances of that 'neo-madrigalian' style which was to recur in various forms in the works of so many Italian composers of the next half century"[1], notably, I think, in Dallapiccola's. This poignant dirge is strictly modal and is characterized by easily flowing lines leaning towards plagal cadences. Although the tonal centre, F, remains unchanged, the music fluctuates through several modes - from the initial Dorian, to Mixolydian (p.264), Phrygian (p.267, last bar), Aeolian (p.271,b.1), Dorian (p.272,b.1), Phrygian (p.274, b.2), Aeolian (p.276, last bar) and back to Dorian (p.277,b.2), where it ends plagally. The tenors of the second chorus (contraltos, tenors, basses I and II) loudly intone the first phrase

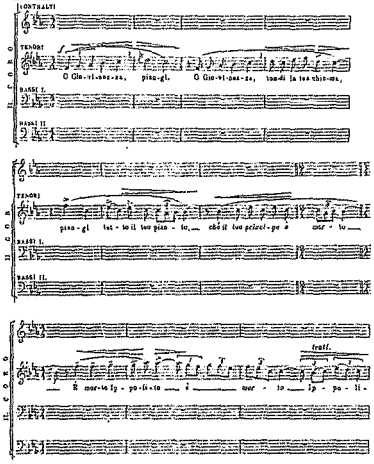
O Giovinezza, piangi.
O Giovinezza, tondi la tua chioma,
piangi tutto il tuo pianto,
ch'è il tuo principe è morto. E' morto Ippolito!

(O Youth, weep.
Weep, youths and maidens, and shear your hair,
weep all your tears
for your prince is dead. Hippolytus is dead!)

1. Waterhouse, J.C.G, Ildebrando Pizzetti, in op. cit., p.1686

set to a steady and yet flexible melodic line of clear contour.

Ex.47, pp.260-1



After the entry of the second basses, echoing the phrase quoted above, the voices unite in four-part harmony (p.262, b.3) before pursuing independent contrapuntal lines for reiterated statements of "O Giovinezza piangi". The first chorus (sopranos, boy sopranos, boy contraltos, tenors) led by the boys' voices, embark on an almost whispered, mildly melismatic setting of the words

O selve di Metàna,
olivi di Genètlio,
sarònide palude,
piagge di Limna, monti d'Ermione,
riempitevi d'orrore e di lamento.

(O forests of Methòne,
olives of Genetium,
Saronic marshes,
shores of Limnae, mountains of Hermione,
be filled with horror and wailing.)

Ex. 48, p. 264



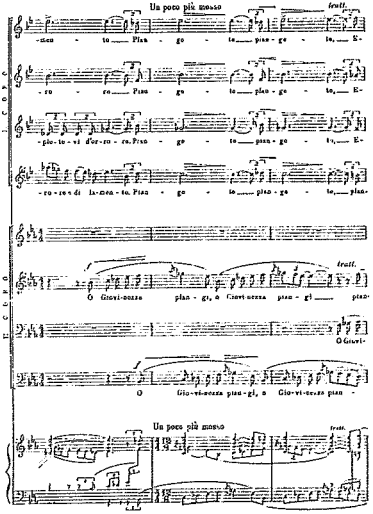
As the music unfolds, the texture becomes fuller and more sustained, rhythmic contrast and variety being introduced by the interrelation of the four-part voices dominated by the gently undulating melismatic figure of Ex. 48. As the first chorus introduces the final couplet

Piangete, Efebi di Trezene. Vergini
di Trezene, piangete. E morto Ippolito!

(Weep, Ephebi of Troezen. Virgins
of Troezen, weep. Hippolytus is dead!)

the second chorus re-enters with its initial phrase and the two choruses continue in a well-balanced eight-part counterpoint almost madrigalian (in the Landini manner) in its polyrhythmic texture and simultaneous use of different words (Ex. 49). The contrapuntal section is momentarily interrupted by a homophonic passage in which the crucial "Ippolito è morto" is alternately stated by the two choruses (pp. 270-1). Noteworthy is the occurrence in the line assumed by the sopranos and in that sung by the tenors of the second chorus, of a clearly identifiable

Mss 49 (pp 286-8)





psalmodic inflection derived from the Gregorian tone II,i.

Ex.50, pp.270-1



The dramatic and emotional impact of this desolate dirge is heightened by the solo voice of Etra, entering towards its end with a sad melopoeia in F Phrygian "Ippolito, oh, Ippolito..." (Hippolytus, oh, Hippolytus...,p.273, b.3-) standing out against the now almost monochromatic background provided by the second chorus (minus the contraltos). On the last "Piangi", sung by the combined choruses, the orchestra enters with a tremolo in the bass above which are heard swift chromatic passages punctuated by shifting chords from the clarinets (p.279). This forms a brief bridge which leads directly into Act III. Against a background of rumbling chromatic passages supported by low tremolando pedals, one of the ephebi asks Teseo to allow Ippolito's charioteer to relate the story of the death of his valiant master. Eurito's narration, interrupted by the brief, broken choral ejaculations and grief-laden interjections is, in spite of its considerable length, one of the best sections of the opera. Gianandrea Gavazzeni defines it as "a model of musical prosody"[1] admirably conveying, in its variety of accents and expressive nuances

1. Gavazzeni, Gianandrea. ALTRI STUDI PIZZETTIANI, p.159.

...ndscape's features, the echoes of feelings ...[1]. In vivid detail Eurito relates the progressive ...ceremony,"Il cavallo tenuto era dagli uomini" ...horsemen) in a 'Largo e grave' section(p.286) ...well-articulated theme in $\frac{12}{8}$:

...p.285

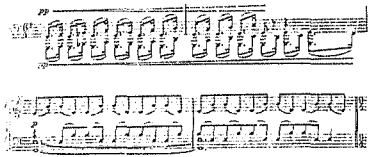


...the echo of Ippolito attempting to oppose his skill against ...the horse maddened by the insistent barking of the dogs:

...92, p.29:



...Eurito's speech,"Fu sul lido" (It was on the sea-shore), ...relates the actual struggle between man and horse and ...Ippolito's eventual defeat, is accompanied by energetic rhythmic figures: ...53, 54, pp.304, 305



...ai, Gianandrea, op.cit., p.150

conveying both "the tense drumming of hooves"[1] and the inexorable advance of Fate, and by a fanfare-like motive which, emphasized by trombones accentuates the epic quality of the concluding episode.

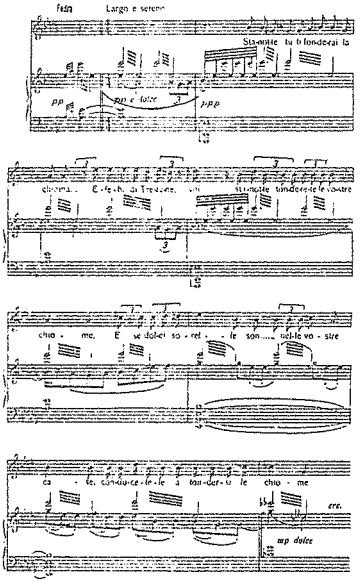
Ex.55, p.307



Ex.51 and the ostinato figure of Ex.46 (associated with Teseo's [illegible] underline the passage in which Teseo accuses himself of having [illegible] Ippolito with his curse(p.319-). The remainder of the act belongs to Fedra who appears on the stage in her chariot driven by white [illegible] heralded by progressions of triadic chords from the cellos over a A Aeolian background of the reiterated, rhythmicized dominant E enriched with orchestral tremolos and rapid scales ascending in the harp. The sickle moon is slowly setting and its shining arc is seen amidst the *trees of the sacred grove.* As Fedra steps from her chariot slowly and firmly the darker A Aeolian gives way to a luminous A-flat Mixolydian and a slow and ecstatically lyrical theme (Ex.56) steals softly into the orchestra the bow-like shape of its melodic contour echoing that of the moon and bringing in yet another instance of graphic symbolism. Ex.56 [illegible] will be seen later, also as the symbol of Fedra's death.

Almost always literally restated, Ex.56 is used as an accompaniment *figure to the speech* in which Fedra, after bidding one of the ephebi remove the spears from the side of Ippolito, whom she has in the meantime covered with her white veil, reveals to Teseo that Ippolito

1. Euripides, HIPPOLYTUS, p.118.


fata
Largo e sereno
Stavolta tu ti fonderai fa
pp
pp e luce
ppp
chioma. E fa-rò di tre-mare, an stavolta fondere-ti le labbra
chio - me. E se dol-ci so - rel - le son..... toi-le vo - sire
ca - le. Ch'io ve-ce-le a fon-der-si le chio - me
cre.
pp dolce

Ex. 56, p. 328

was guiltless. Neither the wrath of Tesco nor Etra's abuses seem to touch her. When she says:

> Sola, or io sento in me
> una divinità che irraggia l'Ade.
> Divinamente sola
> io porterò su le mie braccia d'ombra
> Ippolito velato all'Invisibile
>
> (Alone, I feel in myself
> a divinity that sheds its light on Hades.
> I am divinely alone,
> and I will carry in my shadowy arms
> the veiled Hoppolytus to the Invisible World)

she is already beyond the world of men and human passions. Her newly acquired freedom is symbolically asserted by the fanfare-like figure of major and augmented triads blared by horns and trombones over orchestral quotations of the first motivic element of the theme of Fedra's passion (Ex.1A) in another of its shapes (p.343, b.2-4). Now, as Fedra declared to Gorgo in the previous act, the matter is between her and the Goddesses. To sustained vocal lines culminating with "Io vinco" (I win) and set against an orchestral background so light as to border upon thinness, she first challenges Aphrodite whose power, fatal to her and her ill-doomed race, she no longer fears ("La dea nemica" - The enemy goddess, p.346-). The choral exclamations of horror at Fedra's sacrilegious daring become higher and more excited as she, looking up in the direction of the lunar bow, defiantly invokes Artemis, her true enemy and rival in having been the only object of Ippolito's devotion. There follows 'a deep silence, only broken by the immense lament of the sea, weeping under the starry night' (D'Annunzio's stage directions) depicted in a short eight-bar D Mixolydian interlude in which Ex. 56 (the motive of Fedra' death)

appears suggestively interlaced with Ex.51 (connected with Eurito's narration of the death of Ippolito). The texture of this section, 'Largo e calmo, quasi sereno' remote, transparent and shimmering in the sound of strings, flutes, harp and celesta, captures the atmosphere of the nocturnal scene and at the same time anticipates the feeling of the imminent catharsis. During Fedra's last monologue "Ah, m'hai udito, dea!" (Ah, you have heard me, goddess, p.357, b.5-) Exs.38 and 2, both associated with Fedra's passion gain special prominence. Appearing in the various string groups before being taken over by oboe and horns, Ex.2 gives life to a 'Concitato' passage reaching its climax at Fedra's words:

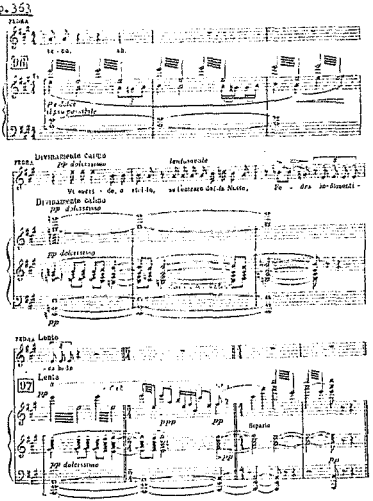
.....Vedo porre la saetta
sul teso arco lucente.
Nel mio cuore non è più sangue umano.
E giungere col dardo
non puoi l'altra mia vita. Ancora vinco!

(..... I see the arrow
in your shining bow.
In my heart is no longer any human blood.
But you cannot reach me
in my coming life. I win again!)

The music relaxes. A trill on E-F natural, commencing fortissimo in the orchestra and decrescendoing to pianissimo at p.362, b.11, continues for four bars emphasizing the dominant of A major in which the work is to conclude. Over the trill flutes and clarinets twice propose a chordal version of Ex.38, leading on the second occasion to a chord of the seventh . As Fedra, struck by the arrow from Artemis' bow, falls over Ippolito's body, a solo trumpet enters over the bare tonic fifths of A Dorian with a last statement of Ex.56 which prefaces the concluding

'Divinamente calmo'. Before dying the 'unforgettable Fedra' addresses herself to the stars, smiling upon them 'at the onset of night', as Ex.38 sounds again 'dolcissimo' in horns and harp, the celesta adding the shimmer of the descending intervallic figure previously heard at p.357, b.5. Only now is the key of A major firmly established over a pedal point of bare fifths and the curtain falls whilst the first violins climb to the higher register to settle on a soft tremolo which dies away over the last vibrations of the chord:

Ex.57, p.363



Although this conclusion is etched in almost pastel, luminous tones, it yet

has an enormous impact on the listener comparable, perhaps, with that of the final scene of Strauss' SALOME. However, whereas the dramatic ending of the latter work is brought about by means of the *sledge-hammer*, that of FEDRA is encompassed, with infinite finesse, by the lucent moon beam and by the glitter of the starry night.

--- oOo ---

FEDRA, premiered in 1915, represents Pizzetti's first mature attempt (after the series of youthful experiments) to give a new interpretation to the concept of music drama. In spite of its inequalities FEDRA firmly established the reputation which the composer had gained through his early achievements in the vocal, choral and instrumental fields. Despite the disconcerting novelty of the score and the lack of preparation of the greater part of the audience, hardly ready for such a disruption of everything that opera had previously meant to them *FEDRA met with a warm reception.* "It was a battle won..." wrote the critic of the Corriere della Sera "a true victory, almost astonishing when we consider the fact that there are no traces of facile effects in this opera. Indeed there are no concessions whatsoever to the taste of the public"[1]. Writing in Musica d'Oggi, Guido M. Gatti pointed out: "the drama of passion and death which unfolds on the stage has found in Pizzetti's music a most convincing means of expression, surely the one most apt to heighten its emotive power"[2].

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1. La FEDRA di Pizzetti e di D'Annunzio (unsigned). Corriere della Sera, 21 March, 1915, p.5

2. Gatti, Guido M.,FEDRA, in Musica d'Oggi, April 1920, No 4, p.99

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Considered in its entirety FEDRA does not perhaps stand comparison with the subsequent DEBORA E JAELE. Yet, apart from having made "a splendid clean sweep of all previous musical traditions of the [Italian] stage"[1], it already contains those fundamental technical principles and musical characteristics which were to become the features of Pizzetti's operatic style. Even so FEDRA cannot, judging by present standards, be considered as a revolutionary work. It was nevertheless a striking novelty to th audiences used to the melodic warmth and exuberance of the 'verismo' school which still dominated the musical world of the 'bourgeois' Italy of the time. Without altogether renouncing the traditional approach to opera (as did, for instance, Malipiero) Pizzetti, in FEDRA, developed a technique based neither on verismo nor, strictly speaking, on impressionism, but rather on flexible and expressive melodic lines resulting from the natural inflexions of the verbal phrase, the idea behir the words, the characters' personality, different emotional states of mind. As John C.G. Waterhouse has pointed out "the heights to which this technique could rise"[2] are well shown by the final act of FEDRA prefaced with the rightly celebrated 'Trenodia per Ippolito morto' and containing the exemplary account of Ippolito's last struggle with the horse Arione and the scene of Fedra's death. To this we may add as well, in Act I, the extraordinarily poignant lament of the Suppliant Women; Fedra's apostrophe to the mother of Hippomedon; her appeal to Aphrodite and the episode of the Theban slave. In Act II, the episode of the Phoenician Merchant and the whole scene

1. De Paoli, Domenico, Pizzetti's FRA GHERARDO, Modern Music, v.6, 1928/9, p.39.
2. Waterhouse, John, ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI, op.cit., p.1686.

of Fedra with the sleeping Ippolito. Also remarkable is the dramatic and atmospheric dimension added to the work by the off-stage voices of the slaves repeatedly invoking Fedra; their cries echoeing from the internal rooms of the palace; the noise of the breaking waves, the sound of the wind and the sea, and the continuous references to an outer world scaled to Fedra living in the nightmare of the endless barking of Ippolito's hounds. For the enhancement of dramatic and psychological moments and atmospheric touch as well, Pizzetti, like all post-Wagnerian composers, including Puccini, used the orchestra as an active and articulated partner of the voice, his harmonies, in a constant flux, also reflecting the emotional ebb and flow of the drama. Pizzetti's harmonic technique does not display the flexibility and variety of his vocal style. Indeed he hardly seems to have assimilated the more advanced contemporary developments. Chromaticism, modality, impressionistic touches, parallel and organum-like progressions of chords, pentatonic and whole-tone scale (sparsely used), long-sustained pedals and rhythmo-melodic ostinati represent the tools of Pizzetti's harmonic vocabulary, from FEDRA onwards. The leitmotive technique is not applied in FEDRA with the strictness or consistency to be found in the best of Pizzetti's later works. Only a few of the many themes and motives (some of which are of considerable melodic interest) appearing in this music drama have a pertinent dramatic purpose and even fewer are aimed at achieving musical cohesion and unity. I have drawn special attention to them. Descriptive music features frequently in the score of FEDRA. There

are touches of realism (the flickering flames, the wind, the waves, the hunting-horn calls); instances of word painting (the descending and ascending motion of the music in association with the idea of sinking, rising and escaping) and of graphic and conceptual symbolism. Of this, the most interesting examples are represented by the theme of Fedra's death mirroring, in its bow-like contour, the shape of the crescent moon and, at the same time implying and anticipating Fedra's dying at the hand of the Moon-Goddess Artemis, and by the scoring of the final scene which becomes increasingly diaphanous, shimmering and remote as Fedra, already transfigured, addresses her last words to the stars before being enwrapped by the silence of perpetual night. The characterization is skilfully handled but, to borrow the words used by John Cairncross to define Racine's Phèdre, "all the light and the shade , the qualities and defects and all the guilt and the pathos are centred on the tragic queen, who alone receives the privilege of variation, which is really that of life"[1]. It is no wonder that, compared with her, the other characters should somehow seem to fade into the background. The chorus, although static and contemplative, is given an important part as well as passages of extraordinary power and beauty. Without being strikingly original the orchestration, mainly relying on the expressive quality of the strings and the woodwind (brass and percussion being introduced mostly for the sake of colouristic effect, or to mark mounting tension) aptly conveys the peculiar mood and atmosphere characterizing not only each act but the contrasting episodes unfolding within it as well. Before

1. Cairncross, John, Introduction to PHAEDRA, op. cit., p.141.

the appearance of LA FIGLIA D'IORIO, FEDRA was rightly considered as "the most important stage-work derived from a drama by Gabriele D'Annunzio"[1]. The question of the problems presented by the musical setting of the works of Italy's most verbose and over-sophisticated poet is discussed in Chapter III [2]. Here, therefore, it will suffice to consider the extent to which Pizzetti has succeeded in preserving the letter and the spirit of the original text (the only addition being the 'Tronodia per Ippolito morto'), however abridging the tragedy by about half of the verse and eliminating a few superfluous episodes. By means of such compression the dramatic structure gained in compactness. As to the musical setting, the austerity of the musician seems to confer a new nobility on the poetic drama, toning down the heavy sensuousness of D'Annunzio's poetry and conferring upon the characters, especially that of Fedra, a new depth resulting from a more sensitive psychological approach. Modality, which colours the greater part of the score, is undoubtedly responsible for the sense of remoteness which, on the whole, characterizes FEDRA and creates that sense of intangible and almost distorted reality typical of things seen "through the transparency of the water"[3] As Luciano Tomelleri has observed, "we can see 'through' the music a world that the musician evokes, with limpidity and restraint, rather than describes - a restraint that ... has nothing to do with poverty, but rather with the simplicity of great art"[3].

1. Tomelleri, Luciano, GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO E LA MUSICA, p.50.
2. See p. 136 in this thesis.
3. Tomelleri, op.cit., p.50.

[illegible] we do not yet discern the typical Pizzettian [illegible] as Guido M. Gatti asserta, we may recognize it as a [illegible] starting point; a marginal, if not fundamental, [illegible] secular problem of opera.

[illegible]

[illegible] GHERARDO PIZZETTI (English edition), op. cit.p.22.

CHAPTER X

IFIGENIA

The subject of war, which had provided the bloody, lacerated landscapes of DEBORA E JAELE and VANNA LUPA returns in IFIGENIA with wider implications and more dramatic and universal overtones. This one-act 'musical tragedy', winner of the international Prix Italia competition for a radio opera organized by the Radio Televisione Italiana in 1950, had its first stage performance under the auspices of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, on May 9, 1951. IFIGENIA, written by the composer in his seventies, is the expression of an exasperated sensibility. It seems as if this music drama found its motivating impulse in anger and compassion - anger for the aimless and not forgotten cruelties of war, and compassion for all the innocent victims of the insanity of mankind unable to find an answer to the mystery of suffering.

The libretto, based on the mythical story of Iphigenia, was written by the composer in collaboration with Alberto Perrini and derived from Euripides' IPHIGENIA IN AULIS. This play had apparently been written towards the end of Euripides' life, when "his creative art was at its zenith"[1]. It remained unfinished, the missing parts being supplied by some later writer who, according to H.J.Rose, knew nothing of classical meter "but enough mythology to get the ending right"[2]. There are however different mythical accounts of the tale, and not all writers and dramatists who have tackled the subject are in agreement as to its most important detail - namely, Iphigenia's ultimate fate.

1. Vellacott, Philip. Introduction to IPHIGENIA IN AULIS, in *Euripides'* ORESTES AND OTHER PLAYS, p.81
2. Rose, H.J. A HANDBOOK OF GREEK LITERATURE, p.194

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1. Wellacott, Philip. Introduction to IPHIGENIA IN AULIS, in Euripides' ORESTES AND OTHER PLAYS, p.81
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From Aeschylus' AGAMEMNON and Sophocles's ELECTRA, it appears that Agamemnon had really sacrificed his daughter to win the favour of the goddess Artemis in the war against Troy. Euripides, on the other hand, has Iphigenia saved by the intervention of Artemis who had, at the last moment, substituted a deer for the human victim so as not to have her altar defiled "by the destruction of a noble life"[1]. This conclusion does not however seem to suit "the mood of harsh and sombre bitterness"[2] which pervades the play and is usually dismissed by scholars as "a worthless supplement"[3], certainly unauthentic. According to a third account, likewise ancient, and accepted by the sixth century poet Stesichorus and by the historian Pausanias, the Iphigenia sacrificed in Aulis was not the daughter of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon but the off-spring of the illicit union of Helen, (Clytemnestra's sister) and Theseus. This version became the source of Racine's drama IPHIGENIE EN AULIDE, one of the best dramatic works on the subject. First performed in Paris in 1674 with "a prodigieux succès de larmes"[4] (a great success which left nobody in the theatre dry-eyed) IPHIGENIE EN AULIDE became one of the French dramatist's most popular plays.

The finest and best known, but by no means the only operatic adaptations of this mythical tale are Gluck's IPHIGENIE EN AULIDE (Paris, 1774, libretto by F.du Rollet) and IPHIGENIE EN TAURIDE (Paris, 1779, libretto by N.F. Guillard). Italian librettists and composers seem to have been particularly fascinated by this story. One of the most succesful librettos on the subject was the IFIGENIA written by Apostolo

1. Euripides. IPHIGENIA IN AULIS (Tr. P. Vellacott), op.cit., p. 426.
2. Vellacott, Philip, in Introduction to ORESTE AND OTHER PLAYS, p.82.
3. Rose, H.J. A HANDBOOK OF GREEK LITERATURE, op. cit. p. 195.
4. Brunel, Pierre et al. HISTOIRE DE LA LITERATURE FRANCAISE, p.252.

Zeno for Antonio Caldara in 1718 and subsequently set by a number of minor composers including Orlandini (Florence , 1732); Porta (Munich, 1738); Abos (Naples,1745); Salari (Casal Monferrato, 1776) and Parolini (Florence,1819). Other Iphigenia operas were provided by Zingarelli (1787); Cherubini (Turin,1788); Mosca (1799); Curcio (Florence,1799); Trento (Naples,1804); Danzi (in German, at Munich, 1807) and Mayr (Brescia). Simon Mayr's IFIGENIA IN AULIDE (text by Arici, based on Du Roullet), betraying the composer's concern with Gluckian ideals, is one of the last settings of what had been a classic eighteenth century story. In fact, with the 1820 Palermo production of Mayr's work all the operas on the Iphigenia subject seem to have disappeared from the Italian theatres, the audiences having been gradually conquered by the dramatically more palpably impressive plots of the romantic stories.

In the twentieth century, Pizzetti re-discovered the tremendous dramatic potential of the ancient myth which to him, who had lived through the distressing experience of two world wars, came to signify the unacceptable wrong of innocent suffering:

> Est-il possible...que cette pitoyable et misérable humanité n'en ait pas assez de guerres, de massacres, de sang, de faim? Veut-on vraiment contraindre encore des peuples entières à accepter des prétextes, presentés sous forme de raisons impératives, pour justifier une nouvelle guerre, et pour suffoquer et annuler dans leurs âmes l'horreur et la honte de ces action inhumaines, dont on sait que des milliers et milliers d'innocents souffriront?
>
> (Is it possible that this wretched and

> miserable humanity has not had enough of wars,
> massacres, blood and anger? Is it still possible
> to induce entire nations to accept pretexts,
> presented in the guise of imperative reasons,
> to justify yet another war and stifle and annul
> in the souls of men the shame and horror of
> inhuman deeds resulting in the suffering of
> thousands and thousands of innocents?)

wrote Pizzetti[1] echoing, in his words, the question that from century to century had been the concern of those who had felt the agony of living in unhappy times which had seen the debasement of men and the desecration of human values. Thus he made of IFIGENIA his own statement on the murderous insanity of men taking up arms against their fellows and, to enhance his point, he channelled the facts derived from Euripides' drama, and retained in the libretto, to a conclusion suggesting elements of vibrant topicality. In Pizzetti's IFIGENIA there is no hint at a possible salvation, either by human or divine intervention. The shame and cowardice of those ready to sacrifice innocence on the altar of war cannot, and must not be obliterated. In the concluding scene of the music drama Agamennone is left with his knife at Ifigenia's throat. We do not witness the actual sacrifice but, as the scene changes from the Greek camp to a dark ditch where a seething multitude of people is seen through a tangle of naked trees (against a background representing buildings and monuments emblematic of the most splendid times in the history of civilization), an off-stage voice reminds us that

> ...son passati secoli, e millenni,
> e l'ara dalla guerra ancora gronda
> sangue innocente; e ancora, e ancora sempre
> cupidigie e violenza son cagione
> di rovine e di stragi e lutti e lacrime.

1. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. PRIX ITALIA 1950 (Edizioni Radio Italiana) p.37

(...time has elapsed - centuries and
millennia and still innocent blood splashes
the altar; now, yet again, forever, violence
and greed engender ruins and slaughters,
tears and mourning.)

"Perchè, perchè, Signore, lo permetti? E insino a quando?" (Why, why, o Lord, do you allow this? And until when?) asks an anonymous off-stage voice. There is no answer to such a question and the anguished "Perchè?" , echoed in different languages is followed by the invocation "Dona nobis pacem" which seems to ring endlessly from the depth of sorrow.

In the libretto to IFIGENIA the story, reduced to its very essence, develops in a series of scenes contained in one act divided into two parts and concluded by an Epilogue. The main characters , limited to three (Agamennone, Clitennestra and Ifigenia), are the same as in the myth, yet seen in a more human dimension. We note that the passage chosen by Pizzetti to introduce Agamennone, "Qual uomo soffrì più grave angoscia" (What man has ever suffered such an anguish, PartI, sc.III) is the only one in Euripides in which the King of Argos appears endowed with moral characteristics contradicting the negative image of him presented in the rest of the play. Clitennestra is depicted with an emotional and dramatic intensity which cannot fail to win our sympathy. We are spared the somewhat incongruous "brave spirit and fearless will"[1]

1. Euripides. IPHIGENIA IN AULIS (Tr.P. Vellacott), op.cit.,p.425.

attributed by Euripides to Iphigenia in the last scene of his play and she remains throughout a gentle, bewildered child incapable of understanding things beyond the reach of her innocent vision of life. Achille, who is neither the self-conceited youth depicted by Euripides, nor the fiery warrior imagined by Racine, makes a *fleeting*, unimpressive appearance at the beginning of Part II. He is intoduced *more for the sake* of information than as a character in his own right. In classical Greek *manner*, a couple of Choriphaei and the Chorus (divided into various groups *on - and off -* stage) provide the necessary information in substitution of the missing characters, besides commenting (without however taking an active part) on the dramatic events. Given the nature of Pizzetti's work , a one-act radio opera where the pace is kept moving inexorably towards the final scene, the emphasis is placed not only upon the characters but also upon the situation as intensified by the words.

Brevity, simplicity and a poetic language of an almost classically crystalline limpidity, are the striking features of this admirable libretto which stands comparison with the best specimens of the past and the present.

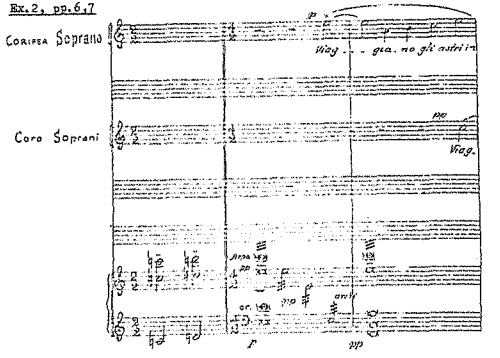
—— oOo ——



Ex. 21

IFIGENIA opens with a 'Molto largo' movement built upon one of those typically Pizzettian broad, flexible unison melodies "evoking a spacious, elevated, slightly foreboding atmosphere"[1], (Ex.1). The effect is enhanced by the shaping of the melodic lines exploiting the open sound of the predominant intervals of fourths and fifths, the lack of harmonic fabric, the tenuous colouring of flutes, clarinets, bassoons and harp combination, and the austere flavour of the predominantly modal construction. To the words "Viaggiano gli astri in cielo nel mezzo della notte" (The stars sail in the sky in the middle of night) women's voices, led by a Corifea soprano, enter in imitation:

Ex.2, pp.6,7



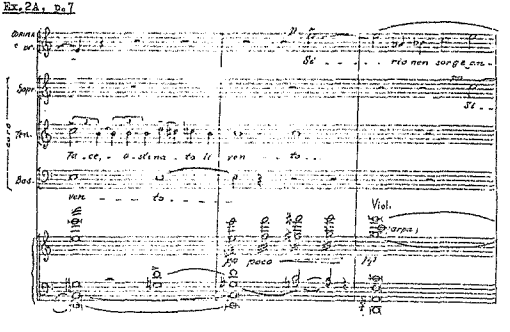
1. Waterhouse ...an C.G. THE INTERNATIONAL CYCLOPEDIA OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS. 1975 op.cit.,p.1686

Ex.2 (continued)



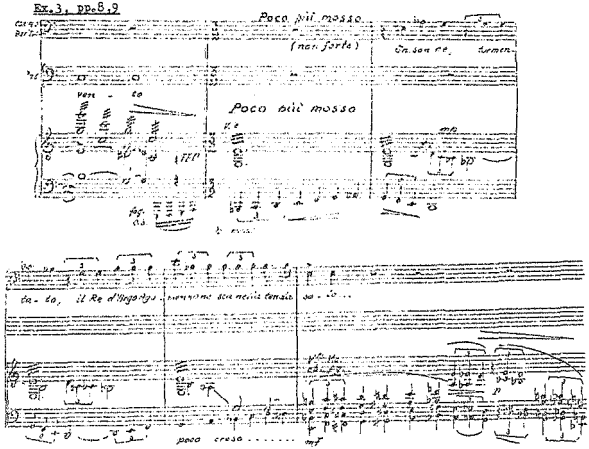
over a scantily orchestrated and almost static orchestral structure in C major which conveys the calm of the still nocturnal atmosphere. An element of disturbance is brought in by the nervous chromaticism of the melodic line to which are set the words "Tace ostinato il vento" (The wind is stubbornly silent) sung by the basses (Ex.2) and repeated in imitation, at the interval of the fifth, by the tenors:

Ex.2A, p.7



After this atmospheric setting a Herald, acting as a kind of prologue, prepares us for the ensuing action. His first utterance, "Insonne, tormentato, il Re d'Argo Agamennone sta nella tenda, solo" (Sleepless, distressed, the King of Argos, Agamemnon, is in his tent, alone) is ushered in and underlined by an upwards and downwards moving D Aeolian scalic passage (Ex.3) with a four-note falling chromatic figure in the bassoon, and supported by a re..erated E pedal in the violas which leads to an ascending and descending progression of fifths dissolving into thirds:

Ex.3, pp.8,9

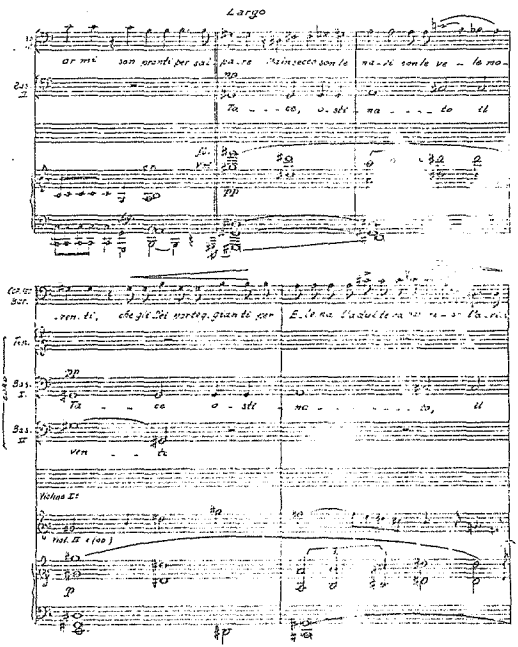


The dramatic implications of Ex.3 are made explicit by its slightly modified restatement at p.19 under the words "Un triste inganno ha teso alla fanciulla ignara chiamandola alle navi a celebrar le nozze" (A wicked trap he has laid for the unsuspecting maid in calling her to Aulis to celebrate her wedding). At the Herald's mention of Agamemnone's leadership over the army ready to sail for Troy, a fanfare-like figure, again exploiting melodically and harmonically the effect of empty fourths and fifths, sounds first in the horn and then in progressively richer harmonic and instrumental guises over a long held tonic-dominant (Dorian in D) pedal in the lower strings:

Ex.4, p.9



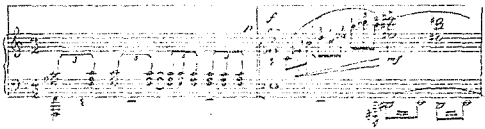
The broad opening phrase of Ex.1 enriched after two bars by the superimposition of an arching melodic line (in the first and second violin reinforced by the oboe), is brought back, in G-sharp Phrygian and in augmentation by flute and violins as an accompanying figure to the recitative passage, commented upon by the Men 's Chorus' ominous reiteration of "Tace ostinato il vento", in which the Herald tells of the malevolence of the Gods [ ] , the Hellenic expedition against Troy (Ex.5).


Largo
or mi son stanti per sas - si - re l'asciecca son le na - vi con le ve - le no -
Ta - - - ce, o - sti na - - - - - to il
Ten.
Vln
Vla
Vlc
Cb
Vlns I
Vlns II
Violins I:
Vcl. II (90)

Ex. 5, p. 10

The first allusion to the 'innocent victim' to be sacrificed on the altar by her father is marked by the appearance of a nervously articulated climbing figure, actually a broken cluster chord:

Ex.6, p.12



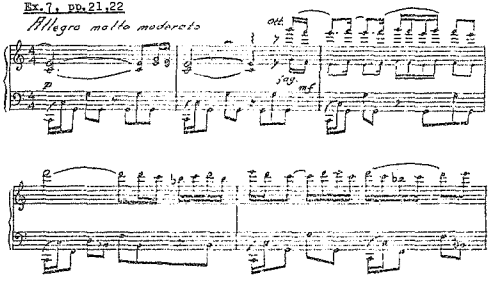
capable, thanks to its Protean quality, of assuming different shapes and forms. The Women's chorus reacts by lamenting the fate of 'the wretched King, unhappy father'. The descending chromatic motive of Ex.2, assumed by the first contraltos, echoed by the Col ea soprano and repeated in the orchestra by flute, clarinet and violins in octaves, penetrates the strictly homophonic structure of the rest of the chorus giving life to a choral episode of admirable expressiveness. As the Herald, after resuming his narrative, alludes to the arrival of 'the most beautiful of virgins', Ex.5, somewhat modified and proposed by the clarinet, steals into the tenuous sonorit of the orchestral background. Alternating, at first, with quotations of the opening music of Ex.1, it persists in the oboe and clarinet, each time in a different version, as an ominous reminder of the 'innocent victim' during the last portion of the Herald's speech which is devoted to anticipation of the imminent wedding and with which the first scene of IFIGENIA ends.

With Scene ii the action proper begins. It is daybreak.

A sprightly C Mixolydian theme, scored for piccolo and bassoon with a

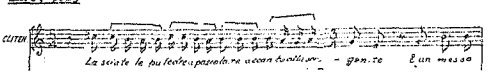
wavering tonic-dominant ostinato figure underneath

Ex.7, pp.21,22



announces the arrival of Clitemnestra followed by Ifigenia and their entourage of maidens and women in attendance . Clitemnestra's first utterance, aimed at imparting essential information for the benefit of a radio audience is not striking as far as characterization is concerned. Interesting is however the almost Debussian whole-tone passage to which the words 'Lasciate pascolare le puledre accanto alla *sorgente*" (Turn loose the fillies near the flowing spring) are set:

Ex.8, p.21



The figure of Ifigenia is delineated with light and delicate touch. Her extreme youth (according to Philip Vellacott she is probably not more than fourteen)[1] and that blend of anxiety, pity and

1. Vellacott, Philip. Introduction to IPHIGENIA IN AULIS, op.cit., p.89

tenderness which form the essence of her character are rendered and conveyed by a few musical elements: a fresh and gentle F Phrygian melody sounding however somewhat melancholy in the dark tones of viola and English horn; the pulsating rhythmic figure introducing the tonal clash A-A flat against which the melody is set and the hesitant, almost apprehensive quality of her line of recitative:

Ex. 9, pp. 24, 25 *Poco più mosso*



Taken at its face value the wedding song "Intrecciamo le danze, fanciulle" (Let's weave maidens, in the whirling dance), sung by the Women's chorus to dispell Ifigenia's vague inquietude, is refreshingly charming. The volatile, rapid modal scales introducing and accompanying it, the lilting little tune proposed by the First sopranos and repeated in free imitation by the Second sopranos and contraltos, the violins (later, flute) traceries and, last but not least, the attractive levity of the words, combine to conjure up a mood of joyous excitement (Ex. 10):


mp
Ah
Jme. neo
Jme. neo
Jme. neo
Jme. neo
mf delta
Jme. neo
Intre - cie - mo de dan - zas fan -

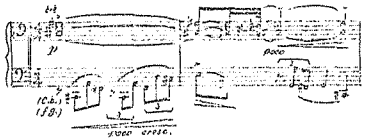
Ex. 10. p.29

Ex. 10A



Exs. 10, 10A, p. 30

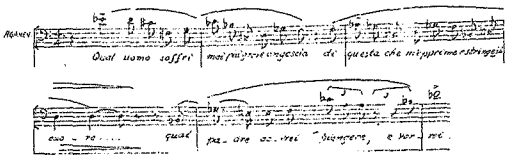
We cannot however miss the dramatic implications suggested by the four-note falling chromatic figure of Ex.2, formerly also associated with 'unhappy father' (see score, pp.17-19) and now used, with obvious symbolism, as a setting for the words "Fausto Imeneo" (Prosperous Hymen, Ex.10A). Punctuating, and concluding the choral section, Ex.10A is still heard, as a distant echo, at the beginning of the following scene (iii) entirely devoted to Agamennone's protracted, but powerfully dramatic monologue "Qual uomo soffrì più grave angoscia" (What man has ever suffered such an anguish,(p.38-), almost literally transferred from Euripides and showing the conflict between the man, owing loyalty to his family, and the king, 'a slave to the masses', to whom human emotions are forbidden. Agamennone, the tormented father and king, is limned in a series of orchestral motives all containing, in their erratic skips and chromatic steps, an element of anguish and unrest. This figure: Ex.11, p.36



scouring in double bass and bassoon under minor triads in the trombones, and assuming more definite shapes at each of its repetitions, prefaces the

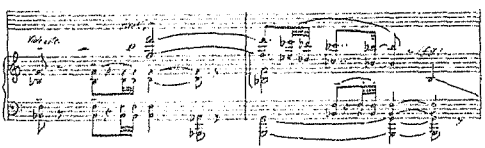
speech of Agamemnone quoted above. The speech is set to lines of declamation also characterized by nervous contours, comparatively wide intervals, leaping anacruses

Ex. 12, p. 38,39



and chromatic steps often emphasized in imitation by the orchestral support. The words "Qual padre dovrei piangere, e vorrei ma un tal conforto a un Re non è concesso" (As a father I should, and would like to weep, but such comfort is denied to a King) are underlined by a fragment of the B-flat Phrygian scale descending in the violins, with interjections of reiterated and rhythmicized fifths from cellos and violas,

Ex. 13, p. 39



whilst the passage "Che cosa potrò dire a Clitennestra? Come fissare gli occhi suoi di madre? (How can I tell it to Clytemnestra? How can I meet the eyes of the mother?) is commented upon by this well-articulated, grinding figure (Ex. 14)

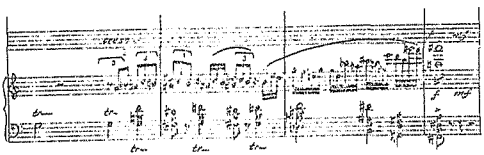
Ex.14, p.41



which soon combines with Ex.13 to form a fairly complex background for the dramatic questioning "Come fissare gli occhi dell'agnello?" (How can I meet the eye of the lamb?, p.44). Agamemnone's solo is followed by a choral episode in which the Men's Chorus, heard from behind the scene, demand that the sacrifice be made without delay. The fanfare-like motive of Ex.4, set against a persistent triplet ostinato oscillation of B-flat _ A flat, cuts through the choral texture woven out of successive entries, becoming more and more assertive in its subsequent, fuller re-statements and eventually giving way to thematic development (Ex.15). Snatches of themes previously heard (Ex.12 in oboe and clarinet and Ex.2 in the bassoon) discreetly support Agamemnone's "Sole nefasto..." (Ill-omened sun..., pp.52-3) whilst Ex.4, alternating between horns and trumpets over long-held chords in the violins punctuates the Men's Chorus' shouts "O re Agamennone" (O King Agamemnon) with which scene iii ends.

Scene iv, linked to the previous one by a crescendo harp passage of triplet chords of fourths and fifths, begins with the Wedding Chorus "Intrecciamo le danze" sung by the women escorting Clitennestra and Ifigenia onto the stage. It is interrupted with quotations of the sprightly tune previously heard on the occasion of Clitennestra's arrival (Ex.7), now emphasizing the joyous excitement with which she anticipates the happy events of the day. Again the disquieting chromatic pattern of Ex.2 appears both in chorus and orchestra for "Fausto Imeneo" dramatically carrying on the conflict between the more obvious meaning of the words and their tragic implications. Announced by the cheers of the army, Agamennone arrives, the martial horn and trumpet calls which accompany him contrasting with the gentle sadness of the Ifigenia theme (Ex.9), at first timidly hinted at by first violin and oboe combined and then developing into a tense passage supported by a succession of chords of the seventh:

Ex.15, p.65



Used in fragments or in its entirity, given to different instruments and subjected to changes according to the dramatic necessity of the moment, Ex.9 plays a vital role during the episode of Ifigenia's meeting with her father. It stresses her affectionate longing for him, her distress at

finding him so remote and preoccupied and her bewilderment, tinged with a shade of apprehension, at his obscure (to her) allusions to their reunion, in a distant future, after a painfully long separation. Especially moving is Agamemnone's passage "Biondi capelli, gote delicate, grembo innocente" (bright hair, soft cheeks, innocent womb) set to a vocal line seemingly derived from the ominous pattern of Ex.2 and sustained by chords moving through third relations:

Ex.16, p.72



The duologue during which Agamemnon, after Ifigenia's departure, asks Clitemnestra to leave at once for Mycenae without attending their daughter' wedding is carried on in swift recitative. The orchestra complements with reiterated statements of Ex.12 in cellos and bassoon reinforced at the octave by violas and clarinet. A thrusting figure in inverted dotted rhythm appears in oboe and English horn:

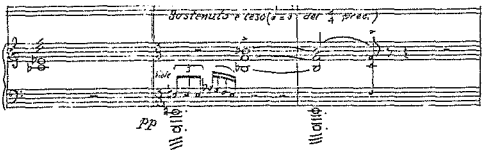
Ex.17

Ex.17, p.77



followed by a vigorous motive alternating quaver triplets with semiquavers

Ex.18, p.78



and henceforward much exploited in its symbolic association with the idea of war and of "the kind of action to which war commits those who become involved with it"[1]. This motive appears throughout the instrumental section - *Molto concitato* -, which follows the Agamennone-Clitennestra duologue and concludes Part I, serving also as a preface to Part II. Ex.18 is repeated over and over, practically without any harmonic support, interest being provided by the instrumental colouring, the dynamic effects, the variety of the rhythmic interplay and the quick and steady pace, all of which contributes to the inexorably propelling sense of movement which seem to lead towards something ineluctable (pp.83, 85). It is not surprising that this same instrumental passage should recur (much shortened) towards the end of the music drama, concluding the actual action and leading into the Epilogue showing how, after 'centuries and millennia', the incurable folly which had

1. Vellacott, Philip. Introduction to IPHIGENIA IN AULIS, op.cit.,p.84

oppressed innocence at Aulis is still claiming its victims for the altar of war. As in Euripides', war appears in Pizzetti's IFIGENIA stripped of all its "romantic trappings"[1]. What the Greek heroes intend to do 'for the glory of Hellas', is realistically described by the Men's Chorus in the episode (scene i) with which the second part of IFIGENIA begins:

Saggiate il [illegible] dello scatto
della lancia mortale,
saggiate l'arco e il dardo
dallo scatto fatale.
Si rompan gli indugi!
Si salpi sulle navi!
Dal mare giungeremo,
onda di lance e spade,
a diroccar le mura
dell'orgogliosa Troia.
Vedrem fuggir tremando
i nemici sgomenti:
vedrem le donne frigie
gementi ai nostri piedi.
Vittoria e gloria all'Ellade!

(You will soon try the power
of our mortal spears,
and the fatal precision
of our bows and arrows.
Let us disband the fleet,
Let us set sail for Troy!
[illegible] army of bronze shields,
[illegible] will advance over the sea
to raze to its foundations
the walls of Troy, the proud.
Sobs from the Phrygian women
will mingle with the cries
of the dismayed enemy.
For the glory of Hellas!)

This chorus (Ex.19), characterized by the prevalent homophonic style of vocal writing, the squareness of the rhythm of the ostinato-like support and the metallic coruscation of the orchestra shining in the penetrating tones of trumpets, horns and trombones and galvanized

1. Vellacott, Philip. Introduction to IFIGENIA IN AULIS, op.cit., p.28


CORIF. TEN.
CORIF. BARIT.
f
Sag-gia-te il ta-glica
Sag-gia-te il ta-glica
Sag-gia-te il ta-glica

Ex.19, pp.86.87



Ex.19 (continued)

by drum beats, is followed by the scene (ii) in which Clitennestra comes to know from Achille that it is to the sacrifice, and not to the wedding ceremony that Agamennone wishes to lead his daughter. Achille is a rather shallow figure, furnished with an unimaginative theme:

Ex.20, p.99



and mainly fulfilling the need for the imparting of information.[1] The most notable moment of this extremely compressed scene is Clitennestra's lament "Figlia innocente!" (Innocent daughter!), where the expressiveness of the declamation, dramatically heightened by the downward lines to which these words are set, is matched by the doleful sombreness of the 'molto espressivo' E Phrygian motive descending on violas and English horn over a tremolando pedal in the bass (and obviously derived from Ex.13):

Ex.21, p.110



Scene iii is ushered in by a brief orchestral passage based, again, on Ex.18, also used as an accompanying figure for the episode in which Agamennone, to Clitennestra's horror, proclaims his submission to the will of both the Gods - who exact the blood of an unblemished sacrifice, and of his own army - demanding victory. Clitennestra's "Ascolta, o Re, la madre di tua figlia..." (Listen, o King, the mother of your daughter...) where she, whilst throwing herself at Agamennone's feet begs him to spare their child's life, is dramatically phrased and interestingly complemented by a complex supporting texture made of different rhythmic and melodic ostinato patterns occurring simultaneously:

Ex.22, p.119



After being repeated identically five times, this texture accomodates some variations within the overall scheme and special emphasis is given to the upper part which, first played on the strings and successively taken over by English horn, flute and violin, and, eventually, by violin, flute and clarinet, serves as a lengthy but almost tantalizing preparation for the nervously shifting chromatic figure of Ex.12 dramatically enhancing the emotion of Agamennone's

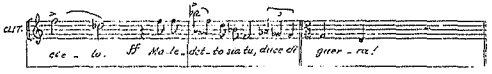
outburst "Non colpirmi più a fondo" (Do not strike me so mercilessly, p.123-). As the narration progresses and the army roars in the distance, one of those typically Pizzettian ostinato-themes, blunt, and implacably onward-moving, establishes itself in the bass:

Ex.23, p.125



Announced by lower strings and bassoon, Ex.23 persists throughout Clitemnestra's succeeding speech "Belve crudeli, scatenate, cieche" (You cruel beasts, blind and blood-thirsty), marked by a suppressed fury eventually bursting out at "Maledetto sia tu, duce di guerra" (Cursed be you, leader of war):

Ex.24, p.131



and followed by the ominous threat "E tremi l'assassino al suo ritorno" (I will await your coming!, Ex. 25) which brings scene iii to an end:

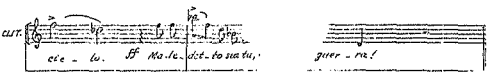
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Ex.23, p.125



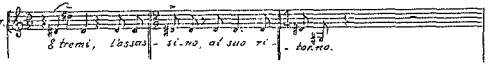
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Ex.24, p.131



and followed by the ominous threat "E tremi l'assassino al suo ritorno" (I will await your coming!, Ex. 25) which brings scene iii to an end:

Ex.25,p.131



The mood and atmosphere of scene iv, ensuing without interruption, is set by the Chorus singing first in *unison* and then in free imitation over an orchestral background in which Ex.21 features conspicuously, the mournful lines

> Figlia innocente! Figlia sventurata
> che il canto nuziale
> odi mutarsi in funebre lamento...
>
> (Innocent daughter! Ill-doomed child,
> your wedding song is turned
> into a chant of mourning...)

Heralded by the Men's exclamation "Ecco la vittima..." (Here comes the victim) Ifigenia's enters. Showing no surprise at Clitennestra' announcement that she has been betrayed by her father (a dramatically weak point redeemed however by the intense expressiveness of the music), she addresses her mother in words filled with compassion. With the greatest delicacy she then pleads for her life with Agamennone, gently claiming her right to see the light, to breath the air on earth'. Poignantly sad, her theme (Ex.9) is repeatedly recalled by English horn, oboe and clarinet in B flat Phrygian over tugging, repeated chords in the strings. It momentarily asserts itself in an orchestral forte at the climactic point of her speech (p.137), then subsides to 'piano dolce', in the clarinets, as she asks of her father the strength she cannot find in herself.

The ensuing choral section, for sopranos and contraltos with Clitennestra

repeatedly interjecting "Figliola mia" (My daughter!) is remarkable for simplicity and restraint. Its slow-moving, rather archaic and straightforward vocal lines, only ruffled by the intrusion of the ominous chromatic pattern of Ex.2 at the words "bagnati del tuo *pianto*", (p.141) convey a sense of remote aloofness which, rather than ameliorating, seems to intensify the elegiac pathos of the very beautiful endecasyllabic lines proposing, and at the same time immediately destroying, images of happiness:

> Taccion la cetra e il flauto e la zampogna.
> I fiori che cogliesti nel giardino
> della tua casa in Argo, son bagnati
> del pianto tuo, fanciulla sventurata.
> Lascia la veste candida di sposa
> e vesti i panni dell'agnello mite.
> Taccion la cetra e il flauto e la zampogna.
> E tace il mare, il cielo s'è velato...
> Taccion le pietre gèlide d'orrore.
>
> (Silent are zither, flute and reedy pipes.
> The flowers which you gathered in the garden
> of your home in Argos are bathed with the tears
> shed for your eyes, ill-doomed child.
> Leave the pure whiteness of your bridal robe
> and wear the garment of the victim-lamb.
> Silent are zither, flute and reedy pipes.
> Silent is the sea. The sky has turned grey...
> The stones are silent too, frozen with horror.)

The lights and shadows evoked by this intensely poetic passage, rounded off with the Corifea's comment "Soltanto Clitemnestra ulula e geme" (Clytemnestra alone wails and cries) are [illegible] subtly enhanced by the orchestra discreetly recalling, with new instrumentation and rhythmic and harmonic means, the broad and flexible, slightly ominous phrase heard at the beginning of the opera, Ex.1. An echo of it


figlia la mia!
Taccion la cetra e l'flauto e chiuso
e ve - sti i panni dell'agnel - lo mi - - - - te...
spo - sa e ve - sti i pan - ni dell'agnello mi - - - te...
fe - glia la mia...
- po - gna - - - -
Taccion le pic - tre gelide d'or
Il sce - lo s'a - ve -
E ta - ce il
orna - - - - - - - - - - ve

Ex.26, p.142

persists in the thrice repeated minims (given out, at different pitches, by various instruments over a wavering movement in the violas supported by sustained fifths and octaves *in the bass*, Ex.26) heard towards the end of the choral episode and eventually settling down on an unresolved chord of the thirteenth on B supporting the plaintive "Oh!" given to sopranos and contraltos whilst the clarinets embark on a *progression of* consecutive perfect fourths incorporating Ex.2. This serves as an introduction to Ifigenia's passage "Madre, viemmi più presso, ch'io possa toccarti. Son tanto sola" (Come nearer, mother, so that I can touch you. I am so lonely). Set to eloquent recitative lines this passage, continuously broken up by Clitennestra's passionate utterances and by the impatient shouts of the army, expresses, after the initial pathos, Ifigenia's concern for her family and then willingness to serve the cause of her country. The graphically suggestive, descending scalic figure quoted at Ex.21 lends its doleful sombreness to the orchestral accompaniment of the Corifea's

> S'apra la terra a soffocar nel Buio
> lo strazio delle madri
> che partoriscon figli per la guerra,
> per riscattar con sangue e lutti e lacrime
> colpe che non commisero e non sanno.
>
> (May earth gape wide to smother in its darkness
> the torments of all mothers
> whose children's lives are demanded in war
> to expiate with blood and tears and mournings
> sins they neither know, nor have committed.)

Ex.21, three times repeated in B-flat Phrygian, each time a step higher and eventually sinking down at its last appearance through two octaves, is punctuated by a wailing melisma in the sopranos (actually an echo of

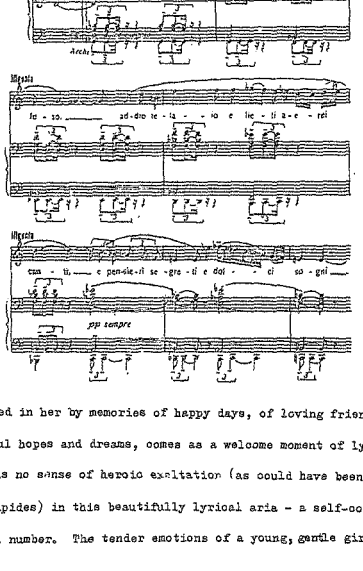
persists in the thrice repeated *minims* (given out, at different pitches, by various instruments over a wavering movement in the violas supported by sustained fifths and octaves in the bass, Ex.26) heard towards the end of the choral episode and eventually settling down on an unresolved chord of the thirteenth on B supporting the plaintive "Oh!" given to sopranos and contraltos whilst the clarinets embark on a progression of consecutive perfect fourths incorporating Ex.2. This serves as an introduction to *Ifigenia's* passage "Madre, viemmi più presso, ch'io possa toccarti. Son tanto sola" (Come nearer, mother, so that I can touch you. I am so lonely). Set to eloquent recitative lines this passage, continuously broken up by Clitennestra's passionate utterances and by the impatient shouts of the army, expresses, after the initial pathos, Ifigenia's concern for her family and then willingness to serve the cause of her country. The graphically suggestive, descending scalic *figure quoted at* Ex.21 lends its doleful sombreness to the orchestral accompaniment of the Corifea's

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> lo strazio delle madri
> che partoriscon figli per la guerra,
> per riscattar con sangue e lutti e lacrime
> colpe che non commisero e non sanno.
>
> (*May earth gape wide to smother in its darkness*
> the torments of all mothers
> whose children's lives are demanded in war
> to expiate with blood and tears and mournings
> sins they neither know, nor have committed.)

Ex.21, three times repeated in D-flat Phrygian, each time a step higher and eventually sinking down at its last appearance through two octaves, is punctuated by a wailing melisma in the sopranos (actually an echo of

its first four no s) finally taken over, in imitation, by combined double bass and bassoon and English horn. After the intensity of this last episode Ifigenia's farewell aria "Addio mie quiete stanze"(Farewell my quiet rooms):

Ex.27, pp.132, 134 -



inspired in her by memories of happy days, of loving friends and youthful hopes and dreams, comes as a welcome moment of lyricism. There is no sense of heroic exaltation (as could have been suggested by Euripides) in this beautifully lyrical aria - a self-contained musical number. The tender emotions of a young, gentle girl are


p dolce
- cin - ti degni d'ver col - - - ti . . . . . de - gni d'es - ser ad. ti.
pp
101
dalle mani di vi ne delle Dee . . . . . .
(2 fl. e cl.)
p
(come)
Ad. dio, ad. dio glo - ri'infan.
ob.
pp

Ex.28, p.156

conveyed by a fairly elaborate vocal part ornamented with occasional melismatic passages and equalling, in its intense lyricism, the poetic language which Euripides usually reserves for the most imaginative stasima of his choral odes. Ifigenia's aria, starting in G Phrygian over a pulsating figure in the strings to which the bassoon adds touches of colour, is sparsely but exquisitely orchestrated. Pastoral instruments -flute, clarinet and oboe- vying with the voice or delicately emulating it (Ex.28), predominate in the middle part of the aria adding, with their bright, crisp and 'open air' tone, to the wondrous freshness, luminosity and fragrance of the poetic lines:

> Addio mattine chiare e campi e valli,
> nevosi monti e fiori a primavera,
> rose e giacinti degni d'esser còlti
> dalle mani divine delle Dee.
> Addio giochi infantili e danze alate,
> e corse a gara e risa spensierate...
>
> (Farewell clear mornings, verdant fields and valleys,
> gleaming white mountains, flowers in the spring,
> roses and hyacinths for Goddesses to pick.
> Farewell games of my youths and winged dances,
> pleasure in racing, carefree smiles and laughters...)

The opening fragment of Ifigenia's theme (Ex.9) is inevitably and movingly brought back by the clarinet and then by the lower strings as a pathetic commentary on her final words of farewell to her beloved country. When, after the healing effect of memories, the less merciful reality of the present is abruptly brought back to her by the sight of her father 'gazing at something he does not want to see', the restless motive associated with Agamemnone (Ex.12)

creeps into the orchestral bassi. Tension is immediately re-established and the string tremolando in demisemiquaver shifting minor thirds and triadic chords (pp.160, 161) accompanies and represents Ifigenia's bewilderment and agitation as she, first in broken sentences and then breaking into an outburst impressively ending with a leap to high B, utters her last words as if in answer to the Corifeo's "Per l'onore e la gloria della patria..." (For the glory and honour of the homeland):

Onore ... Gloria ... Patria ...
Forse son troppo stanca, non comprendo...
Ohimè, ch'è tardi. No,
non voglio chiuder gli occhi
nel buio della notte!
Luce del giorno, luce della vita,
splendente luce, luce amata, addio!

(*Honour ... Glory ... Homeland ...*
I am perhaps too tired to understand...
Alas, it is getting late. No,
I do not want to close my eyes
in the darkness of night!
Light of the day, torch-bearer to this world,
bright, dazzling light so dear to me, farewell!)

Once again the falling chromatic figure which plays so important a part in the opera (Ex.2) provides a suitably telling vehicle for both Clitennestra's outcries "Figliola mia!" and the exclamations of the Women's Chorus. After being interrupted by the shouts of the army, bringing back in the orchestra the fanfare-like motive of Ex.4, these cries are heard again, in the distance, at the end of the brief instrumental postlude based on the theme of war (Ex.18, with Ex.4 intermingling) which forms the transition between the dramatic action and the Epilogue. At the moment the knife should fall, a dark mist obscures the scene to veil the sight of the 'atrocious crime'. A


Una voce recitante: (più alta)
quando ?
Se guardi soltanto ai peccati e
alle colpe chi degli uomini, potrà
più reste -
mf
pp
110
mf
I.
Sop.
mp
Why ?
Qua - re, quare,
2.
mf
Per. ché
Qua - re, qua.re,
Ca.
Pour - quoi ?
Qua - - re ?
Ten.
Parque ?
Qua - re, qua - re
I.
Bas.
Warum ? - - - Wa - rum ?
2.
Una voce recitante
- mersi ?
mmp

Ex.29, p.168


Molto tratt.
(Lamia intenso)
Sup
Qua
re
Sti... ti-mi-qui-
Ten.
Bas
A tempo
Largo
p ma risonante

Ex.30, p.169


Molto tratt.
(p - ma intenso)
1. Sop.
2.
C.B.
Ten.
1.
Bass
2.
Qua - re
Si... i - ni - qui -
A tempo
Largo
p ma pesante

Ex. 30, p. 169

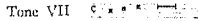
reciting voice, rising clearly above the seething orchestral background utters the disillusioned words "E son passati secoli e millenni..." . This prompts the Chorus to the despairing "Perchè?" (Ex.29) which, repeated in various languages and tossed from one voice group to the other seems to echo in the emptiness suggested by the accompanying music until it explodes in the tonally clashing, fortissimo "Quare?". Then the Chorus embarks on the heartfelt, touching supplication, obviously inspired by Psalm 130 (De profundis), verse 3:[1]

Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine,
Domine, quis substinebit?
Ne irascaris, Domine.
Dona nobis pacem.

(If thou only consider our iniquities,
O Lord, who can survive?
Be not angry with us, Lord.
Grant us thy peace.)

This extended but splendidly sustained last choral episode, built upon an almost obsessive repetition of the words, begins with the Women's voices singing, in unison and over an ostinato-like pattern, the first two lines of the text. Their melodic phrase starts with a quotation of the mediation of the Gregorian Tone VII (see Ex.30) :

Ex.30B

Tone VII 

and, after freely unfolding, it is restated, a fifth above and almost identically, by the tenors entering before the end of its enunciation. As the tenors continue, the Women's voices embark on an imitative passage at the end of which the First basses (sopranos and basses are divided into two groups) also enter with Ex.30. The contrapuntal

1. "If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss O Lord, who may abide it?".

reciting voice, rising clearly above the seething orchestral background utters the disillusioned words "E son passati secoli e millenni..." . This prompts the Chorus to the despairing "Perchè?" (Ex.29) which, repeated in various languages and tossed from one voice group to the other seems to echo in the emptiness suggested by the accompanying music until it explodes in the tonally clashing, fortissimo "Quare?". Then the Chorus embarks on the heartfelt, touching supplication, obviously inspired by Psalm 130 (De profundis), verse 3:[1]

Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine,
Domine, quis substinebit?
Ne irascaris, Domine.
Dona nobis pacem.

(If thou only consider our iniquities,
O Lord, who can survive?
Be not angry with us, Lord.
Grant us thy peace.)

This extended but splendidly sustained last choral episode, built upon an almost obsessive repetition of the words, begins with the Women's voices singing, in unison and over an ostinato-like pattern, the first two lines of the text. Their melodic phrase starts with a quotation of the mediation of the Gregorian Tone VII (see Ex.30) :

Ex.30B

Tone VII 

and, after freely unfolding, it is restated, a fifth above and almost identically, by the tenors entering before the end of its enunciation. As the tenors continue, the Women's voices embark on an imitative passage at the end of which the First basses (sopranos and basses are divided into two groups) also enter with Ex.30. The contrapuntal

1. "If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss.
O Lord, who may abide it?".

action becomes more lively and a triplet figure appears in sopranos and Second basses, exploiting melismatic effects, in the C Phrygian passage starting at p.172:

Ex.31, p.172



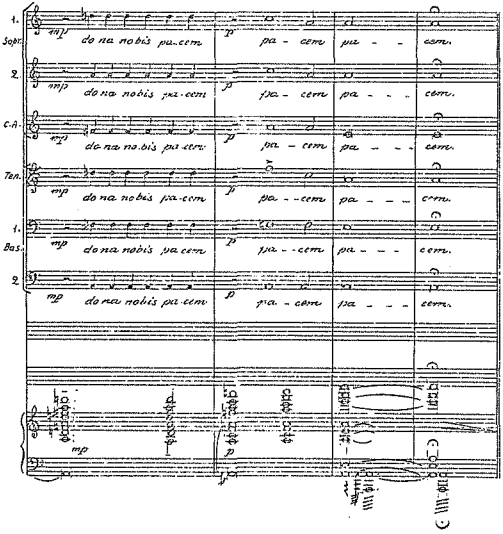
The choral texture swells and relaxes as the voices proceed together giving rise to an architectural construction of the utmost simplicity, the interweaving of the lines serving mainly to bring out the expressiveness of the rhythmic and melodic features. A climax is reached at the words 'Donas nobis pacem' which lead to a homophonic final cadence of nine bars under which the orchestra recalls the broad, spacious phrase from the opening of the music drama in augmentation and again in A Phrygian (Ex.32). A *succession* of repeated chords, moving slowly over a tonic pedal in the tenuous orchestral background resolves on a thirdless chord, its last vibrations supporting the word 'Pacem' repeated, for the last time, as the curtain falls (Ex.32.)


1. Sop.
2.
C.B.
Ten.
1. bas.
2.
pp
Pa - cem
dona nobis
pa - cem,
ma no - bis
cem,
Molto largo quasi sereno
mp
dolce quasi sempre
Ped.

Ex. 32, p. 181


pp
Sop.
pa - cem - - - - - -
Do na nobis pacem
A.
pa - cem - - - -
Do na nobis pacem
C.T.
pa - cem - - - -
Do na nobis pacem
Ten.
pa - cem - - - - - -
Do na nobis pacem
I.
Bas.
pa - cem - - - - - -
Do na nobis pacem
S.
pa - cem - - - - - -
Do na nobis pacem

Ex. 32, p. 182



Ex.32, p.183

—— ooo ——

In writing of the opening night of the XXI International Festival of Contemporary Music in Venice (1959), entirely devoted to Pizzetti's work, Massimo Mila described IFIGENIA (performed, in oratorio form, together with the Prelude to FEDRA and the Intermezzo from ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE) as "the first opera among those of Pizzetti's old age showing evidence of renewed artistic vitality after the decline noticeable in the dramatic works belonging to the period 1935-1949 (from ORSEOLO to VANNA LUPA)"[1]. In spite of the austerity of its plot but possibly because of its extreme conciseness, IFIGENIA is one of the most fascinating and most enjoyable of Pizzetti's music dramas. This 'musical tragedy' does not actually mark a turning point in the tranquil evolution of Pizzetti's style. The music, elegiac, vaguely pastoral and eminently lyrical in even the most dramatic moments of the action is "quella di sempre"[2], (the same as ever), as stated by Franco Abbiati in his review of the first stage performance of the work. The dramatic conception adheres in fact strictly to Pizzetti's by now well-known principles. Musically, IFIGENIA possesses those qualities of noble inspiration, organic unity, subtle lyricism and artistic sensitivity usually associated with Pizzetti's best music dramas. What however makes IFIGENIA the unique work it is, is the success with which Pizzetti, obviously prompted by the exigencies of the medium for which he was writing, gives special consideration

1. Mila, Massimo. CRONACHE MUSICALI, p.163.

2. Abbiati, Franco. "La prima di IFIGENIA, di Ildebrando Pizzetti", Corriere della Sera, 10 May, 1952, p.2

to matters concerning dramatic pace, sustained dramatic interest, variety of moods and emphasis on pictorial and atmospheric effects. The weight of the drama is, as usual in Pizzetti, carried by the vocal lines, flexible and powerful enough to convey both intensity of emotion and nuances of feeling. The characters are sensitively and sympathetically approached and the anguished restlessness of Agamemnone, Clitennestra's passion and suffering and the pathetic bewilderment of Ifigenia are conveyed in a telling and forcible manner. The orchestra is used not merely to accompany singers and chorus but also as an important feature of the actual drama and as a means to 'exteriorize' the action. Martial music, trumpet calls, marches and shouts, interspersed between and within the various scenes, continuously make us aware that the setting is a military camp where an impatient army is ready to set off on a war expedition. The spaciousness, transparency and luminosity of the rest of the music, on the other hand, suggestively evokes the background of this peculiar tragedy which, unlike CLITENNESTRA, does not take place in the palace of Agamemnon, impregnated with horror and where "death drifts through the doorways"[1], but on the rocky seashore of Aulis bathed in the changing light of the day (the action being concentrated into the space of one twelfe-hour period of daylight). IFIGENIA's remarkable organic coherence is achieved by means of the use of a few, recurrent, easily identifiable and well-characterized motives carrying unambiguous symbolic and

1. Hamilton, Edith. THE GREEK WAY (TO WESTERN CIVILIZATION), p.178

dramatic connotations. In the harmonic idiom we note a tendency towards *simpler* harmonies with a marked preference for the intervals of fourths and fifths (also prominently featured melodically) whilst the interval of the third is more frequently treated as a colouring interval than as a chordal component. The whole-tone scale is sporadically used in the first part of the score and chromaticism, *mainly employed as an* element of disturbance and therefore serving a strictly dramatic purpose, recedes before diatonicism and modal writing. In IFIGENIA Pizzetti gives the chorus an even more important part than usual and choruses of various types abound in the music drama. Apart from independent numbers for chorus alone, many of the episodes use the chorus as a dramatic counterbalance to the action or as a commentary on the characters' feelings or changing situations, much as the chorus was used in the classical Greek drama. Noteworthy for its extraordinary poignancy and for the depth of tragedy that it confers upon the work is the appeal to the Lord with which IFIGENIA closes.

The ethico-dramatic conception of IFIGENIA is, like the musical realization, in keeping with Pizzetti's repeatedly asserted principles related to the music drama. His adaptation of Euripides' tragedy is not only essential but competent, and capable of accomodating his own interpretation of the myth. The conclusion imagined by Pizzetti added to the symbolism already contained in the dramatic source a new dimension and a more universal aspect. In Pizzetti's Epilogue, venturing beyond the end of the original action, the drama is not

only brought from the past into the present but projected into the future as well. It states clearly the author's point of view, his bewilderment at the fact that violence may be brought about not by evil but by ordinary people and that, if the murderous folly which destroyed innocence at Aulis is still claiming its victims, there is no hope of man learning from past and excruciating experiences. Too much blood still defiles the altars of war . Too much ruthlessness and violence still engender 'ruins, slaughters, tears and mournings'. There is hardly, I believe, anything more touching, and at the same time more thought-provoking than the plea for peace with which IFIGENIA ends. It is the imploration of the living for the dead: for the young men fallen on the battlefield 'in obedience to a call to crucifying sacrifice for the sake of others'[1]; for the victims of the concentration camps - old men, women, children, all those who have been denied the joys of life, suffering helplessly for crimes which they did not commit and would never understand and who, like Ifigenia, were "rediscovering in their last agonies the fresh innocence of older anguishes"[2].

— oOo —

1 . Pierik, Marie. THE SONG OF THE CHURCH, p.249.

2. Schwarz-Bart, André. THE LAST OF THE JUST, p.407.

CHAPTER III

LA FIGLIA DI IORIO

LA FIGLIA DI IORIO , on which Pizzetti's music drama is based, is usually regarded as D'Annunzio's masterpiece. It was originally conceived for the tragic actress Eleonora Duse[1] with a mind to her dramatic abilities. Written and completed in less than a month it bears the mark of a spontaneity of inspiration usually absent from D'Annunzio's dramatic works. Is is known that this story of lust and blood was derived from an episode witnessed by the poet and his painter-friend Francesco Michetti when, during a holiday in a small village of their native Abruzzi, they saw a young woman running in a frenzied and dishevelled state through the streets of the village pursued by a band of reapers intoxicated with wine and the effect of the summer sun. This scene, immediately elaborated by Michetti in a series of sketches and, finally, in what remains his most famous painting, lingered for many years in D'Annunzio's memory, slowly shaping itself in subconscious gestation. After the completion of the work D'Annunzio wrote to Michetti:[2]

> I felt the sensation that my roots were receiving life from my native land, and I experienced an indescribable happiness. In this tragedy everything is new and simple,

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1. The role was instead given, to Eleonora Duse's distress, to the young and still unknown actress Irma Gramatica, whose performance won however the acclaim of both critics and public
2. The letter, dated August 31, 1903, is reproduced in the Introduction to LA FIGLIA DI IORIO , p.8

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> everything is violent and, at the same time, poised. The primitive man, in the midst of a changeless nature, speaks the language of elemental passions. My period is: 'in the Abruzzi of many years ago'. The substance of these characters is the eternal human essence: of to-day or of two thousand years ago. The action is set in the timeless context of a legendary past, as in popular narrative. The folk-song of my people has suggested to me both moods and accents. The unbroken verse, simple and direct, goes straight to the soul. There is something Homeric in certain scenes of grief - an effect I did not search for. The weeping of a shepherd is not dissimilar to Priam's lamentation.[1]

D'Annunzio, who regarded this tragedy as an 'ancient dream', dedicated it to 'the land of Abruzzi' and to all his folk 'between the mountain and the sea'. LA FIGLIA DI IORIO is, in fact, the revelation, through characters endowed with the universality of symbols, of a primordial world of instincts and passions, of religious fears and superstitious terrors. A world in which life is attuned to the rhythm of the seasons and the only known realities are those of life and death, of love and hatred. The grim realism of many situations appears to be, in the play, toned down by the atmosphere of dream and remoteness established by a poetic idiom amply relying on archaic words and obsolete modes of expression and enriched, as usual in D'Annunzio, with all the "seductions of verbal music".[2] Some of the weaknesses which mar even the best of D'Annunzio's theatrical works - a certain lack of dramatic perspective and the inconsistency of characters more keen to embark on

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1. See footnote 2, on preceding page.
2. Gabriele D'Annunzio and THE DAUGHTER OF IORIO. In REPRESENTATIVE CONTINENTAL DRAMAS. REVOLUTIONARY AND TRADITIONAL, p.209.

lyrical utterances than to disclose convincingly their innermost feelings or to motivate their actions - are also present in LA FIGLIA DI IORIO. Here, they are however mitigated by the nature of the play. We can accept the three sisters' songs and rigmaroles, the mother's and the kindred's ritual formulae of blessing and good wishes, their litanies, as a genuine expression of customs and traditions.[1]. We can also accept Aligi's dreamy attitude and his half-mystical and half-lyrical digressions. His living in the mountains as a shepherd seems to have cut him off from all realities. He has slept 'years seven hundred' and has 'lost the memory of the days of his cradle'. He belongs to the mountains, and there he must return as to the only place where innocence is still possible. Also living in the mountains, surrounded by the purity of the snow, is Cosma the saint, who knows that 'all the ways of mankind appear the direct ways to man; but the Lord God is weighing heart-secrets'. He is the symbol of secular wisdom, and appropriately speaks in the hieratic manner of the prophets. The more realistic characters, like the rough-hewn, lusty and brutal Lazaro di Roio, Aligi's father and enemy, and the violent band of reapers are undoubtedly less convincing and their language sounds annoyingly insincere. Besides, the world of irreality which they represent does not seem to fuse dramatically with the world

1. All details correspond to authentic customs and traditions of Abruzzi. See A.De Nino USI E COSTUMI ABRUZZESI. Barbera 1879-1897, vol.VI.

of dream and innocence. To both worlds belongs Mila di Codra, the daughter of Iorio, the sorcerer. She is the pivotal centre of the drama, and D'Annunzio has endowed her with an extraordinary dramatic individuality. It is from the words of the reapers that we know Mila as 'the woman of stables and hay-stacks well known of all companies', a'bitch roamer over mountains and valleys'. However, from her first appearance when, to escape the madly excited pack of reapers she bursts into Lazaro's house during the celebration of the wedding of Aligi to Vienda and seeks refuge on the hearth, she immediately appears to us as a victim of passion and suffering. In the second act, when we find her in the mountain living in chaste union with Aligi, she defines herself as 'a well-spring tramped on and trodden'. To save Aligi and her newly born innocence, and to expiate for all the evil unwittingly caused, she will allow herself to be burnt at the stake as a witch. Her sacrifice will only be understood by Ornella, the pure in heart who, by greeting Mila as 'her sister in Jesus' foresees for her the peace and blessing of Heaven. Whe in the last scene, Mila, running towards the stake exalts the beauty of the purifying flames, she appears to us as the symbol of the destroying and regenerating flame of love.

Given a protagonist like Mila di Codra, so similar to, and possibly a prototype of the heroines of Pizzetti's own music dramas, it is no wonder that D'Annunzio's play should have appealed to the composer's imagination. Why Pizzetti had waited half a century to set a subject so congenial to him we do not know.

We may conjecture that the failure of Franchetti's opera on the same subject (1906) had deterred him from a similar attempt. In fact, as already stated[1], with the exception of Pizzetti's FEDRA, of 1909 - a success which did not however satisfy its author -, all the dramatic works by D'Annunzio, set by composers such as Debussy, Mascagni, Zandonai and Montemezzi, had proved to be either partially or totally unsuccessful. The reasons for this are not difficult to find.[2] The 'raison d'être' of D'Annunzio's plays is not to be found in their dramatic logic or structure. They are built on a sequence of scenes - often tableaux or choral scenes - saturated with poetry, lyricism and colour. To attempt to reduce them to the shape of an operatic book means to destroy their balance; to try to infuse them with a more vigorous dynamic life means to distort their inner rhythm and to betray their essence. It is however, and most of all, their musicality which stands against their 'musicability'. D'Annunzio's poetry, with its finely and expertly calculated rhythmical and sonorous effect, does not allow the superimposition of a musical line interfering with its own intrinsic and perfect music. Unlike Franchetti who, paradoxically encouraged by D'Annunzio himself, who had prepared the libretto, had considered LA FIGLIA DI IORIO as a realistic drama of conflicts and passions, Pizzetti, already aware of the problems to be encountered, approached D'Annunzio's masterpiece with the discretion and sensitiveness of the artist-interpreter. He did not alter the

1. See p. 10 in this thesis.
2. See Luciano Tomelleri's admirable article on the subject, in GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO E LA MUSICA, p. 25 —.

cleverly constructed structure of the play (practically ignored by the critics and to which I would like to bring attention). He limited himself, for obvious reasons, to omitting much of the verse and to fusing many of the individual characters appearing in Act I, scene iv (in the ceremony of the presentation of the gifts) into the personage of Teodula di Cinzio. Like D'Annunzio's play, the libretto is divided into three acts. Each of them represents in itself a well-balanced dramatic unit and is subdivided into a number of scenes following each other without interruption. Act I, the setting of which is the interior of a rustic house, opens in the joyously excited atmosphere of wedding preparations. It ends dramatically; the unexpected intrusion into the closely-knit family unit of the alien Mila - on account of whom Lazaro, the head of the family, has been wounded in a rustic brawl - brings in not only the disruption of the recent wedding but the rivalry and consequent enmity between father and son - an unlawful situation doomed to catastrophic results. In Act I, particular emphasis is placed on detail aimed at evoking the atmosphere, traditions and superstitions of the 'Abruzzi of many years ago'. We note the scarlet woollen band stretched across the door and supported by a pitchfork and a distaff (symbolizing boys and girls respectively and thus indicating a wish that the bridal couple will be blessed with children of both sexes), the cross attached to the architrave and the red buckwheat at the windows to keep away evil spirits; the ritual formulae accompanying the wedding scene and the colourful kindred's procession. The incident of the bride letting fall the loaf of bread given her

by her mother-in-law as a sign of peace and prosperity points to impending misfortune. We also note that the strangeness of the events seems to relate to the peculiar time of the year in which they occur: the eve of Saint John, the day on which the peasants, according to tradition and in an atmosphere of superstitious inquietude and expectation, prepare themselves for the miracle of the apparition of the bleeding head of the saint in the disc of the rising sun. The mood prevailing at the beginning of Act II, taking place in a mountain cave, is also one of peace and promise and is enhanced by the tranquil beauty of the pastoral surroundings. As in Act I, disaster is forecast by an apparently trivial episode: that of Lila carelessly allowing the flame of the votive lamp burning under a portrait of the Virgin, to die. At the end of the act the rivalry between father and son finds its tragic conclusion in Aligi's patricide - the vilest form of transgression of the ancestral laws focusing on the sanctity of the family's bonds of love. Act III can be considered as a counterpart of Act I, but in 'reverse'. Instead of the chattering and singing of the gaily dressed sisters we have the lamentations of the women in mourning garbs gathered around the body of Lazaro lying on the bare ground within the house. The colourful procession of the kindred bearing gifts is paralleled by the lugubrious procession of the populace which, preceded by the black flag of Wrong Doing, takes Aligi to the house where he will receive the cup of 'forgetfulness'- a drugged drink that will help him to face his trial. His crime calls for a barbarous punishment: after having one hand severed, he will

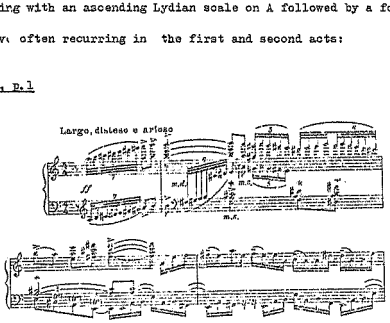
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--- ooo ---

A very short orchestral introduction - a 'Largo, disteso e arioso' opening with an ascending Lydian scale on A followed by a four-note motive often recurring in the first and second acts:

Ex. 1, p. 1

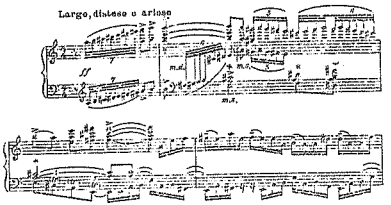


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establishes at once the serene atmosphere characterizing the scene connected with the wedding celebrations. The curtain rises to show Splendore, Favetta and Ornella, Aligi's young sisters, kneeling before three chests containing wedding dresses busy picking out clothes and ornaments for Vienda, the bride (scene i). A clear, airy figure (previously heard in the introductory orchestral page):

Ex.2, p.2



and an ostinato rhythmic pattern of shifting whole-tone steps:

Ex.3, p.4



frequently recur during the episode of the sister's gay singing and chattering, a scene which, owing to the too rigid treatment of the vocal parts sounds more effective in the play than in its musical

setting. To a lyrical phrase stemming from the four-note motive of Ex. 1:

Ex. 4, p. 9



Candia della Leonessa enters (scene ii). She addresses her daughters "Ah cicale, mie cicale" (Ah chatterers, my chatterers) in a gently flowing declamation underlined by a pattern of ninth chords in the form of a rhythmicized multiple pedal supporting independent melody (p. 9). To Candia's characterization, so far not very impressive, more meaningful touches are added as the action progresses. Aligi's figure is, on the other hand, more successfully portrayed from the moment when, as if in reply to his mother's call , he first appears in the door-way in his characteristically dreamy attitude pronouncing 'with fixed eyes and in an almost religious manner' the greeting formula "Laudato Gesù e Maria" (All praise to Jesus and Mary). In a subtle way the music, by means of a tranquil, modal and almost hypnotic melody heard through the diaphanous sonorities of a triple pedal point stretched over three octaves on the tonic of F-sharp Aeolian

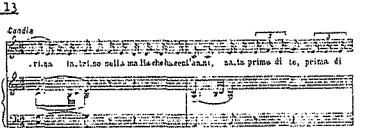
Ex. 5

Ex.5, p.10



evokes that atmosphere of dream and remoteness which envelops the figure of Aligi as if in a luminous mist. In the next scene Candia, left alone with Aligi after the sisters' exit, blesses her son by making the sign of the cross above him with a loaf of bread. Accompanying her words in this ritual act is a new motive appearing first as a dotted figure:

Ex.6, p.13



Out of it grows a 'dolce' little phrase symbolic of the tenderness and anxiety of maternal feeling :

Ex.7, p.14



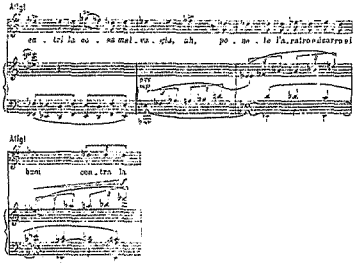
It is noteworthy that this melody, almost symphonic in itself and in its orchestral treatment, seems to accompany a recitative not far removed from the 'recitativo' of early Italian opera. However, the importance and beauty of Aligi's following speech "Io mi coicai e Cristo mi sognai" (Whilst lying down I dreamed of Christ), in which he manifests unexplicable feelings of uneasiness, called for a more intensive exploitation of the verbal text. Pizzetti's treatment of the vocal line - a sensitive syllabic declamation pivoting around the tonic of E-flat Phrygian and cast in a construction adhering to the endecasyllabic pattern of the verse - admirably brings into relief the most subtle nuances implied in the words, the orchestra limiting its role to a scanty accompaniment based on Aligi's *motive* (Ex.5) and a *modification* of Ex.7 (the latter, not visible in the example):

Ex.8, pp.14-15



The downward chordal passage which, supported by shifting parallel perfect fifths seals the brief exchange between Aligi and Candia (p.21), ushers in a 'Concitato, ma sostenuto' section. The vague inquietude manifested in Aligi's previous speech, increased by the indistinct cries of the reapers which are heard in the distance, now gives way to a sort of superstitious terror. At Aligi's mention of 'la cosa malvagia' (the evil thing) a 'mysterious' figure of ascending crotchet triplets (taken from the opening of the vocal line of Ex.8) swarms in the orchestra up to the high F-flat:

Ex.9, p.22



Subjected to symphonic development, Ex.9 provides a background of extreme nervous tension to the dialogue between Candia and Aligi (pp.23-26). The latter is oppressed by the feeling that

something dreadful is about to befall the family despite the fact that all the superstitious practices aimed at warding off evil have been observed. A change of mood occurs when Vienda, the bride (a non-singing character) is brought forward joyously by the three sisters to the 'Largo, arioso' A Lydian pattern of the opening (scene iii). It is now Vienda's turn to be blessed by Candia who, after dividing the bread over Vienda's head puts the two pieces of loaf into the latter's folded apron. Candia's words of blessing are underlined by the motive quoted at Ex.6. The brief, but intense, moment of tension caused by the ominous incident of Vienda letting fall the bread (generically conveyed by chromatic figures in the orchestra) is dispelled by the arrival of Teodula di Cinzio, leader of the group of women kinsfolk. The ceremonial scene (iv) involving the procession of the relatives carrying on their heads baskets and hampers of wheat and bread adorned with gaily coloured ribbons and flowers, is beautifully realized. It adds yet another touch of authenticity to the story, besides being visually effective and relevant to the dramatic action. The musical material upon which the whole scene is built is almost entirely derived from the four-note figure of Ex.1. Out of it grows the folk-like tune - very similar to that of the three sisters, in scene i, here however better fitted into the context - to which Teodula's and Ornella's exchanges

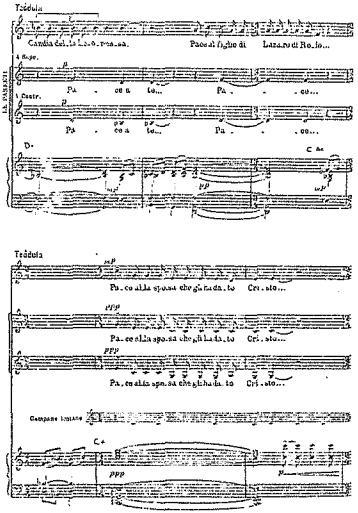
of traditional ceremonial sentences are sung. Harmonized with superimposed fourths and fifths, first over a descending ground on the tonic-dominant of D-flat Lydian, then repeated in close imitations and replete with trills and volatile modal scales, it provides a glittering support for the vocal parts.

Ex. 10, p. 36



Again, Ex. 1 is used under the women's words of blessing as an accompanimental figure, intervallically modified and clothed in simple harmonies smoothly shifting from D minor to C Aeolian and finally settling through a tierce de Picardie — an appropriately archaic effect — on a sustained C major chord emphasizing the "Pace alla sposa che gli ha dato Cristo" (Peace to the bride given by Christ , Ex. 11)

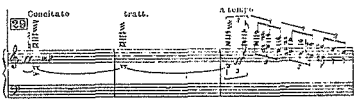
Ex.11, p.40



The clear sound of bells, punctuating this passage, persists throughout Teodula's address to the couple, underscored by Ex.1 now expanded into a freely moving, very lyrical phrase in D-flat Lydian incorporating the central part of Ex.2 (p.41). The pious and peaceful ceremony of the presentation of gifts is still in progress when the clamour of the reapers, so far heard in the distance, comes nearer and nearer. Preced by a downward triplet run ;

Ex. 12

Ex.12, p.43



Mila makes her sudden, dramatic appearance. A dotted figure, the characteristic Pizzettian figure poignant in its implications of pleading and despair, punctuates her words "Mi vogliono prendere, me - creatura di Cristo" (They would size me - a creature of Christ), scene v:

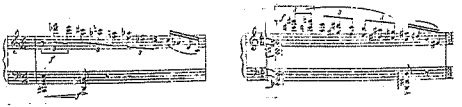
Ex.13, p.44



Already present, although not clearly revealed, in the triplet runs of Ex.12, Ex.13 establishes itself as a crucial motive and plays an important part throughout the entire work also acting as the unifying element of this very homogeneous score. Many changes are rung on it, affecting its rhythmic and melodic structure, as for instance, in the descending triplet thirds figuration which immediately follows (Ex.14) and similarly reproduced in the consecutive fifths passage occurring later on:

Exs.14, 15,

Exs. 14, 15, pp.44, 46



or in the ascending, inverted statement, again in triplet:

Ex.16, p.45



or in diverse figures, variously intervallically modified. Whilst the frightened and suspicious guests retreat before the unknown woman, Ornella, who is the first to respond to a sense of pity and solidarity, offers her water and wine, and tries to persuade the rabble, now furiously shouting, to go and search elsewhere. Pizzetti has associated the reapers with a blunt, ostinato figure suggestive of stubbornness rather than of wild rage and physical excitement:

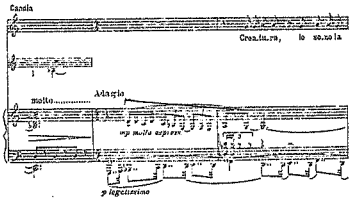
Ex. 17, p.52



Towards the end of this episode, Ex.17 is heard tellingly combined with the theme of the wedding celebrations (Ex.3) when, to the woman's terror, the brutal face of one of the reapers is seen appearing behind the iron bars of one of the windows. A great commotion is created as he reveals to Candia that the woman sheltered under her roof is Mila, the daughter of the sorcerer, and that her husband Lazaro, having been in a fight concerning Mila, is now badly wounded and about to be brought home.

The music , so far mainly confined to a subservient role, starts from now on , gaining vehemence and élan. Candia's speech: "Creatura io sono la madre" (Woman, I am the mother), in which she tells Mila to leave the house into which she has brought sudden sorrow:

Ex.18, p.72



is a slow, very expressive recitative set to regularly flowing lines tinged with a tranquil sadness enhanced by orchestral quotations of her theme, Ex.7 presented in an interesting play of

modulations carried out consistently within the Dorian mode (from the initial G, to the final F-sharp -the cadence of which does not resolve in the orchestral, but in the vocal part- through D and B-flat, pp. 72-4). Candia's anxiety is however betrayed by the ominous dotted figure which, hinting at the tragedy to come, appears in the bass (see Ex. 18) under, or usually unfolding from the sustained pedal points establishing the shifts of modal modulations. In the following episode Mila gains the stature of a great dramatic heroine. All the speeches entrusted to her are noteworthy for the nervous pliability of the vocal lines, revealing all the fear and suffering of her wretched soul. In her first speech "Madre cristiana" (Christian mother, p. 75) she, with humility and passion, implores Candia not to leave her at the mercy of the reapers. When she says "Non io la tua casa cercai" (I did not seek your house, p. 76), the ascending crotchet triplet figure connected with the 'evil thing', Ex. 9, softly creeps into the orchestra under Mila's pleading motive, Ex. 13, bearing an unambiguous association with the ineluctability of fate. As Candia, incited by the relatives, harshly bids her leave, Mila reacts with accents of increasing emotion. Her words, uttered to a series of syncopated second inversion chords starting on the tonic triad of F major and moving, in step-wise progression, over the tonic pedal point, are, at first, still marked with poignant tension (Ex. 79):

Ex.19, p.80



They assume harsher, threatening tones when Mila warns Candia that, were she to abando[illegible]tred and brutal lusting' God would condemn her. The do[illegible]p of a major third, of the triton, of a major sixth, of a perfect fifth, of another two perfect sixths, as harsh as hammerstrokes, stamp her speech (pp. 80-3) dramatically. Tension, after steadily mounting to a climax when Aligi, at the women's instigation, seizes Mila by the wrists, reaches breaking point when Mila, after cursing Aligi and trying to resist him, frantically begs Ornella to defend and help her. Her anguish is conveyed by the pleading Ex.13 appearing in the vocal line, echoed in the orchestra-parts.

Ex.20, p.95



As Mila frees herself and runs to the three sisters who, weeping and lamenting surround her, Aligi, blind with rage, lifts his

crook to hit her. Suddenly, as if struck by an apparition, he lets the crook fall and, staring behind Mila, he falls on his knees with open arms and embarks on his main speech:

L'Angelo muto ho visto, che piangeva;
che lacrimava come voi, sorelle,
che lacrimava e mi guardava fiso.
Lo vedrò fino all'ora del trapasso,
e ancora lo vedrò nell'altra vita.
Io ho peccato contro il focolare,
contro i miei morti e contro la mia terra.
Sorelle, e voi pregate,
pregate per Aligi fratel vostro
che alla montagna deve ritornare.
E quella che patì l'onta o l'ambascia
consolatela voi.
Mila di Codra, mia sorella in Cristo,
donami perdonanza dell'offesa.

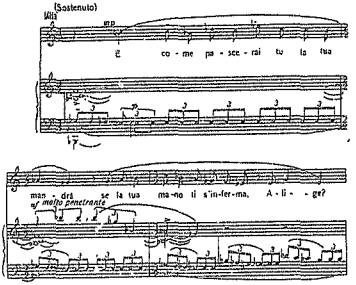
(I saw the Angel, silent, weeping.
He is weeping with you, O my sisters!
And at me he is gazing and weeping.
Even thus shall I see him forever,
Till the hour for my passing, yea! past it.
I have sinned thus against my own hearthstone,
My own dead and the land of my fathers.
My sisters, oh! pray you for brother Aligi,
Who must now return to the mountain.
And she who has suffered such shame here,
I pray you to console her.
Mila di Codra, sister in Jesus,
O give me peace for my offences)[1].

The sobriety of the musical setting (p.96) - a rigidly syllabic declamation, at times almost psalmodic, mostly moving within the range of an octave, and set against a shifting orchestral tremolo sustained by long held pedal points - somewhat weakens the vibrancy of the original speech. Yet, it seems as if Pizzetti, deliberately wanting to tone down D'Annunzio's

1. For this passage, I have used the very fine, although not exactly reproducing the rhythm and plasticity of the original, translation by Charlotte Porter et al., in REPRESENTATIVE CONTINENTAL DRAMAS, op. cit., p.288.

too effusive lyricism, favoured a treatment aimed at bringing out the sense of ecstatic bewilderment demanded by the extraordinariness of the event. The 'mysterious', chromatic figure Ex.9 makes a number of altered appearances during the second part of Aligi's speech, at the end of which he asks Mila's forgiveness whilst dragging himself on his knees to the fireplace and taking up a burning ember to punish the hand that has offended her. With accents dictated by a feeling of humanity Mila stops him "E come pascerai tu la tua mandra se la tua mano ti s'inferma, Aligi?" (And how then your flocks can you pasture if your hand is wounded, Aligi?). This sentence:

Ex.21, p.100



which Aligi will recall later, in the 'mountain act', marks the beginning of Mila's spiritual awakening and of Aligi's surrender. The almost mystical mood which pervades this episode is abruptly dispelled when, to the heavy rhythm of Ex.17 which, now rotating

Act II opens in a mountain cave, through the large entrance of which are seen green pastures, snow-clad peaks, and passing clouds. It is the time of the autumn equinox, at dusk. Beginning with an anacrusis, the broad, calm, unison theme with which the orchestra opens sounds bare and yet luminously resonant, conveying the stillness of the hour, the almost imperceptible melancholy of the season, and the sense of solitude which seems to radiate from the high peaks.

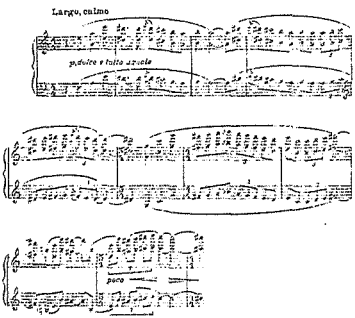
Ex.23, p.117



Marked 'piano, dolce e tutto uguale', Ex.23 unfolds in a diatonic scale associated to a Lydian mode on A (but with a lowered seventh degree) which is twice repeated, first on C (b.6) and then on E (b.9), the opening being, the last time, in diminution. The sound of the bells of the sheep punctuate the end of the orchestral passage (in E-flat major) which leads directly into the first scene of the act.

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Aligi is seen seated, carving the statue of an angel, which he intends to offer to the Pope to be released from his ties to Vienda and then marry Mila. Near him, both asleep, are Anna Onna, an old herb-gatherer and Cosma, the saint. Mila, whilst watching Aligi, sings a song of which the following little phrase:

Ex.24, p.118



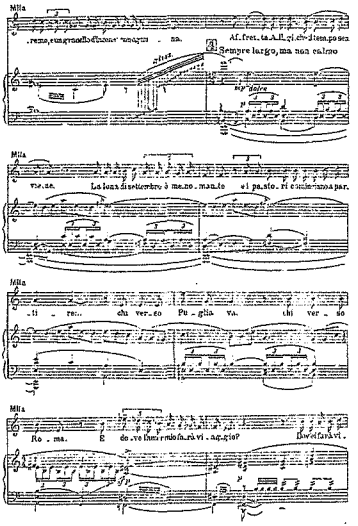
repeated almost identically at different pitches, acts as a refrain. The poetic and musical climax of the act is represented by the ensuing dialogue between Mila and Aligi. Under Mila's words,

> Affretta, Aligi, che il tempo ne viene.
> La luna di settembre è menomante
> e i pastori cominciano a partire...
> chi verso Puglia va, chi verso Roma.
>
> (Make haste, Aligi, for the time is nearing.
> The September moon is waning.
> The shepherds all begin their leave to take,
> *some for far Puglia make, some for Rome.*)

Pizzetti introduced the theme from his own song 'I Pastori', set, some fifty years before, to D'Annunzio's poem. This was a most happy touch: first, because of the appropriateness of the music to the effect of the evocation of bliss and purity in the pastoral environment, and secondly, because of the identity of feeling and inspiration lying at the basis of both D'Annunzio's poem and the tragedy, written almost contemporaneously by the poet in his most

genuine vein and in the heyday of his poetic and dramatic creativity. Preceded by the silvery sheen of a harp glissando, the $\frac{12}{8}$ pastoral theme insinuates itself into the orchestra over a quiet rippling $\frac{4}{4}$ movement supported by the tonic-dominant double pedal of the Aeolian mode on A.

Ex.25, p.123



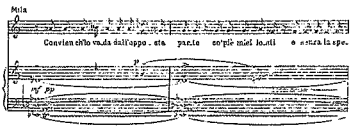
(We note the grace note F-sharp gaining harmonic meaning at b.7. In the same bar, an interesting effect is provided by the descending B-flat

Phrygian scale , with a raised leading note, to which Mila's questioning words "E dove l'amor mio farà viaggio?" - Where will my love his footstep be turning? - are uttered. The German sixth which resolves, in the next bar, on the second degree, with an altered fifth, instead of on the dominant as expected, is enharmonically F, A, C, E-flat, thus becoming the dominant seventh chord of B-flat Phrygian). The 'mountain' theme (Ex.23) comes again in the orchestra when Aligi, in answer to Mila's question, reveals his intention to go to Rome 'to beg the indulgence of the Vicar, who is the Vicar of Christ our Saviour and the Shepherd of all shepherds', whilst the pastoral theme (Ex.25) is heard as an accompanimental figure under the litany-like chorus sung off-stage by a group of pilgrims journeying across the mountain. This overlaps without however interfering with Mila's next speech. There is a streak of heartache in Mila's words when, over frequent quotations of her theme (Ex.13), heard in combination with various motivic material, she urges Aligi to reach the crucifer[1], leader of the group of pilgrims, and to tell him to send greetings tokens of love to 'the mother, the bride and the sisters' informing them that he, Aligi, is now free from 'the evil one' and that she 'will be the cause of dissention no more' (pp. 129-32). She will not follow Aligi to Rome, as the time of departure is come for her. Chords of superimposed fifths and perfect and augmented fourths, built on a pedal point on E-flat, create a

1. The person who carries the cross in a religious procession.

sense of suspense when, to Aligi's anxious question "E dove andrai?" (Where would you go?) Mila replies "Convien ch'io vada dall'opposta parte..." (Need be that I go the opposite way...)

Ex.26, p.135



A few moments of dramatic interest do not, regrettably, redeem Aligi's subsequent , lengthy solo from its sameness of mood. Addressing himself to Cosma woken from his restless sleep, Aligi recounts his life " Cosma, questa è la santa verità" (Cosma, this is the holy truth, scene ii), from the moment of his return to his home to take as wife Vienda, the companion chosen for him by his mother, to his first meeting , on the eve of Saint John, with the 'sad creature' pursued by the bestial hatred of the rabble. He then describes the moment of the apparition of the weeping angel, the supernatural event calling for a relevant use of chromaticism.

Ex.27, p.147



With deeper emotional involvement Aligi recalls Mila's words of concern and compassion "E come pascerai tu la tua mandra..." (And how then your flocks can you pasture..., pp.178-9) , to a vocal line identical to that of Mila seen at Ex.21. After revealing to Cosma - a character who seems to have been directly molded after Debussy's Arkel of PELLEAS ET MELISANDE and who, according to Massimo Mila, "has a peculiar melodico-dramatic way of singing, reminiscent of Mussorgsky"[1] - that he has been living in chaste union with Mila, Aligi tells him of his plan of going to Rome to offer the Pope the statue of the angel. During Aligi's speech it is the orchestra that acts as the chief narrator, bringing back, in a mosaic-like manner, deftly connected reminiscences, especially from Act I. When Cos , enigmatically answers that all the ways of mankind appear the direct ways to man but the Lord weighs heart-secrets, a hymn-like strain (already heard in the orchestra, p.152) , fluctuating between F-sharp major and its Mixolydian mode, is again proposed by the orchestra over a syncopated triplet figuration sustained by a long-held tonic pedal:

Ex.28, p.154



1. Mila, Massimo. Ascoltando 'LA FIGLIA DI IORIO' di Pizzetti; in La Rassegna Musicale, N.2, 1955, p.107.

The situation is diturbed by the impatient call of a shepherd asking Cosma to bring help to a youth possessed of a demon (scene iii). Before leaving Cosma recommends Aligi not to forget the ancestors' laws; for Mila, he has words of peace and blessing,"Se il bene sia teco..." (If good be with you... p.158-)which finally merge with the singing of the pilgrims, heard from time to time and eventually fading away in the distance. Mila and Aligi are left alone, surrounded by the stilness of the mountain which the broad and calm unison theme of the opening (Ex.23) conveys. A sensitive treatment of both vocal and orchestral parts characterizes the scene between Mila and Aligi, both longing for the bliss of an innocent love. In a soft voice Aligi asks Mila to prepare herself for the ardous journey which will be as long as their love is strong. A chromatic theme, opening with a figure as brief as a sigh :

Ex.29, p.169

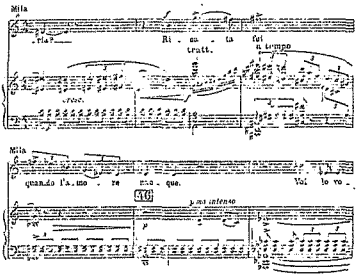


appears in the orchestra underlining Mila's "Camminare con te per monti e spiagge" (To border mountains and stretches of sea-shores, with you). Ex.29 (the 'love'theme) alternates, at first with Ex.25

(symbolic of the innocence of pastoral life) and then gains prominence as the scene unfolds. Partially or totally repeated at different pitches, varied and treated in sequences of continually increasing intensity, Ex.29 culminates in an orchestral fortissimo against which Aligi utters the words "Tutto si perde" (All is dimned, p.174). The brief moment of passion during which Aligi and Mila, in fear and excitement, kiss , is followed by the bitterness of remorse. In a febrile manner they murmur a short prayer whilst snatches of the 'love theme' (Ex.29) are heard above a G minor tremolo supported by an E-flat pedal, first rising and then sinking down through more than two octaves. A voice from outside urges Aligi to go to the sheep-fold. Before leaving, he recommends Mila not to forget to refill the lamp burning under the portrait of a Madonna. In a very beautiful passage fluctuating between recitative and an extraordinary intense and expressive arioso, Mila implores the Virgin to cleanse her mind from the memory of her shame ,"Vergine santa" (Holy Virgin , p.177-). The sequel of syncopated chords which reinforces this passage, shifts, during the first part, from the initial D minor to D-flat , through B minor and B-flat Aeolian (mainly by means of Pizzetti's favourite technique of third relationship). This, finally gives way to a pattern of reiterated thirds when Mila, over a quotation of one of the many versions of her theme (Ex.13) sings (perhaps incongrously, according to the 'word painting' technique sporadically applied by Pizzetti in FEDRA)

to a falling line "Rinata fui quando l'amore nacque" 'Born anew then was I when love was born in me):

Ex. 30, p. 180



A long, sustained multiple pedal of the D major triad prepares for the desolate atmosphere of the following scene in which, to Mila's distress, the flame of the lamp begins to flicker and eventually dies out, pointing to impending disaster. In the veiled woman who has in the meantime appeared at the opening of the cave, Mila recognizes Ornella, who has come to the mountain to beg her to return Aligi to his distressed family (scene iv). Her words are accompanied by quotations of the thematic fragment (Ex. 6) from which Candia's theme derives. When however she warns Mila of her father's intention to search for her, a sinister, chromatic figure (possibly derived from the 'evil thing' motive, Ex. 9):

Ex. 31

Ex.31, p.193



creeps into the bass, underneath a rhythmicized, reiterated G pedal, conveying a sense of dark foreboding. In a passage of poignant dramatic expression, underlined by quotations of Ex.13 (in altered forms) and by a chromatic triplet semiquaver figure expressing great agitation

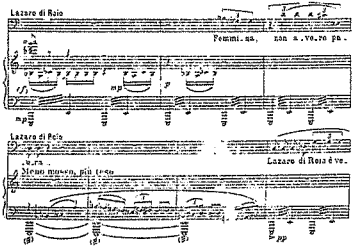
Ex.32, p.196



Mila reveals to Ornella that her relations with ave been sinless. The 'love theme' (Ex.29) returns ajor when Mila, her voice vibrating with the sad emot. of farewell, answers Ornella's question as to where she will go : "Sa le sue vie la figlia

di Iorio" (All pathways know the daughter of Iorio, p.198-) .
Ex.29 is repeated, limited this time to its sad opening, under Mila's reiteration of Ornella's name, sung to falling intervals of, first, a third, then a fifths and finally an augmented ninth (p.205). Whilst Mila retires into the cave, Ornella leaves. Suddenly, after a brief episode between Mila and Anna Onna (scene v), Lazaro di Roio appears (scene vi). The scene of the confrontation between Mila and Lazaro is concentrated and full of tension. Lazaro is characterized by snatches of recitative:

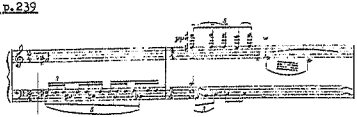
Ex.33, p.213



and by short, blunt figures in the orchestra of not particular interest, but however evocative of a brutal and sturdy nature. A particularly sinister touch is conferred upon him by the creeping motive of Ex.31, stealing into the bass in different rhythmic figurations and accompanying the monologue in which he expresses his intention of abducting Mila where she not prepared to accompany him (pp.213-17).

The moment of the strongest passionate contrast of the drama -the clash between father and son , (scene vii)- is not, regretfully satisfactorily realized in Pizzetti's opera. At the beginning, when Aligi, after appearing at the entrance, implores his father, to sobbing syncopations of the opening motive of the 'love theme' (Ex.29), not to outrage Mila, the episode is treated with suitable dramatic force. When, however, the struggle moves on to the physical plane, the incident loses energy and emotional impact and, as Massimo Mila has rightly observed, "the action lives more on the stage than in the actual music"[1]. This is especially true of the episo Lazaro brutally exercising his despotic paternal rights and of that in which he summons his two companions to carry Aligi away. Tension starts building up again when, left alone with Mila, Lazaro watches her insidiously she tries to elude him (scene viii). Also summarily dealt with is the incident of Aligi (unexpectedly returning free and unbound) striking mortally his father. The horrified screams of Ornella who, having returned, recognizes her father in the body lying in the shadow of the cave give way to the quintuplet quaver figure ending with an appoggiatura effect, frequently heard during this last scene:

Ex.34, p.239



1. Mila, Massimo, op.cit., p.106.

Candia's theme (Ex.7) develops in an orchesral fortissimo, galvanized by the return of Mila's theme (Ex.13) sounding over it as poignant as a cry of anguish:

Ex.35, p.243



A series of chords of the thirteenth dissolving on a unison A brings Act II to a close.

Act III, the scene of which is a large courtyard in front of Lazaro's house, is prefaced by an 'Andante sostenuto e pesante' built upon a mournful unison theme starting in A Aeolian and derived from a figure heard in the Introduction to the opera (p.1, bars 5 and 7). It is one of those ominous rhythmo-melodic phrases to which Pizzetti usually resorts to convey a sense of foreboding, tragedy and doom:

Ex.36

Ex. 36, p.247



Starting at a slow, dragging pace, it gains rhythmic impetus to return to the initial 'sostenuto' movement as the curtain rises on scene i. The lamentation of the mourners is a powerfully effective poetic passage recalling the mood and cadences of Jacopone da Todi's Il pianto della Madonna, which the music translates in a masterly manner:

Iesu Cristo, Iesu Cristo,
l'hai potuto sofferire!
D'esta morte scellerata
dovia Lazaro morire!
S'è veduto a vetta a vetta
tutto 'l monte isbigottire.
S'è veduto in ciel lo Sole
la sua faccia ricuoprire.

Ahi, ahi! Lazaro, Lazaro, Lazaro!
Ahi, che pianto si piange per te!

Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine.

(O Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ,
'tis thy will. 'Tis thy bidding
that of tragic, accursed death
should have Lazaro thus perished!
We have seen from peak to peak
all the mountain shake in horror.

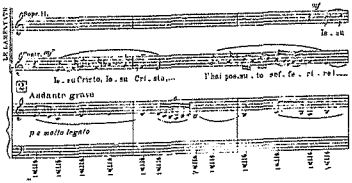
We have seen the sun in heaven
hide his face, veiled in sorrow.

Woe! Woe! Lazaro, Lazaro, Lazaro!
Alas, what tears for thee tear us!

Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine.)

A contralto voice starts the lamentation with a phrase moving in narrow intervals and according to the regular rhythm brought in by the octosyllabic poetic meter, with some melismatic action at the second line (l'hai potuto sofferire). The gentle rising and falling of the melodic line is taken over by the first and second sopranos at the fifth and octave respectively. The orchestra, besides entering in imitation with the voices (from p.250), provides a background made up of quotations (starting in E Phrygian) of Ex.36. With symbolism destined to acquire an almost unbearable intensification of pathos later in the act, when Candia, the mourning mother appears, the opening phrase of the women's lamentation is derived from the chant of the Stabat Mater (see Ex.37A, on the following page):

Ex.37, p.249



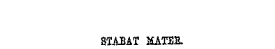
Ex. 37A

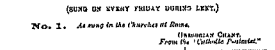
STABAT MATER.

(SUNG ON EVERY FRIDAY DURING LENT.)

No. 1. *As sung in the Churches at Rome.*

(GREGORIAN CHANT. *From the "Catholic Psalmist."*





To add even more pathos the chant is rhythmicized and chromaticized and, for further effect, based on a toll-like pedal. The Requiem aeternam, sung to a monotone and treated in imitation, over chords of the eleventh, seals the lamentation. Over an urgent accompaniment formed by triplet figures above which Ex. 35 is insistently heard:

Ex. 38, p. 254



when Ornella announces the arrival of the standard-bearer, Femo di Nerfa. In a steady recitative supported by the mournful A Aeolian theme of Ex. 36, Fermo announces the sentence of the Judge of Wrong Doing against the patricide. To the sombre sound of rolling drums Femo asks where Candia is, his question bringing back her theme (Ex. 7) which appears in a much chromatic and, tormented version (pp. 270-1).

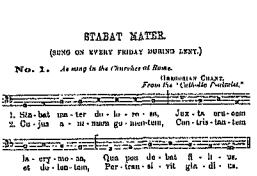
Ex. 37A

STABAT MATER.

(SUNG ON EVERY FRIDAY DURING LENT.)

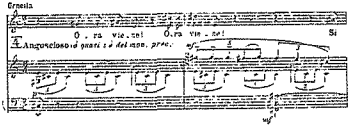
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The bewildered mother approaches (scene ii) and, out of her mind, starts reciting something similar to the Stations of the Cross:

> Il core ho perso d'un dolce figliuolo
> or è trentatre giorni,e non lo trovo!
> L'hai tu veduto, l'hai tu riscontrato?
> —Io sul Monte Calvario l'ho lasciato,
> i' l'ho lasciato sul Monte distante
> l'ho lasciato con lacrime e con sangue.
>
> (I have lost the heart of a sweet, gentle child
> thirty-three days ago, not yet do I find it.
> Have you seen him? have you met him?
> — I have left him upon Calvary Mountain,
> I have left him on that distant place
> in tears and blood I have left him afar.)

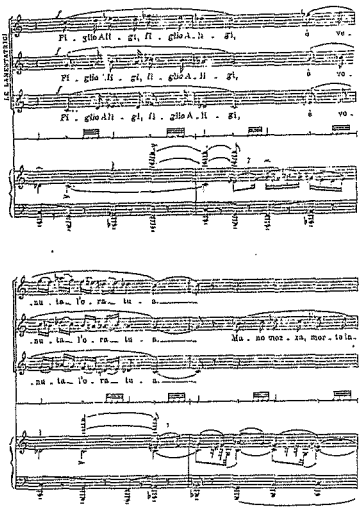
Perhaps in symbolic parallelism with the Mou[illegible] Calvary, the orchestra brings back the 'mountain theme' (Ex.23). Then Candia recalls the words uttered by Aligi at his first appearance "Madre, madre, dormii settecent'anni" (Mother, mother, I have slept years seven hundred) to the same phrase from Act I (p.25) this time however rised by one tone and sung against a grim ostinato in C Aeolian ending with a passage of parallel organum:

Ex.39, p.283



Variously commenting the women watch the arrival of the lugubrious procession leading Aligi to his house (scene iii). As Aligi, his head covered with a black veil appears, the wailers start again the lamentation, singing in organum-like progression, and against the beating of drums, the 'Stabat Mater' tune, first anticipated and then followed by the orchestra, in Aeolian, with some chromatic alterations:

Ex. 40 ; pp. 290-1



Stopping near Candia, Aligi falls upon his knees and curses himself for his tremendous crime. Aligi's speech "Laudato Gesù e Maria" (All praise to Jesus and Mary, p.296-) interrupted by the frequent interjections of the crowd , falls into four parts: the first three are addressed to the mother, the sisters and the bride, of whom he feels unworthy; the fourth is an utterance of despair and mourning for his father, whose murder he regrets. The chromatic figure associated with the 'evil thing' (Ex.9) heard in the bass under a tremolando pedal first on F and then on F-sharp, recurs during the last part of Aligi's speech, again symbolic of the ineluctability of fate and, now, of its tragic outcome. A moment of highly dramatic, more than musical, impact is the scene in which Candia, overcoming an instinctive resentment, goes towards her child and, slowly bending down, lifts the veil before pressing his head to her breast , thus expressing her assent to give him the merciful cup of forgetfulness. It is at this moment that the crowd, having discovered Mila in the vicinity of the house, starts uttering her name over quotitions of her theme (Ex.13). The Mila who impetuously pushes her way through the crowd is not the weary and pathetic creature of Act I, but a resolute woman who demands to be heard. During the episode in which, in order to save Aligi, she says that Aligi is innocent and that she had practised sorcery in order to turn into hatred the love of

father and son, Ex.13 features prominently in the orchestra. Mila's nervous, broken lines of declamation convey anguish and agitation but hardly possess the dramatic intensity required by the situation. The same can perhaps be said of the following episode in which Aligi first tries to persuade the crowd that Mila is besides herself, then, as the effect of the potion makes itself felt, starts to believe and eventually reviles her. There is great orchestral agitation reinforced by the shouts and chanting of the crowd:

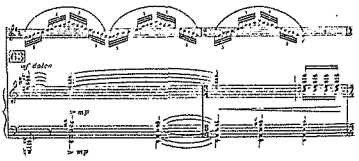
Ex.41, p.334



when Candia, with a frantic impulse, seizes her son and advances with threatening gesture towards Mila. Aligi, declared innocent, curses Mila in a final outburst "Oh! voce di promessa e di frode" (Oh! voice of promising and deceit, p.336-) , during which the 'love theme'(Ex.29) is heard, as if coming from the most hidden recess of the soul. The mob lights a pyre for Mila (note the

arpeggiato figures on the harp, graphically and musically rendering the flickering flames):

Ex.43, p.346



and, amidst chanting, shouting and the inexorable beat of the drums Mila is dragged to the pyre, her last words being "La fiamma è bella" (The flame is beautiful). Whilst the crowd sings "Laus Deo", the orchestra features her poignant motive (Ex.13) the last note of which is finally absorbed into the reiterated, luminous chord of A major which brings the curtain down.

--- oOo ---

As Reginald Smith Brindle has pointed out, LA FIGLIA DI IORIO, written by Pizzetti at the age of seventy-four "shows no movement away from the style formed forty years ago, but it reveals a life-time of experience" [1]. This music drama is in fact a mature work, almost perfectly balanced from a musical and dramatic point of view. The craftmanship is of a very high standard, the leitmotive technique skilfully applied, the sense of mood and atmosphere

1. Brindle, Reginald Smith. Notes from abroad. Italy. The Musical Times, February 1955, p.57.

exquisitely explor'd. Faithful to his own principles, Pizzetti concentrates the drama in the vocal writing. This does not however detract from the importance of the role played by the orchestra, to which the expression of inner emotions, nuances of feelings as well as musico-dramatic symbolism are actually entrusted. Pizzetti's individuality emerges, especially in the vocal writing, with those features already noted as peculiarly his own: a largely flexible recitative, faithfully following the rhythm and accent of the words and ranging from near-declamation to sensitively expressive or forcefully dramatic 'arioso'. Perhaps the most striking feature of LA FIGLIA DI IORIO is to be found in its thematic construction. Themes and motives, combined in a web of sound in a state of continuous flux, are used with a certain flexibility, rhythmically and intervallically modified according to the requirements of the dramatic action. The recurrence in all three acts of the same, easily recognizable, thematic material is responsible for the homogeneous texture of the score. Especially interesting is the exploitation and telling combination of the themes associated with Mila, Candia and of the one symbolic of the 'evil thing', always present in the background with its connotations of dark foreboding, of the ineluctability of fate and of its tragic outcome. Of the three main characters the 'dynamic' ones, like Mila and Candia, are the most convincingly drawn. They undergo changes during the course of the action; Candia's tenderness, anxiety and eventual agony and Mila's poignant tension, devotion and self-abnegation are successfully limned in

the tense, nervous, forcibly telling recitation and in the expressive shape of the themes and motives connected with them. Aligi, whose dreamy attitude and ecstatic bewilderment are so succesfully hinted at by the orchestral theme accompanying his first appearance, fails on the whole to emerge as a fully-realized personality. We may perhaps conjecture that Pizzetti intended him to remain "the exquisite lyrical symbol"[1] which he is in the play (and try to cope at his best with the incongrously 'realistic' situation in which Aligi finds himself involved in Act II), or suppose that Pizzetti's approach to such a passive character was not a sympathetic one. The three sisters, with the possible exception of Ornella, do not seem to overcome the limitations imposed upon them by their rather decorative roles. Harmonically, LA FIGLIA DI IORIO, characterized by a pervasive chromaticism, shows an idiom much more advanced than that of the majority of Pizzetti's music dramas. Even so, however, we do not find in Pizzetti's harmony the kind of sophistications in which most modern composers indulge. Yet, even the most commonplace device seems to receive a new life by Pizzetti placing it in an appropriate context (as, for instance, the tierce de Picardie in the episode of the women's ritual blessing). The use of modes and musical practices proper to Medieval times (parallel organum-like progressions, psalmodic inflections, antiphonal and responsorial singing) confer upon the score a sort of archaic patina well suited to the remoteness of the dramatic action.

1. Gatti, Guido M. Gabriele D'Annunzio and the Italian Opera-Composers. The Musical Quarterly, vol. IV, p. 273.

One of Pizzetti's most characteristic stylistic devices is the use of modes and of their peculiar expressive values . He exploited the cheerful and luminous character of the Lydian mode to convey the gayety of the wedding celebrations in Act I and to add glitter to the splendidly atmospheric 'mountain scene'at the beginning of Act II, and made the most of the sad and darker qualities of the Phrygian mode in all those situations involving feelings of foreboding and tension and to scenes of lamentations and mourning .

As to the question whether Pizzetti succeeded to change in some way, or to add something to the pre-existing literary source by means of his musical setting, the answer is, in my opinion, yes. Perhaps against D'Annunzio's intentions, who intended his 'pastoral tragedy' as a conflict of elemental passions taking place in a primitive society, Pizzetti saw it as a drama of love, death and redemption lived and consumed in the person of Mila di Codra (somewhat reminiscent of the Wagnerian Kundry). As it is around Mila that the drama revolves, he hightened her, already tense, humanity, reaching into the depth of her emotional and psychological world, revealing those mysterious profundity of the soul which, in Pizzetti's opinion, words would never be able to express.

There are some weaknessess in Pizzetti's LA FIGLIA DI IORIO, some of them inherent in the play (the lack of fusion between the legendary and the realistic world) which I have already pointed out .

LA FIGLIA DI IORIO does not, on the whole, stand comparison with some

of Pizzetti's best music dramas. It is however a remarkable work, containing some truly forceful, vivid music and blessed, moreover with a finely suggestive scoring, either evocative of the tranquil beauty of the pastoral surroundings or lending itself to conjure up the atmosphere of mystery and superstition from which the story seems to spring.

—— oOo ——

CHAPTER IV

ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE

ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE, Pizzetti's setting of Thomas Stern Eliot's MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, was first performed at La Scala, on March 1, 1958. Besides being enthusiastically received by the public the opera had an outstanding success with the press which defined this première as "an event in the history of modern opera which will not be easily forgotten"[1]. Eliot, who was in Italy at that time but could not for reasons of health attend the Scala's brilliant production, wrote afterwards to the composer: " I am proud to be the author of the work that inspired you"[2].

Although the work was congenial to Pizzetti, and consonant with his ethical and aesthetic principles, the idea of setting it to music did not occur to him personally but to his son Bruno who, after reading Eliot's masterwork in 1936, suggested it as a possible operatic subject. The essentially undramatic qualities of the play (originally written for production in Canterbury Cathedral) deterred Pizzetti from embarking upon the work immediately. Later, in 1948, he and his wife, also keen on the idea, attended a performance of the play in the church of San Miniato al Monte, in Florence. This made a deep impression on the composer. He was struck by the musical, rather than the dramatic potentiality of the work, by the grandeur of the vast religious fresco and especially moved by the concluding

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1. Gara, Eugenio. "ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE di Pizzetti, in prima assoluta alla Scala". Musica d'oggi, April 1958, p.234.
2. In "O Vecchio Tom" (unsigned). TIME, March 1958, p.68.

scene apropos of which he said "It was in the choral apotheosis which crowns the 'finale' that I found all the symbols and values which I have always associated with my conception of the music drama"[1]. The actual proposal of a collaboration between Eliot and Pizzetti came in 1954, from Guido Valcarenghi, of the House of Ricordi , who carried out the negotiations with the English publishers of the play. The project was eventually finalized and Pizzetti set to work. The 'musical tragedy', as the composer had styled it, was completed in mid-August 1957.

Eliot's poetic drama, derived from recorded historical facts which we will consider later, is reminiscent of both classical Greek dramas and medieval Morality plays. It is cast in two parts of almost equal length and perfect balance linked by an Interlude. The dialogue between Becket and the Four Tempters in Part I and between Becket and the Four Knights in Part II contributes much to sustaining the structural symmetry. Concerned with the spiritual content more than with the nature of the action, Eliot avoids dramatic effect, rather aiming at giving proper weight to the issues involved: "the persistent conflict between the values of the world and those of the spirit, and the idea of the redemption of sin through the death of a martyr"[2]. In both subject and spirit MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL is a markedly Christian tragedy the kernel of which is conflict, the resolution victory. Unlike the situation in Tennyson's drama on the subject the struggle in Eliot's is fought not between two characters but in Becket's soul. King Henry,

1. Padellaro, Laura. Radiocorriere , 18-24 May 1975, p.74.
2. Peter, John, Murder in the Cathedral , in T.S. ELIOT. A Collection of Critical Essays, p.158.

Becket's former friend and then his opponent , does not appear at all as a character and the Archbishop's past is merely indicated by skilfully introduced references. The Tempters who, unlike the historical Knights, are fictional characters serve the purpose of information besides representing "objectified facets of (Thomas') own consciousness"[1], as John Peter says or, in Robert A. Kantra's opinion, "mental attitudes"[2] pertaining to the common man and thus suggesting, in their combination of fantasy and morality...that evil and folly are not social diseases of the body politic"[3]. In MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL there is no 'drama' in the accepted sense. The action and the catastrophe announced by the title are forecast from the moment in which the curtain rises; death hangs over Becket from his very first appearance. By the end of Part I, which sets clearly before us the essence of the plot, the drama is practically over, Part II virtually limiting itself to presenting the Archbishop's actual death and its effects. As in Greek drama, Eliot's play relies greatly on the Chorus which, in the guise of the Women of Canterbury, provides us with information, gives advice, comments on the action, anticipating and preparing us for further developments. We must not however lose sight of the fact that the Women are also "witnesses being instructed to go through a purgatorial experience"[4] as Rasma Virsis observes, and therefore symbolic of the ordinary man made aware, from

1. Peter, John, Murder in the Cathedral, op. cit., p.158.
2. Kantra, Robert A., Satiric theme and structure in MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, in Modern Drama, vol.10, February 1968, p.390.
3. ibid.
4. Virsis, Rasma, The Christian concept in MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, in Modern Drama, vol.14, February 1972, p.405.

the initial reluctance at being involved in extraordinary events to the eventual acceptance of them and reconciliation with what has happened, of the "values of an individuals suffering for others as expiation for sin"[1]. To use, once more, John Peter's words: "Salvation is presented, not by talking about it...but by showing it operating in the consciousness of the chorus"[2].

Thomas à Becket, better known in his own day as Thomas of London, was born in Cheapside, London, in 1118 and came of Norman extraction. After receiving his early schooling in London he was sent to Merton Priory, in Surrey, before completing his education in Paris. He then returned to London and was appointed as clerk to a sheriff of that city. He became connected with the household of the Archbishop of Canterbury and, after being sent on a mission to Rome was ordained deacon. In 1154 he was already acquainted with Henry Plantagenet, who became king in that year, and was soon associated closely with the political as well as ecclesiastical events of the time. Henry's wish to rid himself of the friction between the ecclesiastical power of Rome (as exercised through Canterbury) and the secular government, caused him, in 1162, to appoint Thomas Archbishop of Canterbury, in the face of strong opposition, as Becket had the reputation of being a King's man. Becket now however showed a strong sense of ecclesiastical duty and Henry soon discovered that the new Archbishop was not prepared to allow him to ride rough-shod over the Church. Relationship between the head of the Church in England

1. Virsis, Rasma. The Christian concept in MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, op. cit., p.405.
2. Peter, John. Murder in the Cathedral, op. cit., p.160.

and the King deteriorated. The principal subject of contention between State and Church was the matter of the ecclesiastical courts before which clergy accused of serious, sometimes secular, crimes appeared to be treated with too great a leniency. It was Henry's contention that secular crimes, whether involving clergy or laity, should be tried by secular courts and ecclesiastical crimes by ecclesiastical courts. The Archbishop, supported by his Bishops, refused to accede to the King's demand. With the intention of defaming Becket, Henry called upon him to account for certain sums of money which had been his responsibility and after a lengthy dispute the Archbishop was impeached for high treason. Fearing that he would not receive a fair trial he fled to France and sought an interview with the Pope who supported him against the King. Attempts at mediation made by both the Pope and the King of France failed and it was not until six years later, when the Pope threatened Henry with excommunication, that something of a hollow reconciliation took place and the Archbishop was able to return to his See. Whilst welcomed back by the people, Becket met with little other than enmity from the King's supporters and soon discovered that the King had not carried out the various promises that he had made at the time of the reconciliation. Becket's excommunication of the Bishops involved in the crowning, at the King's order, of Prince Henry without the permission of the Archbishop (coronation being the Archbishop's prerogative) once more aroused the King's ire. Henry flew into one of those uncontrollable rages of which all the Plantagenets were capable and asked of the assembled company:

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"Are there none of th· cowards eating my bread who will free me from this turbulent priest?"[1]. Four knights left the court, crossed the Channel and rode to Canterbury where they broke into the Archbishop's palace and charged him with treason. He denied the charge and the Knights withdrew to arm themselves whilst Becket's chaplains persuaded him to enter the Cathedral where the office of the Vespers was about to begin. As the Archbishop processed up the choir the knights broke into the Cathedral and murdered him before the altar. It is ironical that whilst unable to defeat the King in life Becket obtained the victory in death. Henry's repentance appeares to have been both sincere and abject and when he made peace with the Pope eighteen months later he was forced to surrender on the question of the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts and do penance at Becket's tomb.

The rapid and "dramatic chain of events leading up to that ill-starred twenthy-ninth of December 1170"[2], was soon known throughout the Christian world. The murder of Becket acted thenceforth as a magnet inspiring artists and craftsmen of all description. A number of churches were dedicated to Becket. The majority survived the dissolution of religious buildings and the further havoc wrecked during the Cromwellian Commonwealth but many paintings, stained-glass windows and statues were lost. The impact made on medieval minds by this dramatic happening is however evident in many works of art preserved in continental Europe, including various musical items - motets, conducti, antiphons, services

1. Mc Killiam, A.E. A CHRONICLE OF THE ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTERBURY, p.174.
2. Stevens, Denis. Music in Honor of St. Thomas of Canterbury. The Musical Quarterly, vol.56, 1970, p.312.

and carols - written in honour of Saint Thomas of Canterbury and dealing with his personal characteristics, his politico-ecclesiastical career, the historical circumstances known to relate to his martyrdom and the miracles recorded as having taken place at his shrine in Canterbury Cathedral. The interest in the most famous of the Archbishops of Canterbury did not perish with the Middle Ages but remained alive in literary works and, to a lesser extent, in music.[1] Among the most important works are: A. Tennyson's BECKET (1879 or 1884); K.F. Mayer's DER HEILIGE (1880); T.S. Eliot's MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL (1935, set as a 'musical tragedy' by Pizzetti) and J. Anouilh's BECKET, OU L'HONNEUR DE DIEU (1958) which was made into a succesful film.

Before dealing with the libretto derived by Pizzetti from MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL it would perhaps be interesting to compare Eliot's masterwork with an earlier and a later play on the same subject: Tennyson's BECKET and Anouilh's BECKET, OU L'HONNEUR DE DIEU.

Tennyson's play, derivative of the Elizabethan tradition, is modelled after a Shakespearian historical drama and consists of a happening taken from history, the selected episodes being arranged in such a way as to bring out the nature of the action. It is cast in five acts accomodating the plot in what the German critic Gustav Freytag defines as a "pyramidal structure"[2] made of a rising action, a climax, and a falling action. Traditionally, in tragedy, the hero is an important

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1. Few musical compositions of length appear to have been written on the subject of Becket. Neither the anonymous late seventeenth century oratorio SAN TOMMASO DI CANTURBIA nor Camillo Togni's unimpressive choral setting of a part of Eliot's play (presented at the Neues Musikfest 1953, Cologne) can be termed works of stature.
2. Freytag, Gustav, in TECHNIQUE OF THE DRAMA (1863). Quoted in TRAGEDY AND COMEDY. An anthology of drama, p.753

person who does some deed and as a consequence pays for it either by falling from eminence or with death. Thus, in Tennyson's drama we follow the Becket story from when he is Chancellor and friend to the King to his dramatic change of life and thought as Archbishop and, ultimately, his tragic death. (The last idea is absent from Eliot's play in which the 'murder' is not "primarily a murder at all,but an act of redemption")[1]. The reasons for which Tennyson's BECKET "needs a lax criterion even to be called unimpressive"[2] are given by John Peter who, in his essay Murder in the Cathedral, has pointed out the anomaly deriving from Tennyson's emulation of the Shakespearian tragic pattern. To quote his words:

> Applied to his own BECKET... the conception gives rise to a persistent anomaly which he has nowhere contrived to solve: I mean the anomaly that arises when, having taken as his chief character a saint, he is thereafter obliged to endow the saint with a variety of gratuitous imperfections to account for his "fall". The result of this is to invest the whole play with an uncertainty that can hardly be condoned. If on the one hand Becket is proud and wilful then he is no martyr, and his death is merely a personal downfall with no significantly religious implications. If on the other hand he is a saint, it is fatal, or at least absurd, to represent him as impetuous and headstrong, constantly requiring the restraining admonitions of John of Salisbury, plainly his superior in most respects. The poet can't eat his cake and have it too.[3]

Whilst Eliot in MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL covers in time only the last days of Becket's life and concerns himself principally with the hour of crisis in which Becket is visited by the four tempters and with the

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1. Peter, John. Murder in the Cathedral, op. cit., p.157.
2. ibid.
3. ibid.

events leading up to the actual murder, Anouilh, like Tennyson, treats the story as a chronicle play. In all three plays the Archbishop represents the pre-eminent authority of the Church which he defends against the canonical innovations advocated by the King. The dramatic action naturally pivots "on the prospect of whether and how Thomas, on behalf of the authority of the Church, is going to suffer martyrdom at the hands of the State"[1]. The fundamental clash of secular and religious values is however cast in different forms by each author with consequent changes on emphases and dramatic effects. If Tennyson's BECKET is a historical "Shakespearian pastiche"[2], Eliot's MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, written for the 1935 Canterbury Festival with in mind an audience sharing the author's religious belief and moral outlook, is "a kind of Mass in memory of an event which took place in the same cathedral" [3] eight hundred years earlier. Anouilh approaches the subject more from a historical point of view and the religious aspect, all-important in Eliot's play, does not take pre-eminence. Georges Versini describes BECKET, OU L'HONNEUR DE DIEU as

> l'histoire d'une amitié qui finit mal, d'une amitié qui a pu bouleverser toute une vie et y causer autant de ravages que l'amour. Elle aboutit d'ailleurs au même dénouement tragique que beaucoup de drames d'amour. Mais BECKET c'est aussi l'étude de l'evolution d'un âme qui, après avoir épuisé toutes les satisfactions que peuvent donner le plaisir ou le pouvoir, ne trouve son épanouissement que dans l'accomplissement d'un grand devoir.

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1. Kantra, Robert A., Satiric theme and structure in MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, op. cit., p.388.
2. Taylor, John Russel. THE 'REVELS' HISTORY OF DRAMA IN ENGLISH, vol. VII (1880 to Present Day), p.162
3. Lumley, Frederick. TRENDS IN 20TH CENTURY DRAMA, p.84

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> (the history of a friendship which ends badly, a friendship capable of upsetting an entire life and causing as much ravage as love does. It leads up to the same kind of tragic dénouement usually found in love dramas. BECKET is however also the study of the evolution of a soul who, after having exhausted all the satisfaction which one derives from pleasure or power finds his own realization in the accomplishment of a lofty task.)[1]

Anouilh's Becket is "no saint until his murder made him one"[2]. Not originally spiritually minded he nevertheless, having accepted the task of serving the cause of the Church and defending 'the honor of God', carries 'the burden' passed on to him right to the end. In the impossibility of being loyal to both God and his one-time friend, the King, he makes his choice without hesitation, stubbornly and uncompromisingly sticking to it. On reading Eliot's and Anouilh's plays it would seem that the playrights' sympathies have differed widely. In Eliot's religious play the hero is without doubt Becket who suffered death for his religious beliefs at the hands of a King who placed temporal values and authority above the ecclesiastical. In Anouilh's play our admiration is inevitably drawn to the hot-tempered but frank and jovial king who is seen actually re-living the story of the complex love-hate relationship between Thomas and himself. The play takes as its point of departure the repentant Henry kneeling, stripped naked in front of Becket's tomb in Canterbury Cathedral and awaiting the flagellation of Saxon monks as part of the penance placed upon him by the Pope for his involvement in the murder of the Archbishop. He addresses the dead friend/enemy who appears from behind a pillar

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1. Versini, Georges. LE THEATRE FRANCAIS DEPUIS 1900, p.77.
2. Lumley, Frederick. NEW TRENDS IN 20TH CENTURY DRAMA, p.178.

reminding him to pray instead of chattering. The King however starts to dream of the past, recalling the days of their youthful companionship when they took pleasure in 'drinking, whoring and vying even for the same girl'. A series of flash-backs then unfolds the entire story of Becket until the scene returns to the Archbishop's tomb. The King has now being whipped by the monks who, in admiration of his stoic penance, have become his enthusiastic liege-men and acclaim his name and that of Saint Thomas in the same breath.

Anouilh's play lacks the religious implications of Eliot's but, as Robert A. Kantra remarked "whatever the estimate of the cause for which Thomas died, that he was a martyr is indisputable in both of these plays"[1]. However, whilst in Eliot the murder of Becket is the reiteration of

> an eternal action, an eternal patience
> To which all must consent that it may be willed
> And which all must suffer that they may will it,[2]

in Anouilh it is the price that Thomas has to pay for becoming too deeply involved in what was asked of him, for having played too seriously the role of the defender of 'the honor of God'.

The ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE libretto, prepared by the composer himself, is based on the Italian translation of Eliot's MURDER IN THE C[illegible] made by Monsignor Alberto Castelli. Pizzetti's excisions reduced the play to rather less than a third. He occasionally simplified it to suit the score which 'focuses attention on the psychological

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drama of Thomas Becket's martyrdom"[1]. Much of the picturesque poetry of the original has been cut. In the process some of the essential 'Englishness' of Eliot's text has been lost. This, for instance, is the case with the opening choral song which becomes somewhat devoid of atmosphere because of the erosion of the typical English word-pictures of apples being stored in October, of the labourer kicking off 'a muddy boot' or bending 'to his piece of earth', and of the evocative imagery elaborating the line 'I fear disturbance of the quiet seasons'. Also regrettable is the omission of the beginning of the opening chorus of Part II containing the apposite image of the sea-bird 'driven inland', a "convenient symbol for the Chorus themselves, driven from their wanted security"[2], as John Peter has remarked, and the mention of the bitterness of the present season and of future times destitute of happiness. The "staccato effect" [3] of Eliot's verse, his almost gloomy, detached lyricism (preserved to some extent in the prose language of Castelli's version) were softened by Pizzetti's use of irrepressibly flowing poetic endecasyllabic and septenary lines more appropriate to musical treatment. Thus, to quote a few examples

The New Year waits, breathes, waits, whispers in darkness

from the opening scene in which the Women of Canterbury gather outside the Cathedral, became

l'Anno Novello attende, respirando
e bisbigliando nell'oscurità.

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1. MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL as an opera. (unsigned). THE TIMES, Monday, March 3, 1958, p.15. In the following passage, dealing with a comparison within the poetry of the original play and that of the libretto, I have borrowed, and enlarged on the idea suggested by the 'special correspondent' of THE TIMES.
2. Peter, John, Murder in the Cathedral, op. cit., p.166.

The chilling lines from the choral passage in Part II:

> Numb the hand and dry the eyelid,
> Still the horror, but more horror
> Than when tearing in the belly.
> Still the horror, but more horror
> Than when twisting in the fingers,
> Than when splitting in the skull.

where turned into:

> - Son torpide le mani — come morte.
> Asciutti, aridi gli occhi - senza lagrime.
> - Ma orrore, ancora orrore, ancor più orrore
> di quando il corpo fosse torturato,
> torte le dita e fracassato il cranio.

The heavily dramatic :

> Dead upon the tree, my Saviour,
> Let not be in vain Thy labour;
> Help me, Lord, in my last fear.

(from the same chorus) was smoothed, perhaps inappropriately, to the extent of mellifluousness in the Boys choral passage

> Morto sull'albero
> mio Salvatore,
> mai non sia vano
> il Tuo dolore.
> Dacci Tu aiuto,
> Alto Signore,
> in quest'estremo
> nostro timore.

Dramatically, the libretto follows closely the outline of Eliot's play. The dialogue between Becket and the Priests and Becket and the Tempters in Part I and the rather extended speeches of the Knights towards the end of Part II have been, for obvious reasons, much abridged, the passages sacrificed being especially those concerning the clash of religious and social values which in Eliot's poetic drama throw light on the historical background. The actual incidents

are however maintained, together with "the underlying conflict of spiritual forces beneath the surface action"[1] and "the realization of Thomas's complex arrogance and the power of self-sacrifice that finally made him a saint and a martyr"[1]. The Interlude that separates Parts I and II, dealing with the "Christian conceptions of 'rejoicing' and 'peace'"[2], and elaborating the implications of the ritual, is surely a most appropriate form in which to cast "Thomas' generalized animadversions on his own fate"[2], but it is highly undramatic and one cannot but agree with John R. Taylor when, apropos of this sermon, he says that "though admirably calculated for performance in a specifically religious, non-theatrical setting"[3], it tends "to hang rather heavily anywhere else"[3]. To set it to music as written was a task to tax a composer's resourcefullness and Pizzetti did not attempt to do so. Instead he used the beginning and ending words which now flanked a musical Interlude. It is to the librettist-composer's credit that he gave the right emphasis to the two struggles which form the kernel of the play: "Becket's to do the right deed for the wrong reason, and the chorus's to witness, to accept, and to consent to the suffering and insecurity the martyrdom of Thomas will bring"[4]. Pizzetti's introduction of song-like solo sections for the leader of the chorus seems to be a felicituous one, not only as to its effect on the intelligibility of the text at especially crucial moments, but also because it provides solo female musical sections in a work in which

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1. Webster, E. M. Pizzetti's MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL. Musical Opinion, July, 1962, p.617.
2. Peter, John. Murder in the Cathedral, op. cit., p. 166 and p.165.
3. Taylor, John Russel. THE 'REVELS' HISTORY OF DRAMA IN ENGLISH, op. cit., p.219.
4. Virsis, Rasmas, The Cristian concept in MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, p.405

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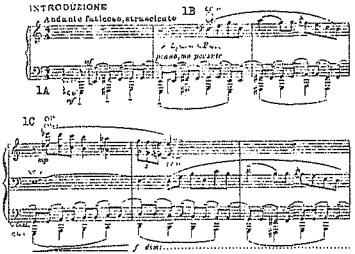
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all the principal solo characters are men. A more satisfactory balance of musical contrast is provided.

--- ooo ---

ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE opens with a slow and heavy orchestral Introduction marked 'Andante faticoso, stracciato' and characterized by prevalently sombre instrumental colours. It aims at establishing a background mood rather than a characteristically atmospheric historical background. Thus, the gloomy atmosphere that seems to emanate from the 'grey sky' of Canterbury and the 'bitter sea' of Dover and that dominates the music drama like an almost palpable presence, is at once evoked by the monotonous, appoggiatura-like A Dorian ostinato in the bassi evoking the shadow of Mussorgsky (Ex.1A). This sustains a swaying unison line traced by bass clarinet, bassoon and violas (Ex.1B) , alternating with a scalic figure, hinting at bitonality, descending on piccolo and oboe (Ex.1C):

Exs. 1A, 1B, 1C, p.1



A new motive, resembling disjointed plainsong-like motives strung together almost haphazardly, is introduced and variously elaborated by the oboe. It gains melodic prominence in the middle section of the Introduction:

Ex.2, p.2

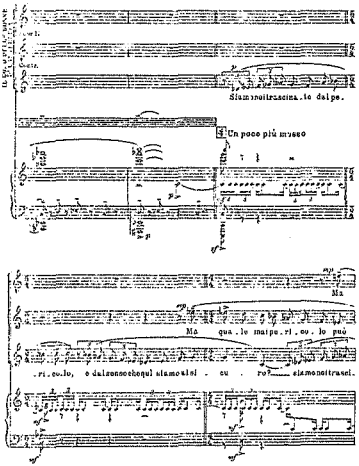


and then combines with Exs. 1A and B in a contrapuntal passage leading to a restatement of the opening ostinato pattern (Ex.1A) this time supported by major chords in horns and flutes (alternating with bassoons) with shifting pedal points in the lower strings - on which the curtain rises. The dull sound of a cathedral bell adds to the 'greyness' of the 'winter afternoon' and it is to the trailing Ex.1A (violas, over a long A-flat - E-flat pedal in the bass) that the Women of Canterbury enter. The first chorus "Fermiamoci qui, presso la Cattedrale" (Here let us stand, close by the Cathedral)[1], shared between them and the

1. Whenever possible, I have used, in the translation, Eliot's actual words, although not adhering to the metre of the Italian verse.

Chorus leaders, expresses their fear of being disturbed by some extraordinary event which they have been called to witness. It is sung to expressive lines of great plasticity set against each other (as in the following example in which the descending scalic figure of Ex.1C - and its inversion - features conspicuously in both vocal and orchestral parts)

Ex.3, p.4



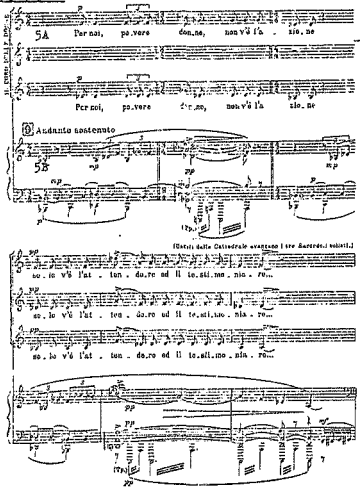
or freely canonically treated (Ex.4A)

Exs. 4A, 4B, 4C, pp.8-9



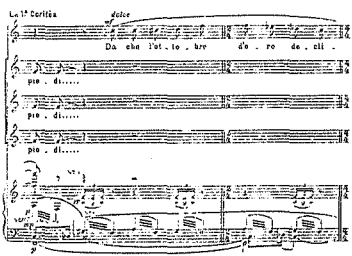
or combined in homophonic passages:

Exs. 5A, 5B, p.16



The orchestra provides a background of variety and interest, either by introducing new motivic elements, as the dotted figure in the divided cellos which underlines the First Chorus leader's "Da che l'ottobre d'oro declinò nello smorto novembre paludoso, l'Anno Novello attende..." (Since golden October declined into sombre November, the New Year waits...);

Ex.6, p.7



the organum-like motive which supports "L'Anno Novello attende" (Ex.4B); the flickering semitonal accidaccatura from the horns heard at "Chi tiene ha la sua mano sopra il fuoco" (Who has stretched out his hand to the fire, Ex.4C)and the grinding Ex.5B , or by emphasizing the sense of tension and foreboding by means of frequent tonal clashes (noteworthy the contraltos C-flat Lydian opening line set against the rhythmicized C pedal,see Ex.3); by recalls of the ostinato structure Exs. 1A and B and by polyrhythmic patterns of comparative complexity: (Ex.7)

Ex.7, pp.12-13



After uttering the words "Per noi, povere donne, non v'è azione, solo v'è l'attendere ed il testimoniare" (For us, the poor women, there is no action, but only to wait and to witness) the Chorus fall silent and to a theme somewhat reminiscent of Ex.2, rhythmically imitated by the timpani

Ex.8, p.17



the Three Priests enter. They are almost immediately followed by a herald bringing news of the Archbishop's return. Quotations of Ex.8 are interspersed with increasingly assertive interjections of the trumpet-call associated with the Herald

Ex.9, p.18



and a pizzicato figure of four ascending fourths in the violins, emphasizing the B Phrygian modality prevalent at the moment (Ex.10)

Ex. 10, p. 19



whilst we are given information concerning the antecedent facts and the conjectured effects of Thomas' return to England. To the Priests' anxious enquiries "Ma dunque, è guerra o pace?" (But then, is it war or peace?)

Ex. 11, p. 22



(note Pizzetti's characteristic use of falling inflections to express a question) the Herald replies "Pace, ma senza il bacio della pace" (Peace, but without the kiss of peace). He concludes his strictly syllabic recitative with the ominous "Ma nessuno osa far lieti pronostici" (But no one dares to make happy prognostics). The joy of having the Archbishop back is overshadowed by the fear that his pride and inflexibility will be harbinger of unhappy events and the cheerful mood momentarily established by the bell-like music (climaxed

by a chordal version of the trumpet-call of Ex.9) heard when the Priests express their intention to go and welcome the Archbishop (p.26) is dispelled by the Women's anguished, melismatic "Oh!". In the ensuing passage "Nemico il vento, e amaro il mare, e il cielo è grigio..." (Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky, p.28) the Chorus show awareness of the danger which is upon them. They do not wish anything to happen to upset the course of their ordinary lives. The fear which they cannot yet know, but only sense, is reflected in the urgency of their outburst "Lascia la tetra Dover, e fa vela per la Francia" (Leave sullen Dover, and set sail for France), in imitation over the Priests's independent bass part:

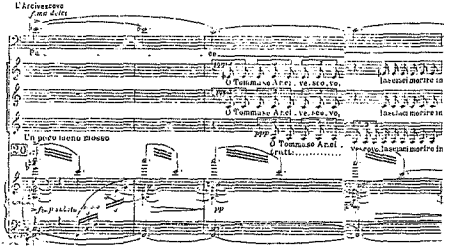
Ex.12, p.40



At the final repetition of their appeal to Thomas to return to France, the Archbishop arrives surrounded by a group of priests. His first word, (uttered to a sustained F Mixolydian ninth chord which, with the raised fourth of the scale added in the third bar and proceeding to C, now ambiguously F Mixolydian/C Dorian, forms the melodic and harmonic structure)

is "Pace" (Peace), to which the Women of Canterbury answer with the almost whispered "O Tommaso Arcivescovo, lasciaci morire in pace" (O Thomas Archbishop, leave us to perish in peace):

Ex.13, p.42



Ushered in by one of those chromatic lower string figures usually associated by Pizzetti with states of restlessness or spiritual conflict (Ex.14), the theme of Thomas appears on horn and violas(Ex.15):

Exs14, 15, pp.42-43



In its original form it is a simple, diatonic and very relaxed tune possibly derived from the intonation and mediation of the psalmodic Tone VI:

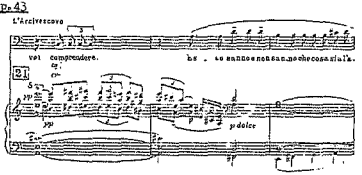
Ex.15A

Tone VI



Being used more as a musical symbol than as a theme, Ex.15 is subjected to endless subtleties of inflection as well as rhythmic and harmonic variations. With the exception of the first three notes, which remain its constant feature, it never appears twice in the same guise. The Archbishop's first speech "Lasciatele alla loro esaltazione" (Let them be, in their exaltation, p.43) is addressed to the Priests who do not seem to understand the anguish of the poor women of the parish. To progressively more intense lines of recitativo-arioso he says of them "Esse sanno e non sanno che cosa sia l'azione od il soffrire" (They know and do not know what is to act or suffer):

Ex.16, p.43



Then, what in Pizzetti's dramatic version emerges as the dominant theme - the experience of redeeming martyrdom lived and suffered not only by the martyr himself but also by the ordinary people - is given in the statement "Fissi, colui che agisce e quel che soffre, in un'eterna azione e pazienza" (Both, agent and patient, are fixed in an eternal action, an eternal patience, p.44). After imparting his blessing to the Women, who again implore him to return to France because for them there is no action, only 'to wait and to witness', Thomas leaves to enter the Archbishop's palace. In the brief interlude which follows without interruption, the majority

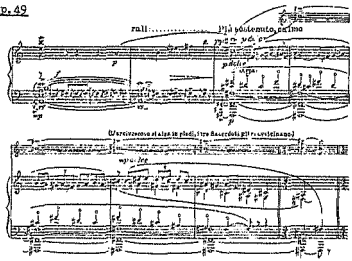
of the themes so far heard are restated in a kind of recapitulation, sometimes expressively interlaced in cross-rhythms, as in the section combining Sxs. 1A and B with Ex.9:

Ex.17, p.48



or tellingly sounding in a new, luminous tonal colour (F-sharp Mixolydian) as is the case of Thomas' theme (Ex.15), to the music of which the scene shifts to the study in which the Archbishop is seen absorbed in prayer:

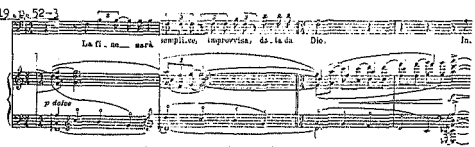
Ex.18, p.49



For the Three priests, who have been watching him in reverent silence, the Archbishop has words of gratitude for the welcome they have given him. He speaks briefly of the political significance of his crossing the Channel, warning them against having any illusion of the future.

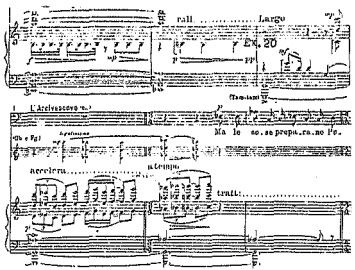
To a diatonic, descending figure

Ex. 19, p. 52-3



Thomas utters the words "La fine sarà semplice, improvvisa, data da Dio" (End will be simple, sudden, God-given) for the first time alluding unmistakably to his martyrdom. With "La sostanza del nostro primo agire saranno ... ontesa con ombre" (The substance of our first act will be shadows, and the strife with shadows, p. 54) underlined by a timpani pedal point of increasing rhythmic complexity under an almost static but widely-spaced chord of superimposed fourths and fifths, the Archbishop dismisses the Priests. The crucial scene with the Four Tempters is dramatically and musically prepared by the sentence: "Ma le cose preparano l'evento..." (All things prepare the event...) which is framed by string quotations of Thomas' theme (Ex. 15) preceded by, and interspersed with a dotted figure the importance of which is soon to be revealed:

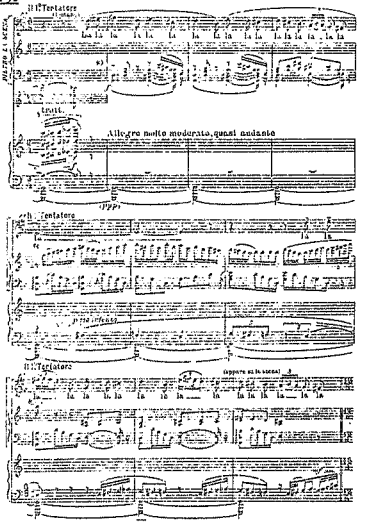
Ex. 20, p. 55



and complemented by re-statements (from oboe and bassoon) of Ex.4B associated with the 'New Year' and its implied happenings.

The cheerful carolling of the First Tempter, set to a lilting $\frac{6}{8}$ Lydian tune accompanied fairly elaborately by flute, guitar, two violas and cellos, is heard off-stage:

Ex.21, p.56



At the same time the orchestra continues its independent course with the violas (muted) elaborating Ex.4B over a muffled, sustained pedal in the tam-tam. Becket is seen lost in thought and when the First

Tempter appears on stage it is as if a figment of the Archbishop's imagination were taking shape before the eyes of the audience. The Tempter tries to disquiet Thomas' conscience by recalling memories of youthful pleasure when he, 'gay Tom, Becket of London' and the King were still in amity. Becket does not find it difficult to resist the first temptation offering worldly pleasures. The seasons of 'fluting in the meadows, viol's in the hall, laughter and apple-blossom floating in the water' are past and, as he says almost to himself in an introspective mood "Nella vita dell'uomo mai non torna un medesimo tempo" (In the life of one man never the same time returns, p.60). The First Tempter is characterized by a number of suggestively scored motives. The most memorable are falling and rising scalic fragments of major and minor thirds

Ex.22, p.57



and the flute roulades which have announced his arrival (see Ex.21) and to which he takes leave 'with humble levity'. Heralded by an energetic motive in bass tuba and trombone the Second Tempter makes his appearance:

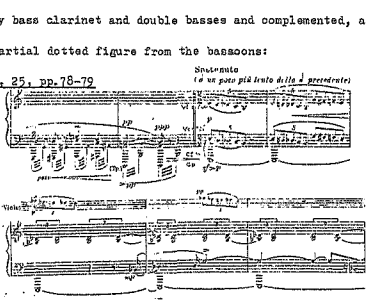
Ex.23, p.65

Ex.23, p.65



He offers Thomas ruling power at the price of religious concessions ('of a certain submission'). It is in this dramatic context that the dotted Ex.20, after which the downward skips to which the 'Nos' punctuating the Archbishop's indignant reaction are seemingly patterned, reveals itself as what, for an analytical purpose might be called the 'motive of denial' (or of self-determination). It is usually heard in the horns. The choral song "Non v'è nessuna requie nella casa" (There is no rest in the house, pp.73-77) occurring in the play at the end of the 'temptations' scene, is sung (antiphonally) by the two Chorus leaders and the Women of Canterbury after the exit of the Second Tempter. The Third Tempter enters to a descending quintuplet pattern in divided violas and cellos resting on a pedal point of C held by bass clarinet and double basses and complemented, a little later, by a martial dotted figure from the bassoons:

Ex.24, 25, pp.78-79



Ex.25

The Tempter urges Becket to support the cause of the barons in a revolt against the King. Becket reproves him and then dismisses him with the words "Nessuno mai dirà ch'io ho tradito un Re" (No one shall say that I betrayed a King, p.85), tellingly emphasized with Ex.20 heard in the orchestra in minor chords over a tremolando E pedal. It is now the turn of the Fourth Tempter, the most insidious of all. He does not actually appear on the stage and what we see of him is only his magnified shadow projected against a wall. The dialogue with the other Tempters "has symbolized an introspective process and ... hitherto it has been a comparatively simple matter for the Archbishop to isolate and discard the temptations"[1]. Now, however "tempter and tempted begin to merge"[1]. The Fourth Tempter's first words "Bene, Tommaso! Dura da piegare è la tua volontà" (Well done, Thomas, your will is hard to bend) seem to grow out of Thomas' reflection "Fare, ma poi spezzare...Ma s'io spezzo, spezzar devo me solo (To make, then break...But if I break, I must break myself alone, pp.86,87). A skirmish takes place between Thomas and the invisible interlocutor tempting him with his own desire: to seek 'the way of martyrdom', to make himself 'the lowest on earth, to be high in heaven' - in brief: to make the right deed for the wrong reason.

This all-important episode is effectively dealt with. The insidiousness of the Fourth Tempter is represented by the stereotyped formula, of long-age usage, of sinuous chromatic lines (in the violas), set against static chords (F major, then C major) from which a strongly rhythmicized figure unfolds. The ~ ical superstructure is underpinned by low lying pedal

1. Peter, John., Murder in the Cathedral, op. cit., p.164.

points in the basso, the timpani contributing a sustained tremolo growing out of the initially rhythmicised pattern:

Ex.26, p.87



A sense of tension is created by the restlessly flowing orchestral background, by the sharp, angular contour of the melodic lines

Ex.27, p.87



and by the mysterious voices floating in the air whispering, as if the echo of an insidious thought, "Il Santo e il Martire" (The Saint and the Martyr, pp.91,93...97,98). At the end of his struggle with the last temptation Thomas kneels under the Cross which dominates the stage. The "external prompting"[1] needed to help him in this

1. Peter, John, Murder in the Cathedral, op. cit., p.164.

moment of confusion comes from the Women of Canterbury who sing "Signore, noi non siam state felici..." (We have not been happy, Lord) whilst the Four Tempters interrupt with "La vita umana è inganno ed illusione" (Man's life is a cheat and an illusion, p.100). The choral section develops and a climax is reached when, after loudly lamenting "Dio ci lascia" (God is leaving us) the Women embark on flowing, chromatically descending melismata on "Oh" supported by a fortissimo F-sharp Phrygian chord with a dominant tremolo underneath and rhythmicized interjections from the horns reiterating the tonally clashing F-natural:

Ex.28, p.108



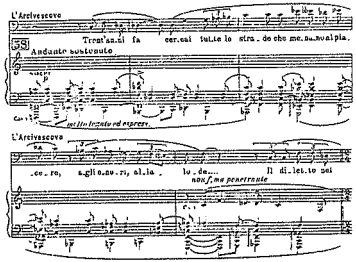
Coming back to reality after being lost in a world of disquieting shadows Thomas, in a flash of realization, recognizes that the 'last temptation is the greatest treason'. Martyrdom is not a personal choice; it is submission to God's design, an act of humility and self-abnegation. Now he can earnestly admit "Or la strada m'è chiara ed il significato anche m'è chiaro" (Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain). This speech, sung against the Women's pleas "O Tommaso Arcivescovo, sàlvaci tu" (O Thomas Archbishop, save us) is intensely sensitive and powerfully dramatic. It starts with well-articulated lines of recitative (Ex.29)

Ex. 29, pp. 110-111



supported mainly by quotations of Thomas' theme (Ex.15) and repeated statements of Ex.20. Noteworthy is the stretto-like passage at p.111 with Ex.15 appearing in turn in parallel fifths in flutes and clarinets, in close succession in cellos and double basses, in the bassoon over a tremolo in the upper strings and a trumpet pedal. The melodic lines grow more lyrical and expansive in the passage "Trent'anni fa cercai tutte le strade che mènano al piacere" (Thirty years ago I searched all the ways that lead to pleasure)

Ex.30, p.113



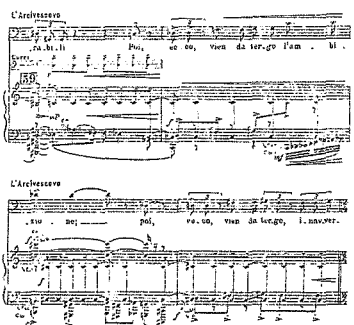
The scoring is delicate, glittering harp passages adding a luminous touch to 'love in the garden, singing to the instruments':

Ex.31, p.114



At "Poi, ecco, vien da tergo l'ambizione" (Ambition comes behind and unobservable) occurs a sudden change of mood conveyed by the tenser idiom in which the words are coached and intensified by heavy reiterations in the horns, the syncopated rhythm and the dark theme, introduced by rapid ascending figures in the lower strings, creeping in the bass:

Ex.32, p.115

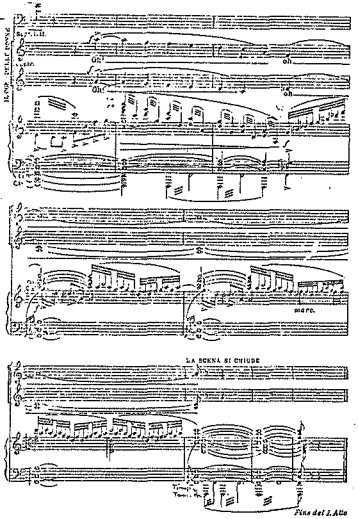


A fine climax is reached when Becket, urged by the Women's cries, surrendershimself to what "he now recognizes as his necessary purpose"[1]. There are accents of resolution when he asks his 'good Angel' to be his guardian and, as at the words "Librati sulla punta della spada" (Hover over the swords' points) his voice climbs up to the high F, the orchestra explodes in a fortissimo F major chord emphasized by

1. Peter, John, Murder in the Cathedral, op. cit., p.165.

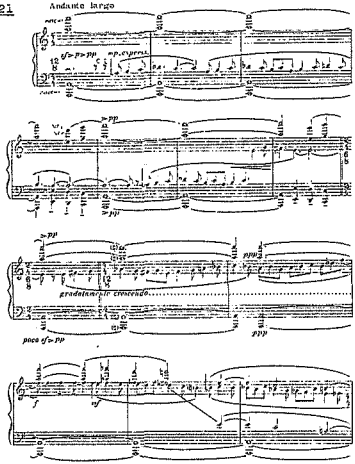
a shuddering tremolo in the strings and Ex.20, now symbolic of his victory over the temptations, flares out of the trumpets in a full-fledged version. Its dotted pattern is taken over by oboe and English horn and, as the Women's voices come to rest on long sustained notes after the final melismatic lamentation, the upper strings become more active, weaving traceries between the pedal chords. The roll on the timpani and the final tam-tam add to the climactic bitonal ending on loud, superimposed 'tutti' chords of F major and D minor, the latter furnishing a point of harmonic connection to the A pedal which opens the following Intermezzo (D being the subdominant of A).

Ex.33, p.120



Becket's Christmas Day sermon, which in both the play and the music-drama forms the interlude connecting Parts I and II, is considered to be one of the best portions of Pizzetti's score. In Massimo Mila words "a superb gem"[1] and in Francis Toye's opinion "truly expressive of the atmosphere"[2]. A gentle, essentially lyrical orchestral introduction based on a free use of Thomas' motive (Ex.15) played on the English horn against translucent strings (mainly in sustained pedal points) and harp, with occasional contributions from flute and celesta,

Ex.34, p.121



1. Mila, Massimo. L'Assassinio nella Cattedrale, CRONACHE MUSICALI; p.165.
2. Toye, Francis ASSASSINIO triumphs in Milan, The New York Times, March 16, 1958, p.11 (Music XII).

takes us into the Cathedral where the Archbishop is about to deliver his sermon "Figli cari di Dio" (Dear children of God):

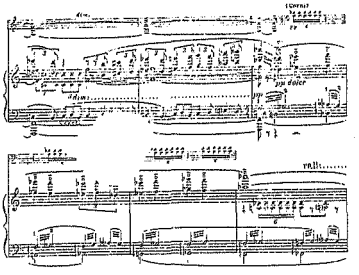
Ex.35, p.122



Its opening section, which throws light on the concept of Christ's giving life through death, implicit in the Christmas celebration, is set to sensitive, smoothly flowing lines. There are frequent changes of time signature and the music is now freely chromaticized, now strictly diatonic, occasionally adhering to the tonality established by the supporting major chords (contributed mainly by the harp). The keys shift in a progression by fourths, from C to F, through F, B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, D-flat, the whole structure being sustained throughout by a timpani pedal reinforced (from p.123, b.3) by double basses, pizzicato.

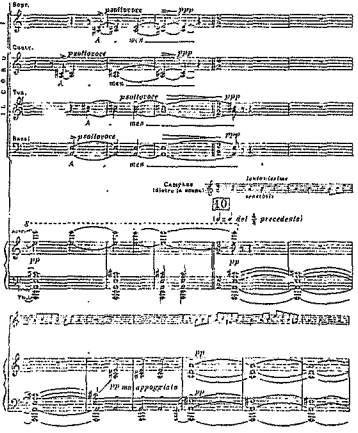
At Becket's mention of the ambivalence of life and death the stage darkens and the orchestra takes over to convey, in vaguely Tristanesque waves of sound of increasing and decreasing intensity, the Archbishop's train of thought. The setting of this orchestral section is rhapsodic. The opening is an almost literal quotation of "Trent'anni fa..." (Ex.30) and the melodic lines, steadily surging and then smoothly gliding downward, are marked by a fluent lyricism. What follows is completely dominated by Becket's theme (Ex.15) appearing in the bassoon against an F pedal kept for eleven bars by cellos and tremolando violas, and answered by oboes and muted violins in unison. The trumpets enter with a rhythmicized figure of reiterated notes (p.126, b.12) and Ex.15, now shared by cellos and bassoons, is taken over in imitation by the violins. A last quotation of Ex.15 comes from the solo flute reinforced by trumpets heard over a string texture supported by a steady chromatic descent in the cellos, complemented by a pattern of diminished fourths sounded pianissimo on the horns.

Ex.36, p.127



When the curtain rises, on a long dominant A-flat pedal, Becket's voice is heard delivering the concluding part of the sermon. The vocal lines, often interrupted by cadential points, are more dramatic and vibrate with suppressed emotion when the Archbishop, talking about martyrdom, identifies true martyrs not with those who have desired 'the glory of being a martyr' but with those who have submitted to the will of God. Poignantly, he foreshadows his own death with "Non credo che potrò parlarvi ancora...potrà darsi che fra breve abbiate un nuovo martire" (I do not think I shall ever preach to you again...it is possible that in a short time you may have another martyr". With very simple, touching words he then dismisses the congregation. After their A major 'Amen' the bells start ringing a change

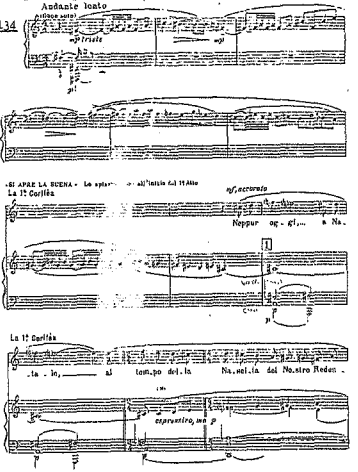
Ex. 37, p. 331-



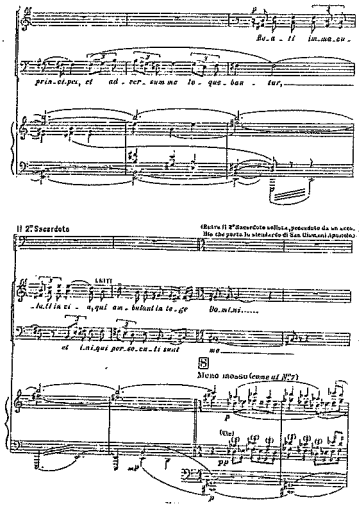
which, with slight changes but remaining in the Dorian mode on A, is repeated another four times over a series of major chords (from the initial A to D, G, C, F) slowly shifting over an A pedal. The change-ringing is heard again and for the last time, after a six-bar passage anchored in an A minor scale or mode (Dorian being suggested by the recurrence of its characteristic F-sharp which persists until the end also introducing the second part of the music drama), after which the orchestra fades away in a four-fold piano.

Act II, taking place outside the Cathedral, begins with a poignant oboe melody introducing the First Chorus Lea[illegible] beautifully lyrical passage "Neppur oggi, a Natale...v'è pace su[illegible]ra?" (What, at Christmastide,... is there not peace upon earth?):

Ex. 38, p. 134




La 1ª Cortfea
(Entrano i Sacerdoti e Ministri del Coro.)
Un poco più mosso
4 Voi t.
(Entra il 3º Sacerdote seguito, preceduto da un accolito che porta lo stendardo di Santo Stefano.)
Il 3º Sacerdote
Un gior_no da Na_
Il 3º Sacerdote
_tale, Il dì di Santo Stefano, Stefano Primo Mar_ti_re...
Anche un pò più mosso

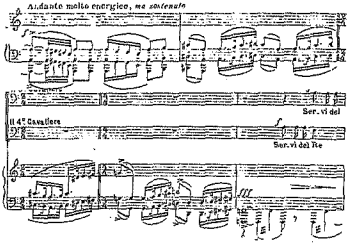

Il 2º Sacerdote
(Entra il 3º Sacerdote seguito, preceduto da un acco... Ha che porta lo stendardo di San Giovanni Apostolo.)
Meno mosso (come al N°2)



Esse. 39, 40, 41, 42-5

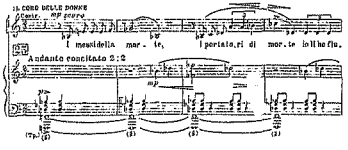
The pervasive mood of anxiety and desolation is lightened for a brief spell by the mention of the coming spring ("Verrà marzo ventoso" - Windy March will come, p.138) with the oboe, richly elaborating its melody, the fluttering motion in the clarinet and the soft, arpeggiated passages in the harp providing glimpses of the season of rebirth. After the Women's resigned "Noi attendiamo...E il tempo è breve" (We wait...and the time is short), the ostinato pattern Ex.1A returns with its tenebrous, oppressive effect. As indicated in the play a Chorus (given in the music drama to priests and monks) is heard chanting phrases from the Offices for the feasts days of St.Stephen Protomartyr, St. John the Evangelist and the Holy Innocents thus denoting the passing of time. These excerpts from the Offices, freely elaborated by Pizzetti, are sung mainly responsorially (Ex.39) and linked by an ostinato-like figure in the upper part (Ex.40) almost always occurring simultaneously with Ex.1A which also provides the material for the orchestral background. At the end of this somewhat stylized passage one of the priests muses on the meaning of the fourth day after Christmas, still unsanctified. The mood alters at once when, heralded by a stark theme

Ex.41, p.151



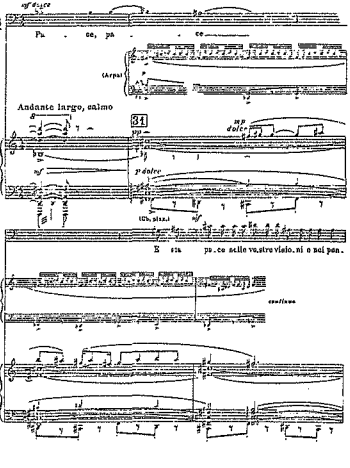
the Knights enter to discuss, by order of the King, urgent business with the Archbishop. Becket's arraignment takes place in the following scene. Reproached by the Knights for being 'the Archbishop in revolt against the King and the law of the land' he enjoins them repeatedly, firmly refuting their accusations. Remaining impervious to Becket's counter-arguments, the Knights accuse him of high treason, eventually commanding him, on the King's behalf, to leave the land and return to exile. At the Archbishop's refusal to abandon his flock, already tried by seven years of pain and misery, the Knights withdraw with ominous threats. The setting of this episode is masterly. The accusations, alternately given to the Four Knights, are set to short, pressing snatches of recitative frequently interrupted by Becket's now indignant, now authoritatively persuasive objections and remarks. The orchestra provides a background of urgency and tension by exploiting the Knights's theme (Ex.41), Ex.20 and other figures, prevalently of a vigorously rhythmic nature. After this the Women's Chorus, led off by the Contraltos, embarks on the passage "I messi della morte...io li ho fiutati" (I have smelt them, the death-heralds), sung to curiously angular lines

Ex.42, p.176



woven into a well-balanced polyphonic pattern reflecting their fears, anxieties and feeling of impotence in the face of the oncoming events. We note that the disembodied figure appearing in the orchestral part of Ex.42 is a derivation of Ex.1B. Reduced to fragmentary interpolations or, at times, better articulated, it forms the melodic substance of the supporting texture of the entire choral episode culminating with the plea "O Tommaso Arcivescovo, o Signore, perdonaci" (O Thomas Archbishop, O Lord, forgive us, pp.186-7). In a gentle, F-sharp major passage commented upon by yet another version of Thomas'theme (Ex.15) supported by the harp with double bass punctuations, the Archbishop tries to dispell the Women's apprehension with "Pace...e sia pace nelle vostre visioni e nei pensieri" (Peace...and be at peace with your thoughts and visions)

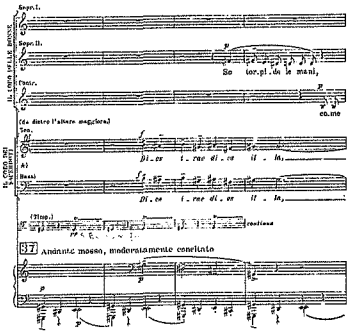
Ex.43, p.188



He explains how their present 'share of the eternal burden' will be converted into future happiness. A moment of intense emotion, conveyed by means of the utmost simplicity, arises when, after being urged by the priests to repair to the Cathedral, he calmly says "Ma non sono in pericolo. Sono soltanto prossimo alla morte" (I am not in danger. Only near to death, p.197-). The harp comes again into action at the words "Ho già sentito un fremito beato, un palpito di cielo" (I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, p.198).

The scene shifts to the interior of the Cathedral where the priests have taken Becket for safety. It is the time for the Office of Vespers. Again, as given in the ... ...ation, a choir is heard singing the Dies Irae[1] whilst the Women's ... embarks on the chilling passage "Son torpide le mani, come morte" (Numb the hands):

Ex.44, p.200



1. Not included in the Office of Vespers but appropriate to the prevailing atmosphere of apprehension of the Archbishop's impending death.

(Pizzetti's use of the traditional plainsong melody of the Dies Irae, although anachronistic[1], seems to me to be justified by the fact that it remains the best known hymn associated with death). The lines "Morto sull'albero mio Salvatore..." (Dead upon the tree, my Saviour...) are given to a small choir of boys. With musical and dramatic aptness their words combine with those of the Women singing the lugubrious "Solo : qui l'esangue faccia piatta della morte" (Only is here the white flat face of death):

Ex.45, p.206 La 1ª Corifea



[1] Although the sequence was written by Adam of St. Victor (d.1190), this sequence, one of the five still surviving in the Roman liturgy, could hardly have been written by 1170, the year of Becket's murder.

Author Duse Yucci Maria Orsini
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