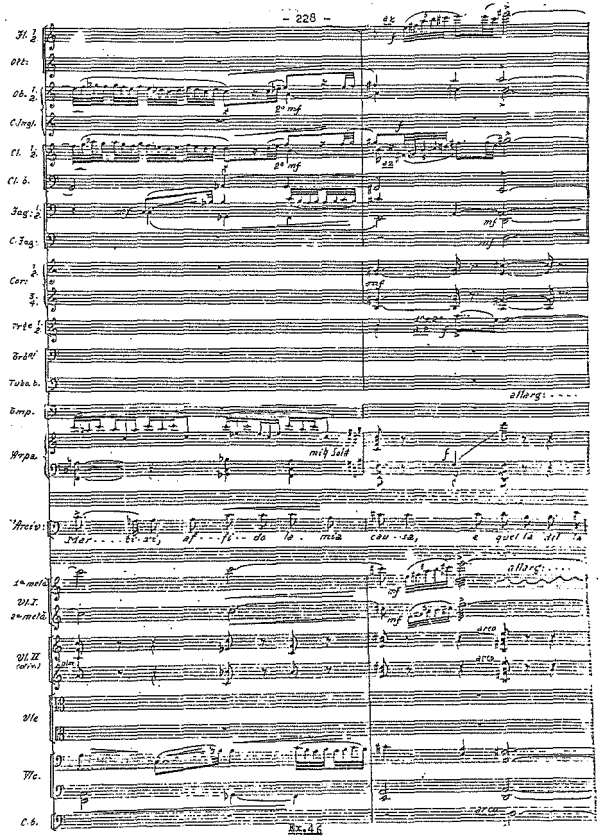

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The libretto and its musical setting in Ildebrando Pizzetti's music dramas derived from literary sources.

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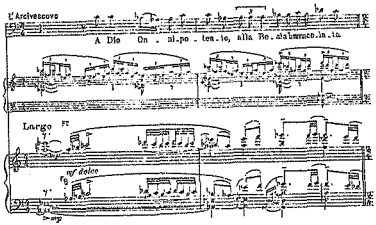
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Fl. 1 2
Ott.
Ob. 1 2
C.Ingl.
Cl. 1 2
Cl. b.
Fag. 1 2
C.Fag.
Corr. 1 2 3 4
Trbe 1 2
Bardi
Tuba b.
Timp.
Arpa.
Arcip.
Per - fi - do la mia cou - ta, e quel la in -
1mi violi
Vl. I.
2mi violi
Vl. II (divisi)
Vla
Vlc.
C. b.
mit Schl
allarg.
arco
Rx.46

It is over the priests' 'Rex tremendae majestatis' that the Women of Canterbury utter the question (shortly to be answered) "Chi dunque, chi per noi pererorerà?" (Who shall then plead for us?, p.209). From here onwards the drama moves unremittingly towards its conclusion. The priests bar the doors of the Cathedral but Becket orders that they be opened. Then, in a vigorously dramatic, eloquent passage accompanied by orchestral triplets frequently punctuated by Ex.20 he proclaims his decision to give his life 'to the Law of God above the Law of Man'. Again heralded by their stark, dark-coloured theme (Ex.41) the Knights enter and bluntly give their ultimatum. Becket answers firmly, refusing to submit to their requests and commends his cause, and 'that of the Church' (Ex.46) to 'Almighty God, to the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to all the Saints and Martyrs'. His last words are spoken against a translucent background dominated by the harp and by the combined flute and bassoon proposing Becket's theme (Ex.15) , again modified:

Ex.47, p.229



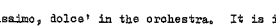
The Knights, drawing their swords, sweep aside the terrified priests and strike Becket who falls to the pavement . A repeated "Oh!" from the Women of Canterbury and the Priests on a descending figure harmonized in fifths and fourths and commencing with a chord of the eleventh on F, is supported by the orchestra and aptly suits the violence of the moment (p.231). After four bars the Priests'chorus dies away and the Women continue with a diminished chord on F from which the 'Oh!' motive descends until the contraltos performa modulation to A minor. As they burst out in the exasperated "Chiarite l'aria, ripulite il cielo" (Clean the air, clean the sky), the oppressive Ex.1B heard at the beginning of the music drama returns, this time in the violins, with haunting effect in nervous, broken fragments at first alternating with the dotted figure of Ex.6, then becoming quietly insistent against thirds in the clarinets and finally trailing off when, at the end of the choral outburst, the orchestra comes to rest on a long and muffled A pedal.

The scene in which the Knights attempt to justify their actions, addressing the audience directly in a Shavian manner, a scene which, in Eliot's words, was aimed at "shocking the audience out of their complacency"[1], is reduced to a few, essential sentences. It has lost its character of combined "humour, parody and bitter irony"[2] but modern colloquialism is avoided and the funeral bell which tolls in the background over an F-sharp pedal point which continues throughout the scene, plus the heavy timpani

1. Lumley, Frederick. TRENDS IN 20TH CENTURY DRAMA, op. cit.,p.85.
2. Jacobs, Arthur. Pizzetti's MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, The Musical Times, April 1958, p.213.

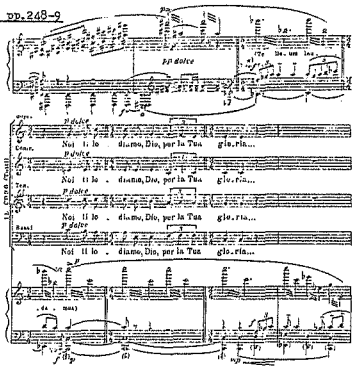
punctuations "keeps us close to the tragedy of the year 1170"[1]. As soon as the Knights have finished speaking a fanfare-like figure is heard 'pianissimo, dolce' in the orchestra. It is immediately followed by a quotation of the opening phrases of the Te Deum (authentic Ambrosian melody)

Ex.48 *Te Deum Laudamus*
THE AUTHENTIC OR AMBROSIAN MELODY
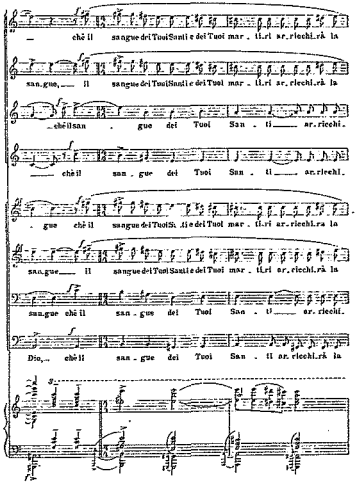


loudly intoned by three off-stage tubas in alternation with "Noi ti lodiamo, Dio, per la Tua gloria" (We praise Thee, O God, for Thy glory), homophonically sung by the combined Women's and Priests' choruses:
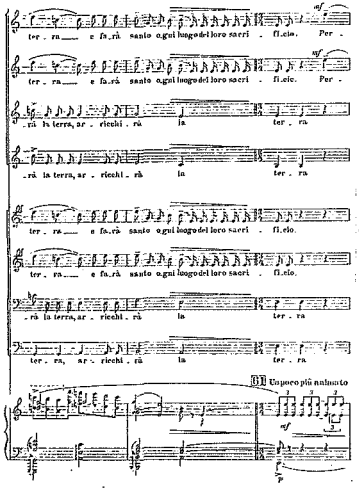
Ex.49, pp.248-9



Over a light string and woodwind texture the hymn in praise of God

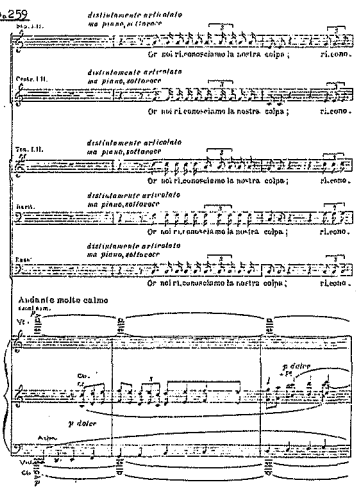
1. MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL as an opera (unsigned), The Times, op. cit., p.15


chè il sangue dei Tuoi Santi e dei Tuoi mar . ti.ri ar.ricchi.rà la
san.gue, il sangue dei Tuoi Santi e dei Tuoi mar . ti.ri ar.ricchi.rà la
chè il san . gue dei Tuoi San . ti ar.ricchi.
chè il san . gue dei Tuoi San . ti ar.ricchi.
gue chè il sangue dei Tuoi San . ti e dei Tuoi mar . ti.ri ar.ricchi.ra la
san.gue il sangue dei Tuoi Santi e dei Tuoi mar . ti.ri ar.ricchi.rà la
san.gue chè il san . gue dei Tuoi San . ti ar.ricchi.
Dio, chè il san . gue dei Tuoi San . ti ar.ricchi.rà la


ter . ra e fa.rà santo ogni luogo del loro sacri . fi.cio. Per .
ter . ra e fa.rà santo ogni luogo del loro sacri . fi.cio. Per .
.rà la terra, ar . ricchi . rà la ter . ra
.rà la terra, ar . ricchi . rà la ter . ra
ter . ra e fa.rà santo ogni luogo del loro sacri . fi.cio.
ter . ra e fa.rà santo ogni luogo del loro sacri . fi.cio.
.rà la terra, ar . ricchi . rà la ter . ra
ter . ra, ar . ricchi . rà la ter . ra
61 Un poco più animato

begins to unfold, surging and subsiding as it leads into an eight-part polyphonic passage of poignant beauty (Ex.50). At "Or noi riconosciamo la nos. . colpa" (We aknowledge our trespass) Becket's theme (Ex.15) is quiet.y heard in oboe and clarinet over a long sustained C pedal point in the strings and an ascending scale in the harp steadily mounting through two octaves:

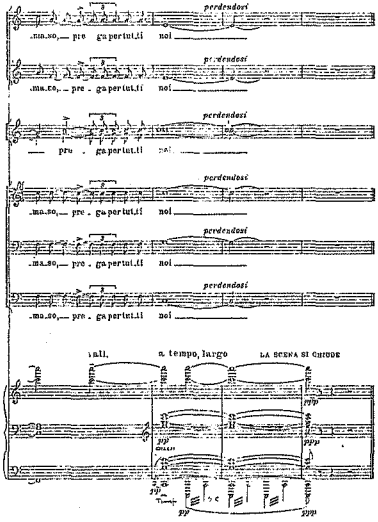
Ex.51, p.259



Whilst the C pedal persists in the violins the C major harmonic structure shifts to D-flat major (p.261, last bar), then to C minor (p.262, b.2), F major (p.262, b.3), plagally ending on the radiance of C major as the Chorus, now at the end of their long weariness

die away after the invocation "O Beato Tommaso, prega per tutti noi!"
(Blessed Thomas, pray for us all!):

Ex. 52, p. 263



— ooo —

Of Pizzetti's later works ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE is the one which, perhaps because of the fame of Eliot's play, has aroused the greatest interest in Italy and elsewhere. A considerable amount of critical comment therefore exists. On the occasion of its Italian première

(so successful that the originally scheduled four performances were increased to ten) ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE was almost unanimously reviewed by the press in the most favourable terms. Fernando L. Lunghi who, like Francis Toye praised the opera without reserve, put the accent on the novelty of its musico-dramatic conception (obviously determined by the drama itself) pointing out the dramatic and lyrical suggestiveness of the music; the almost sculptural evidence of both individual and group characterization and, especially, the peculiar effectiveness of the orchestral colouring evocative of the sullenness of the 'grey sky' of Canterbury and the 'bitter sea' of Dover amidst which the "tragedy unfolds, slowly but inexorably, towards its final solution"[1]. Franco Abbiati defined ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE as "a magnificent work",[2] structurally adhering to the principles of Greek drama but otherwise reminiscent of the Mystery plays, especially in its musical realization aimed at transfiguring reality in the 'fixed' symbolism of an edifying story. Abbiati seems to agree with Toye in finding the second act, in which there is more drama, more action and therefore more incisiveness, more exciting than the first. However, whereas Abbiati describes the Tempters as somewhat lacking in ambiguous seductiveness, Toye thinks that "the music seems to heighten the subtlety of the temptation, of which the insidiousness becomes even more apparent when finally the Archbishop masters all four of his Tempters in a final climax of which any operatic composer might be

1. Lunghi, Fernando L. Conferma d'un successo (ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE). TEATRO ALLA SCALA. La Stagione Lirica 1958-59, p.454.
2. Abbiati, Franco. L'ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE. Corriere della Sera, March 2, 1958, p.6.

proud"[1]. In Toye's opinion Pizzetti's music, generally speaking, "admirably reinforces Eliot's text"[1], the composer's partiality for accompanied recitative being fully justified in MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL. Apropos of the choruses he wrote: "Tribute has already been paid to Pizzetti's mastery of choral writing, but it may be doubted whether he has ever done anything better than the choral writing here; the fear, the misery and the horror of the women are reflected to perfection in their music"[1]. Arthur Jacobs, who found Pizzetti's idiom "strangely akin to that of Vaughan Williams"[2] in its use of consecutive triads and modal melody, observed that "the play, being concerned with argument rather than emotion or characterization, is perhaps not of the kind most suited to operatic treatment. The music, indeed somewhat blunts Eliot's 'attack'. But, if it be granted that opera has aesthetic values of its own, which are not entirely to be measured by those of an original spoken play, then Pizzetti's score must be welcomed as generally effective, often finely expressive, and satisfactorily unified"[2]. Jacobs was not over-impressed with the Knights' episode (in fact the most controversial one) but the unnamed correspondent of The Times seems to have been happy that the Knights' address was "not presented as a kind of Shavian anticlimax"[3]. Another unnamed critic, writing in Time, said of Pizzetti's opera: "It is a long way from Canterbury to Rome, but an Italian composer has undertaken the cultural journey with fascinating results" and further that

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1. Toye, Francis. ASSASSINIO triumphs in Milan. The New York Times, March 16, 1958, p.11.
2. Jacobs, Arthur. Pizzetti's MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL. The Musical Times, April, 1958, p.213.
3. MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL as an opera (unsigned). The Times, Monday, March 3, 1958, p.15.

"resisting the tempting opulence of much Italian religious music, Pizzetti went back past the Renaissance toward the medieval simplicity of Gregorian chant. Sometimes the music evoked Bach, sometimes such unsentimental modernists as Hindemith and Honegger"[1]. Irving Kolodin, who reviewed the première which took place at Carnegie Hall, New York, on September 17, 1958, is however of a different opinion, describing ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE as "a work rooted in Italian operatic soil, with a strong sense of vocal line, liberal use of chorus, a fluctuation between melodic recitative as Puccini utilized it, and outspoken, if brief arias"[2]. He emphasizes the loss suffered by Eliot's work in "transference from medieval England to the dateless operaland of Italy"[2]. Somewhat contradicting himself, Kolodin first credits Pizzetti "with an ability to sustain a stage problem matched by few contemporaries"[2], then says that "the abundant skill and fluency of his operatic craft are insufficient to sustain interest when everything else relates to one static character about whom the inaction revolves"[2]. Again in contrast to this we read David Ewen's " While the action of the opera often proves static, and dramatic interest sometimes tends to lag, Pizzetti's musical writing achieves such power and poetic eloquence that the opera remains thoughout a compelling emotional experience"[3]. The first British performance of ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE was mounted by the Sadler's Wells Opera Company for the Coventry Festival

1. O Vecchio Tom! (unsigned. The music critic was, at the time, Dick Murphy but the article may have been written by a substitute), in Time. March 17, 1958, p.68.
2. Kolodin, Irving. MURDER in Carnegie. The Saturday Review, September 6, 1958, p.29.
3. Ewen, David. THE COMPLETE OPERA BOOK OF 20TH CENTURY MUSIC, p.493.

on June 12, 1962.[1] The most unfavourable criticism came from Clive Barnes: "Pizzetti's work is nowhere like as important as Eliot's and as a consequence one is entitled to wonder whether the opera has any real justification"[2]. Although recognizing in this new work "a telling seriousness and craftmanship" Barnes found the music "dull and stolid, stiffly conventional and unduly monotonous", adding that "all Pizzetti's considerable skill as an orchestrator cannot remove the impression that the opera is bumbling along with none of the flash and intellectual fire of the original play"[2]. E.M. Webster seems to have been particularly impressed by the chorus, especially the Women's, to which Pizzetti gives "little drama, but much tenderness and passion", by the "gentle, poignant orchestral interlude"[3] given to the Christmas Sermon and, generally, by the delineation of Thomas à Becket as well as by the climactic endings of Acts I and II. Andrew Porter's review seems to me to contain sound and objective remarks. He presents Pizzetti as "a decent, sober composer, concerned with large themes, but unable to command the language of passion - no Puccini, nor a Strauss, but rather a Boito, a Pfitzner, or perhaps a Hindemith"[4]. He prizes ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE as 'PALESTRINA and THE HARMONY OF THE WORLD are prized - a sterling piece made with integrity and craftmanship; grave, low-toned, thoughtful: always interesting; musically satisfying but never fiery"[4]. Porter thinks that "Pizzetti has caught the picturesqueness of the piece, especially

1. Orrey, Leslie, in A CONCISE HISTORY OF OPERA (p.231) erroneously gives the date 1958.
2. Barnes, Clives. Pizzetti's Becket , Music and Musicians, July, 1962, vol.10, No 11, p.22.
3. Webster, E.M. Pizzetti's MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, Musical Opinion, July, 1962, p.817.
4. Porter, Andrew. MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, The Musical Times, 103, 1962, p.544.

in his big operatic finale to the first act"; that "the harmonic and orchestral style comes from Puccini...and from Wagner" and "the melodic lines are marked by a lyricism that is pleasing and fluent though hardly individual"[1]. Like Jacobs, Porter finds the Knights' episode rather feeble. He concludes by saying: "To go to MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL expecting excitement and unforgettable moments of high inspiration is to invite disappointment. But as a grave, studious and thoroughly well made opera, it seems to me to offer considerable rewards. Puccini, building his stews, borrowed and cheapened ideas from Wagner, from Debussy; Pizzetti, without the other's genius but with a nobler art purifies these ideas again"[1]. Curiously enough the lack of 'historical' ambientation, pointed out by Massimo Mila[2] and, often, by my supervisor, Prof. U.V. Schneider, does not seem to have worried English critics, as one would have expected. One may perhaps well wonder whether Pizzetti's avoidance of historical ambientation was not perhaps a deliberate one. A story set in a particular society, at a particular time, inevitably relates to the moral, social and political standards and to the purely temporary concerns of the moment. By imbuing the musical setting of Eliot's play with that mystico-religious, timeless and placeless atmosphere so peculiarly his own, and by emphasizing the theme of redemption of sin through the death of a martyr, Pizzetti

1. Porter, Andrew, MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, The Musical Times, July, 1962, p.544.
2. Mila, Massimo, L'ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE, Cronache Musicali, p.165.

seems to have added a newer, wider dimension to the story, lending to it a more universal religious aspect. Not very much remains to be said about this music drama. Perhaps that the score is one of the finest written by Pizzetti and exhibits all those conspicuous gifts so frequently appreciated in the composer's command of these means of expression. Pizzetti's highly individual style, with its material so often derived from chants, sequences and hymns of the church; the psalmodic inflection of the melodic lines, redolent of pity and humanity; the anthiphonal, responsorial and canonic treatment of the choral parts; the use of plagal cadences and organum-like progressions, has never been applied to any other Pizzetti score with such magnificent aptness. Because of the congeniality of the story to Pizzetti, and of its consonance with his moral and aesthetic principles ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE remains, perhaps, his most inspiring work. Certainly, the most deeply and intimately felt. The conventionally minded opera-goers might not, perhaps, find full satisfaction in ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE. Although the stamp of Italian opera is visible, the work also, consciously or unconsciously, appears to show much of the oratorio style of the early seventeenth century religious operas. Perhaps Toye had this in mind when he wrote "If there is any demand at all for sober and religious operas, ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE should win, as it deserve, a high place in the repertory"[1].

— oOo —

1. Toye, Francis. ASSASSINIO triumphs in Milan. New York Times, March 16, 1958, p.11.

CHAPTER V

CLITENNESTRA

Of all the conflicts that have divided mankind the most bitter are those that have set against each other members of the same family causing the disruption of a natural order and the shattering of the most sacred bonds of love. This is the theme of CLITENNESTRA, a gigantic saga of hatred in which we see a wife who kills her husband to redress the wrong of his murdering their own daughter and is in turn killed by her own son. CLITENNESTRA was Pizzetti's last work. Performed three years before the composer's death, it is usually regarded as something of an artistic and spiritual testament. As is so well-known among authorities on Pizzetti as hardly to require mention, the first act of CLITENNESTRA grew out of incidental music which Pizzetti wrote for Aeschylus'AGAMEMNON (in 1929) and then condensed into the Introduzione all'Agamennone di Eschilo (published in 1931). It is surely no chance that the last music drama of the classically-minded Pizzetti should have once again been derived from the fertile source of Greek mythology.

The myth of Agamemnon, Aegisthus, Clytemnestra and Orestes, upon which the libretto (written by the composer himself) is based, is an ancient one, parts of it, for instance the sacrifice of Iphigenia, going back to the times of human sacrifice. It has survived in sophisticated dramatic forms but its origins have practically been forgotten. The first, most complete and satisfactory version of the story is to be found in Aeschylus' THE ORESTEIAN TRILOGY which deals, in succession, with the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra (AGAMEMNON); the murder of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus at Oreste's hand (THE CHOEPORI, or THE LIBATION-BEARERS) and

the termination of the blood-feud by superhuman intervention(THE EUMENIDES). Much of the material is derived from earlier sources, among them Homer's ILIAD and ODYSSEY, but the Agamemnon saga as recounted in the ORESTEIAN TRILOGY is largely the creation of Aeschylus' own imaginative, yet logical mind. It was through the narration of the entire chain of events, from the first ancestral curse to the final expiation of Oreste's guilt, that the tragic implications of the story and its religious and moral significance could be fully understood and appreciated. Like all great stories THE ORESTEIAN TRILOGY is an old tale adapted to the spirit of different times and cultures. To put it in Philip Vellacott's words, it is "a story compounded of fact and imagination, reflecting the experience, belief, and aspiration of a vital society, and blending within itself the poetry of common lif and the vision of the prophet"[1]. A.C. Swinburne's description of Aeschylus' trilogy as "probably on the whole the greatest spiritual work of man" [2]has hardly been challenged and it appears that Goethe revered AGAMEMNON "as if it were divine, and found in its pages the keystone of all ethical and aesthetic inquiry, particularly regarding the relation of moral to tragic guilt"[3]. The myth of the cursed house of Agamemnon continued to act as a magnet upon Athenian tragedians, among them Sopho.'es ad Euripides who, in their ELECTRAS shifted the focus of dramatic interest from Clytemnestra to the hate-consumed daughter of the King of Argos. As the basic story is the same, a comparison of the works of the three classical dramatists shows their varying approach to the same subject. E.F. Waitling, in his Introduction to Sophocles' ELECTRA AND

1. Vellacott, Philip. Introduction to Aeschylus' THE ORESTEIAN TRILOGY, p.9.
2. Quoted by Michael Grant, to whom I am indebted for some of the material used in these pages, in MYTHS OF THE GREEKS AND ROMANS, p.160.
3. ibid., p.175.

OTHER PLAYS, deals so well with the matter that I reproduce the entire passage:

> ... in presenting the saga in the form of three consecutive plays his (Aeschylus') concern is primarily with the power and continuity of the divine forces which control the destinies of the doomed family - forces which cannot be questioned or resisted. The persons of the drama are less individuals than puppets symbolic of men and women enwrapped in the predicaments to which humanity is condemned. Man is involved in such and such conflicts by the will of heaven, and only heaven can pronounce the verdict and unravel the knot. Euripides took one chapter of the story - the return of Orestes and the punishment of the murderers - and presented it, in the main, on a human and naturalistic level, yet expressing in his way a judgment on the problem of the story - the judgment, in fact, of a rebel against the accepted interpretation: the deed of Orestes, by Euripides' account, was both inevitable and sinful, and cannot have been the will of any good power. Orestes kills his mother, bitterly protesting against the horror of the deed to which he is driven, and the epilogue of the play foreshadows the torment which his soul is doomed to suffer, imprisoned in a maze of evil from which there is no escape. Sophocles pronounces no judgment. He neither approves nor condemns. Here, he says, is the story - an immoral story, but a story of human beings; such was the bearing of the person implicated in the event. And within the limits assigned to the play what is done is complete and final. If there was a sequel, we are not concerned with it, except in so far as we supply one for ourselves in our reflections after the fall of the curtain[1].

Many works on this fascinating subject were written throughout the centuries: Seneca's AGAMEMNON ; Voltaire's ORESTE (1750); Alfieri's AGAMENNONE and ORESTE (1776-1778); Hofmannsthal's ELEKTRA (1909) to name only a few of them. Several writers and dramatists in present times "have used the myth as a catalyst for their statements about life".[2]

1. Waitling, E.F. Introduction to Sophocles' ELECTRA AND OTHER PLAYS, pp.9-10.
2. Grant, Michael, op.cit., pp.175-6.

Paul Claudel, who translated the ORESTEIAN TRILOGY into French, used some of its elements in his own trilogy, set in the nineteenth century: L'ORAGE, LE PAIN DUR and LE PERE HUMILIE (1911-1920). He interpreted the EUMENIDES "as primitive revelations anticipating Biblical verities"[1]. Also in the nineteenth century, in New England this time, is cast Eugene O'Neill's trilogy MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA (HOMECOMING, THE HUNTED and THE HAUNTED), of 1931. It is a transposition, in Freudian terms, of Aeschylus' story and it is based on the assumption, stated by O'Neill himself, that we have no gods or heroes, but we have "the sub-conscious, the mother of all gods and heroes"[2]. The effort to adapt Greek dramatic forms to the modern theatre has been carried on by Thomas S. Eliot. Eliot's MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL (1935) is considered by Michael Grant, perhaps arguably, as his AGAMEMNON, whilst FAMILY REUNION (1939) echoes THE COEPHORI deriving however from THE EUMENIDES the transformation of the Furies, who are seen as the urges of conscience and, as such, agents of divine grace, into the Kindly Ones. The curse haunting the House of Monchensey is not the result of an ancestral blood-feud but it is the primeval crime of Cain murderously driving mankind. Robert Turney's DAUGHTERS OF ATREUS (1936) is a splendid re-creation of THE ORESTEIAN TRILOGY, also incorporating IPHIGENIA IN AULIS. Jean Giraudoux' ELECTRE (1937) is another re-statement of the old story. It has a superb turn right at the end where, after showing the Furies determined to drive Oreste to madness and suicide as well as the ruinous consequences of murderous hatred, the perennial miracle of the rising sun seems to bring

1. Grant, Michael, op.cit., p.177.
2. ibid.

with it a message of hope. Jean Paul Sartre has to his credit what is, perhaps, the most up-to date version of the Orestean story. In his first war-time play, LES MOUCHES (1943), the Furies are symbolized by hideous blood-sucking flies polluting Argos. Egisthe symbolizes the occupying powers and Clytemnestre represents the collaborators. The positive character is Oreste who does not surrender to the overpowering forces. In a true existentialist way, he shows that man is free and capable of self-determination and consciously assumes the consequences of an act condemned by conventional standards .

The tragic race of the Atrides (members of the Agamemnon's family) has inspired, more or less directly, various operas. Lemoyne's ELECTRE (Paris, 1782, Libretto by N.F. Guillard) is based in outline on Sophocles but presents the murder of Clytemnestre by Oreste as purely accidental, as he intended to kill only Egisthe. Felix Weingartner's ORESTES (Leipzig, 1902), after Aeschylus, is an almost Wagnerian trilogy including AGAMEMNON, DAS TOTENOPFER and DIE ERINNYEN. The most famous opera on the subject is undoubtedly Strauss' ELEKTRA (1909), a powerful setting of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's homonymous drama. In Darius Milhaud's trilogy ORESTE (1913-1924), Claudel's version of the Aeschylean trilogy finds a most appropriate musical expression. In this "prodigious work"[1], which covers the entire story, from Clytemnestre's murder of Agamemnon to the appeasement of the

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.. Collaer, Paul. A HISTORY OF MODERN MUSIC, p.252.

with it a message of hope. Jean Paul Sartre has to his credit what is, perhaps, the most up-to date version of the Oresteian story. In his first war-time play, LES MOUCHES (1943), the Furies are symbolized by hideous blood-sucking flies polluting Argos. Egisthe symbolizes the occupying powers and Clytemnestre represents the collaborators. The positive character is Oreste who does not surrender to the overpowering forces. In a true existentialist way, he shows that man is free and capable of self-determination and consciously assumes the consequences of an act condemned by conventional standards.

The tragic race of the Atrides (members of the Agamemnon's family) has inspired, more or less directly, various operas. Lemoyne's ELECTRE (Paris, 1782, libretto by M.F. Guillard) is based in outline on Sophocles but presents the murder of Clytemnestre by Oreste as purely accidental, as he intended to kill only Egisthe. Felix Weingartner's ORESTES (Leipzig, 1902), after Aeschylus, is an almost Wagnerian trilogy including AGAMEMNON, DAS TOTENOPFER and DIE ERINNYEN. The most famous opera on the subject is undoubtedly Strauss' ELEKTRA (1909), a powerful setting of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's homonymous drama. In Darius Milhaud's trilogy ORESTE (1913-1924), Claudel's version of the Aeschylean trilogy finds a most appropriate musical expression. In this "prodigious work"[1], which covers the entire story, from Clytemnestre's murder of Agamemnon to the appeasement of the

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1. Collaer, Paul. A HISTORY OF MODERN MUSIC, p.252.

Furies in a growth of light and happiness, Milhaud seems "to have understood perfectly the Greek concept of tragedy that unites the human with the divine, simplicity of ideas with richness of imagery, and the reality of Mediterranean life with supernatural law"[1]. In 1965 came Pizzetti's CLITENNESTRA, a dramatically compact and terse version of the story contained in Aeschylus and Sophocles' dramas on the subject, set to music of inspired lyricism and sombre grandeur. Although following in the main the outline of the classical models, Pizzetti took the liberty of modifying the traditional endings so as to free Oreste from divine influence and to make of him a responsible human being. I do not think that such initiative, aimed at projecting a personal point of view, should be criticized as "arbitrary and arguable"[2] as Franco Abbiati does. The variations in plot and detail, as well as in character portrayal found in the works of the classical dramatists prove, as Robert Graves has pointed out, that they were not bound by tradition[3], which also applies to modern writers and dramatists, as shown so far. And rightly so, as it is the fluidity of meaning, the timeless truth, the universal perspective contained in the mythological stories that enables them to become the vehicles of different beliefs and ideas at different times and places.

Paul Collaer, in his A HISTORY OF MODERN MUSIC writes:

> Milhaud composed the ORESTIE on Claudel's translation of Aeschylus between 1913 and 1924. In 1919, Satie wrote SOCRATE, based on the text by Plato. Stravinsky

1. Collaer, Paul, op. cit., p.250.
2. Abbiati, Franco. Presentata alla Scala la CLITENNESTRA di Pizzetti. Corriere della Sera, March 2, 1956, p.12
3. Graves, Robert. THE GREEK MYTHS, p.64

> wrote music for Sophocles' OEDIPUS REX, as adapted by Cocteau, between 1926 and 1927. Honegger worked on ANTIGONE from 1924 to 1927. Four of the most renowned contemporary composers and two great French poets made an offering of the best of their talents to the genius of the Greeks[1].

Pizzetti's offering at the feet of Greek drama was not confined to CLITENNESTRA. His IFIGENIA and also FEDRA (via D'Annunzio) derive from the same fertile source.

Information about the construction of the libretto is given by Pizzetti himself in the revue TEATRO ALLA SCALA:

> The gestation period of the libretto was lengthy. I started writing it in 1961, having in mind the first two tragedies of Aeschylus' THE ORESTEIAN TRILOGY - AGAMEMNON and THE CHOEPHORI - as well as Sophocles' ELECTRA. I must say however that I took the liberty of not only changing some episodes but also adding others as suggested to me, even, perhaps, demanded of me, by the tragic story and the characters themselves. I have, in fact, added opening and concluding scenes between Clitennestra and Agamennone to Act I, and an opening scene, having the same characters as protagonists, to Act II. Of these scenes there is no trace in THE ORESTEIAN TRILOGY. Finally, I did not deem it right to conclude the tragedy with an adaptation, however free, of Aeschylus' THE EUMENIDES - the third tragedy of THE ORESTEIAN TRILOGY. I decided that, after committing his crime, with the intentional complicity of Elettra, both Oreste and Elettra, freeing themselves from all superhuman influence, should feel themselves again 'mere' human beings and, as such, should search within themselves, within their entire tormented lives for either a valid reason for their possible redemption, or a deserving, desperate and inexorable punishment[2].

A comparison of the libretto with its sources shows that the first act of CLITENNESTRA is (with the exception of the Clitennestra-

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1. Collaer, Paul, op.cit., p.262.
2. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. TEATRO ALLA SCALA. LA STAGIONE LIRICA 1964-5, pp.289-90.

Egisto episode added by Pizzetti in scene i, but constructed upon elements found in classical sources) entirely derived from Aeschylus' AGAMEMNON. The second act is, in general outline, based on Sophocles' ELECTRA but incorporates material drawn not only from Aeschylus' THE COEPHORI but also from Euripides' ELECTRA which, surprisingly, is not mentioned by Pizzetti at all. The crucial section of the first scene of Act II (one of those added scenes of which, according to Pizzetti, there is no trace in the ORESTEIAN TRILOGY), in which Clitennestra, after sending her nurse Cilissa[1] to bring abundant offerings to the tomb of Agamennone, tells Egisto of her fear born of 'a hideous dream presaging dreadful events', is an expansion of the passage which Aeschylus, in THE CHOEPHORI, assigns to the Chorus (of female servants of Clytemnestra) with Orestes interpolating comments. Thus, Aeschylus'

(Chorus): She dreamt that she gave birth to a snake
.....
She wrapped it in shawls and lulled it to rest
like a little child.
.....
She herself, in her dream, gave it her breast
to suck.
.....
with her milk the creature drew forth clots
of blood.
.....
Immediately she sends libations,
hoping to purge this poison at its source.

becomes Pizzetti's:

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1. The character of Cilissa, who introduces the sentry bringing news of Agamennone's return at the opening of the opera, is taken from Aeschylus' THE COEPHORI. She is actually Oreste's, not Clitennestra's nurse; she does not, in the original, entertain sympathetic feelings for the queen.

Strisciando sopra il letto, un lungo serpe
mi s'era attorcigliato al corpo, ai fianchi.
Era la testa, mi guardava fisso
con occhi che parevano di bragia,
e fuor dalla sua bocca
gli usciva un fiato gelido....
E allora, allora -maledetta me!-,
come se fosse il figlio mio, il figlio
partorito da me, da me nutrito,
gli porsi io stessa il seno, e il serpe subito
vi s'attaccò succhiando.
Sentivo dal mio seno in lui fluire
il latte.. Ma poi.. No, non era latte
quel che rigurgitava
dalla sua bocca ingorda.
Non era latte, no, ma sangue, sangue!

Crawling on my bed, a long snake
coiled itself round my body and my limbs.
Raising its head, it looked at me
with eyes like live coals,
leaving out of its mouth
a chilly breath .....
And then, then -cursed me!-,
as if it were my babe, the babe
born of me and whom I nursed,
I gave it my breast *and it started*
sucking from it.
I felt the milk flow....
but then it was not milk
that trickled down
the sides of its greedy mouth.
It was not milk, but blood, blood!

From both Sophocles' and Euripides's ELECTRAS comes the Clitemnestra-Elettra confrontation at the beginning of the second scene of Act II. From Sophocles are derived the two following passages. In the first of them Sophocles has Electra saying to the Chorus (of women of Mycenae):

> Imagine what it means to see, day after day
> Aegisthus sitting in my father's chair....
> .....and, last outrage,
> The murderer going to his bed with 'her' -
> Must I still call her mother? - with his mistress.

whilst, in Pizzetti, it is to Clitemnestra that Elettra says:

Hai detto madre?
Una parola che nel pronunciarla
fetide piaghe ti dovrebbe aprire
su le labbra immondate dalla bocca
del tuo Egisto, l'assassino turpe
che hai fatto insieme a te Sovrano d'Argo,
l'uomo che fai giacere nel tuo letto
dove insieme con te giaceque mio padre!

Di.. You say mother?
On pronouncing this word
putrid wounds should open on your lips
polluted by the mouth
of your Aegisthus, the hideous murderer
whom you have made, with you, ruler of Argos,
the man whom you have allowed to lie,
with you, in my father's bed!

In the second, Clytemnestra challenges Electra with:

> I caused your father death. I had an ally -
> Justice. This father of yours...did a thing
> no other Greek had dared to do, when he ruthlessly
> sacrificed your sister to the gods... Is that any
> reason why he should not be brought to justice for
> killing what was mine? Had not Menelaus two
> children of his own?

which Pizzetti slightly expands, as follows:

L'uccisi? Sì, l'uccisi.
E a tradimento? A tradimento, sì,
come egli meritava.
Se fui solo strumento, esecutrice
d'una suprema legge di giustizia,
io non lo so, nè m'importa saperlo.
Ma poteva bastarmi, a far giustizia,
ch'egli mi avesse straziato il cuore
quando per prosperare alle sue navi
il vento favorevole verso Ilio.....
..... egli sgozzò
sopra l'ara d'Artemide, non già
una figlia del vile Menelao,
ma dell'empia figliuola la più piccola,
la mia Ifigenia, il cuore mio!

I killed him? Yes, I did.
I betrayed him? Yes, as he deserved.
Whether have I been, or not, the instrument
of a supreme law of justice
I do not know, neither I wish to know.
But it sufficed, to do my justice
that he had torn my heart apart
when, to win to his ships sailing for Ilium
a favourable wind.....
..... he sacrificed upon Artemis' altar
not a daughter of the villain Menelaus
but my youngest daughter,
My Iphigenia, my heart!

Elettra's scornful answer to this is elaborated from the lines which Euripides puts in the mouth of his Electra:

(You justified yourself)
with the argument that for your child
you killed your husband. The world knows you less well than I.
You, long before your daughter came near sacrifice,
the very hour your husband marched away from home,
were setting your brown curls by the bronze mirror's light.
...You needed Agamemnon never to come again.

reading, in Pizzetti:

Ma per quanto
tempo da quando il Re d'Argo partì
per la guerra contro Ilio, quanto a lungo
sapesti conservarti
degna d'Ifigenia sacrificata
e pur degna di te, Regina e madre?
.....
Tu che spinta da cieca lussuriosa,
t'eri già fatta adul..a accogliendo
fra le tue braccia il turpe vile Egisto,
uccidesti mio padre per serbarti
il tuo lurido amante.

But for how long
since the King of Argos left
for the war in Ilium, for how long
did you remain worthy of Iphigenia,
your daughter sacrificed?
And worthy of yourself, a mother and a Queen?
.....
You, that already prey of lascivious passion
had adulterously received into your arms
the vile Aegisthus,
You killed my father to keep your dirty lover.
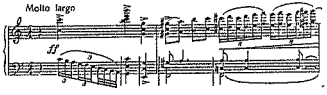
Pizzetti's Elettra, especially as she emerges from Clitemnestra's sharp remarks, owes much to Euripides' portrayal of her. The dramatic incidents, after this initial clash up to the killing of Clitemnestra by Oreste, follow Sophocles closely but, from the murder-scene onwards

Pizzetti reverts to Aesohylus' THE COEPHORI, offering much richer dramatic possibilities. Pizzetti's conclusion, reflecting a more up-to-date conception of morality is, of course, a personal one, yet one of the many that we can supply for ourselves "in our reflections after the fall of the curtain"[1].

— oOo —

The Prelude to CLITENNESTRA, of symphonic character, bears resemblance to the Wagner prelude in its richness of sound and orchestration, harmonic variety and tonal fluctuation (Ex.1).[+] In multisectional form, it can be considered as a paraphrase of Act I, as it presages its dramatic incidents and musical contents as well. It opens with a 'Molto largo' section, the very first bar of which introduces the almost aggressive C major motive associated with Clitennestra's passion, followed by an ascending chromaticized passage in woodwind and upper strings:

Ex.2, p.1
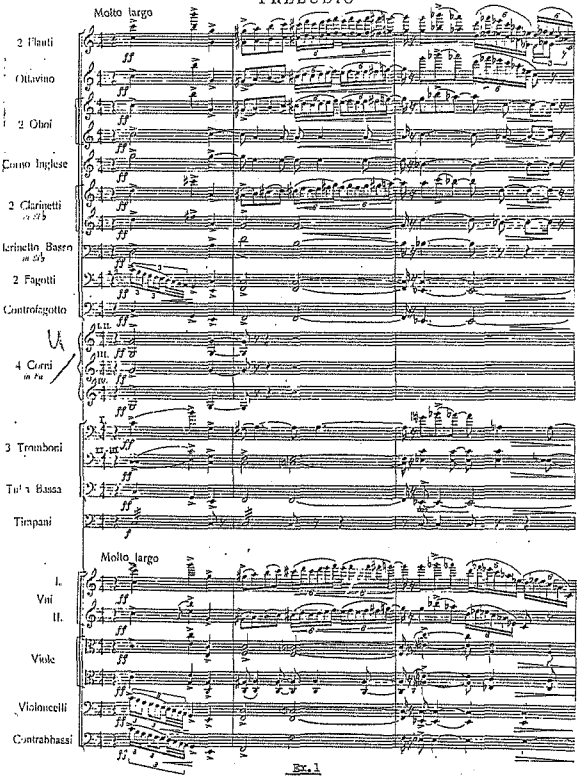


The music continues with what seems to be a development of Ex.2

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1. Waitling, E.F. ,ivi, p.273.
   The quotations are from: (1) Aesohylus. THE CHOEPHORI (Tr.Philip Vellacott), pp.222-3(2)Sophocles. ELECTRA (Tr.E.F. Watling),pp. 76 and 84 (3) Euripides ELECTRA (Tr. Emily Townsend Vermeule), pp. 279 and 280).
   The translations from Italian are mine.
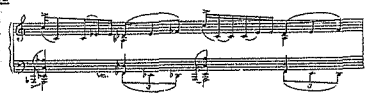
+ See next page.

PRELUDIO


Molto largo
2 Flauti
Ottavino
2 Oboi
Corno Inglese
2 Clarinetti
in Sib
Clarinetto Basso
in Sib
2 Fagotti
Controfagotto
4 Corni
in Fa
3 Tromboni
Tuba Bassa
Timpani
Molto largo
I.
Vni
II.
Viole
Violoncelli
Contrabbassi

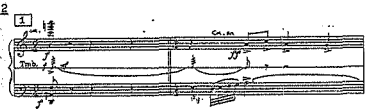
and a few motives, later to assume more definite thematic shape are hinted at. Those at bars 3 and 5 are also connected with Clitemnestra (as will be seen later) whilst the descending motive in the cellos,

Ex.3, p.1



carrying within itself ominous connotations, will be heard throughout the opera anticipating, or commenting on catastrophic happenings. The nervous course of the music is brought to a halt by a trill on the bass drum and a resolute chord of the seventh on D. A sudden change of mood comes with a forceful theme stated by the horn:

Ex.4, p.2



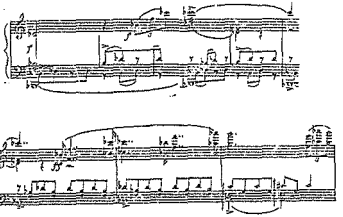
Trumpet calls and other energetic figures give life to a passage which is almost literally reproduced in Act I (pp.69-72) on the occasion of Agamemnone's arrival. The ensuing 'Concitato' section provides a contrast. An agitated, pulsating figure (hinted at at b.5, and used later to describe feelings of turmoil in Clitemnestra) storms in the violins whilst Ex.3 is sounded in cello and bass clarinet (in rising and falling motion) over a double bass pedal point:

Ex.5, p.4



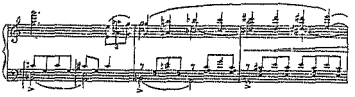
After ten bars Ex.5 is taken over by the cellos and above it the oboe announces a new theme, twice repeated before being re-proposed in a tenser, dotted and more explicit version by combined flutes, oboes and clarinets:

Exs.6A, 6B, pp.4-5



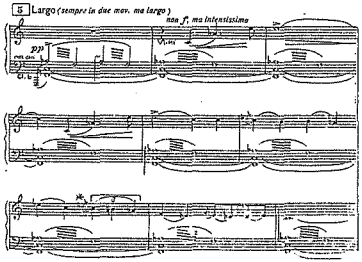
In both forms, Ex.6 plays a very important part in the entire score as it is connected with the idea of murder. The motive heard next (hinted at at b.3, see Ex.1) stands for Clitennestra herself.

Ex.7, p.5



The 'Largo' which follows a brief, transitional 'Meno mosso' passage, presents the solemn phrase taken from the vocal line of the prayer which Clitennestra addresses to Zeus, in Act I asking that she be assisted in her murderous design (Ex.8):

Ex.8, p.7

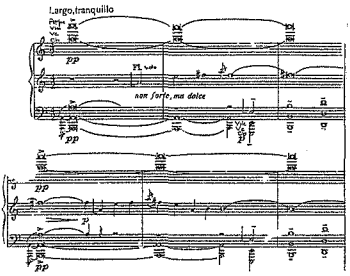


The kinship between Ex.8 and the 'murder' motive (Ex.6) is therefore quite natural, given their symbolic connotations. As the Prelude unfolds with its précis of the dramatic events of Act I, Ex.8 is variously reiterated and Ex.5 is fragmentarily recalled before the theme of Clitennestra (Ex.7) is carried to a climax in agitated and increasingly sonorous waves of sound. This lead to a forceful coda ('Largo') started off by a fortissimo quotation of the initial theme of Clitennestra's passion (Ex.2) and ending with a plagal cadence in C galvanized by bass drum beats.

The first act (scene 1) begins with a twenty-two bar orchestral introduction opening in A Dorian. A spacious solo flute theme appears contained within a string and harp tonic pedal:

(Ex.9):

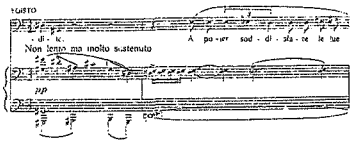
Ex.2 p.11



This, an ubiquitous theme, judging from the contexts in which it is subsequently used, seems to be associated with both the land of Argos, background to the action, and the House of Atreus, to which the rulers of Argos belong. It also however stands for the curse which, haunting the House, exacts from each generation its share of blood-shed. When the curtain rises to reveal a dimly lit hall in the palace of Mycenae, Ex.9, shared by the woodwind, is repeated in F-sharp Dorian and, whilst the clarinet brings in the ominous Ex.3, Cilissa, Clitennestra' nurse, enters with a sentry. The clarinet which, also used as a characterizing agent, is associated with Clitennestra, heralds her appearance by proposing her theme (Ex.7). To a sustained G major chord highlighted by oboe and English horn, Clitennestra asks for the sentry, announced by Cilissa, to be introduced. Betraying the Queen's inner tension, the agitated figure of Ex.5 is prominently heard during this brief scene in which she receives the long expected news of

Agamennone's return to Argos. Ex.9 is appropriately used as an accompaniment to the steadily controlled passage in which the Queen, pretending joy at the news, asks Cilissa to organize festivities and offerings of thanksgiving to the Gods, for 'the happy and glorious event'. These last words she sarcastically emphasizes whilst bursting into hysterical laughter.
Egisto, who is seen entering from Clitennestra's room, is represented by a square theme of descending fourths followed by rhythmicized major seconds:

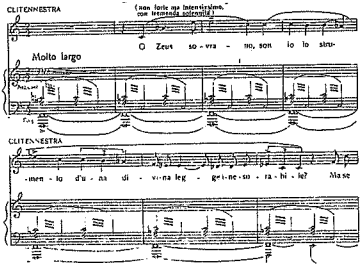
Ex.10, p.22



In answer to Egisto's announcement that he, fearing Agamennone's return will leave her, Clitennestra tells him, in ambiguous words, of her intention to be rid of Agamennone that same day - firstly to the accompaniment of the agitated figure of Ex.5 (pp.27-8), then to static major and minor chords followed by a more lively, but still subdued background section. Clitennestra persuades Egisto to remain near her and, as they kiss, the aggressive C major motive of the opening (Ex.2) is forcefully given out 'molto teso' by violins, flute, and piccolo over

nervous reiterations in the violas and pedal points in the lower strings. The impressive passage in which Clitennestra, after Egisto's departure, prays to Zeus to bring her design to fulfillment, "O Zeus sovrano" (O sovereign Zeus):
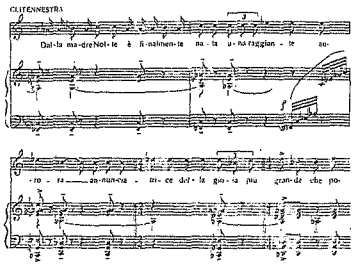
Ex.11, p.34



is scantily accompanied by an A minor string tremolo underpinned by long pedal points. Ex.11 has been anticipated in the Prelude and almost identically follows the pattern there proposed (Ex.8). Whilst the scene plunges into darkness, the Chorus acclaims Clitennestra and the royal House of Atreus. C major chords, punctuated by trumpet interjections accompany this choral intervention (p.37). As they resolve on a fortissimo tonic cord, the scene brightens to reveal an open scene before the royal palace (scene ii). It is a radiant summer morning. Th the motive of 'murder' (Ex.6B) sounding gloriously assertive, Clitennestra comes majestically out of the palace to address the crowd gathered there to
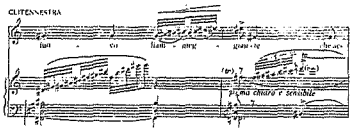
hear about the victorious ending to the Trojan war. The Queen conveys the news in her characteristically resolute line of recitative marked by the interval of the third:

Ex. 12, p. 38



She then embarks upon a description of the beacons posted over a great distance to convey the glad tidings - a flexible, almost florid passage accompanied by music of a vividly descriptive nature.

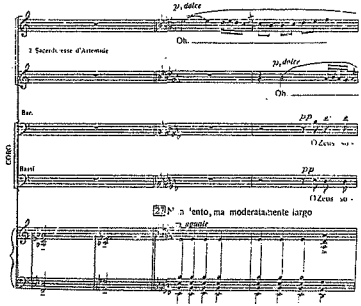
Ex. 13, p. 41



The ominous Ex. 3 is repeatedly heard in the orchestra whilst Clitennestra describes the scene of the capture of Troy as she sees it and broods over the suffering of the captured before telling the

crowd that 'good, together with justice, will prevail'. The prayer to the 'Supreme, omniscient Zeus' intoned by the two priestesses officiating at the ritual ceremony falls into three parts. The first, in E-flat Phrygian, is characterized by the flowing melismata of the priestesses set against the measured melody of the men's voices supported by softly reiterated orchestral chords:
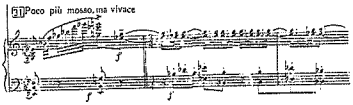
Ex.14, p.47



The middle section, freely modulating, recalls, slightly modified, the opening of Clitennestra's plea to Zeus (Ex.8). The last section roughly corresponds to the first one, this time however without a firm key centre. There follows a strictly homophonic passage assigned to the Women's chorus, with the Corifea's line soaring above, poignantly illustrating the lines 'Hellas cries upon her children who had left alive and who came back as ashes in an urn'. The mood changes at once

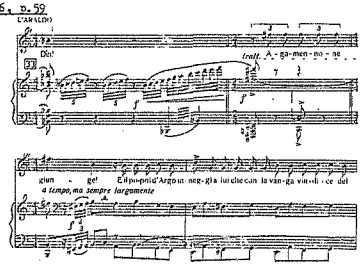
as Agamemnone's herald, announced by a vigorous dotted pattern of thirds over an ostinato staccato figure

Ex.15, p.55



arrives to confirm the news of victory. The theme of Argos (Ex.9) glitters in the orchestra in F-sharp Dorian (p.57, b.5-9), then enharmonically changed to G-flat Lydian (p.58, b.3-6) as the Herald greets his native land in "O suolo d'Argo, terra dei miei padri" (O land of Argos, earth my fathers trod, p.57). He then announces his master's return:
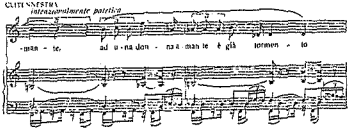
Ex.16, p.59



The conventional accompaniment of rocking minor thirds which supports the speech in which Clitennestra, addressing the Herald, declares her joyful anticipation of the imminent meeting with her King,

is given a subtly dramatic overtone by the motive of 'murder' (Ex.6) repeatedly appearing in triplet form (p.60, b.4-). Clitennestra withdraws and the motive of Argos (Ex.9) assumes ominous connotations, for the first time overtly carrying association with the curse haunting the House of Atreus when the Chorus, referring to the 'dreadful omens' hovering over them, recalls the implacable law of retribution "Ogni violenza genera violenza, alle vendette seguono vendette" (All violence generates violence, vengeance calls for further vengeance, p.65). As the victorious king, to the sound of rolling drums and t et fanfares, enters in his chariot carrying with him Cassandra - the captive daughter of King Priamus of Troy , endowed with the gift of prophecy - the feeling of foreboding fades and the Chorus now hails Agamennone with shouts of "Gloria". (This episode also, like the one mentioned at Ex.11, has been anticipated in the Prelude, pp.2-4). Agamennone's words of thanks (underlined by Ex.4, here in major thirds) to the citizens of Argos are duly answered by a grateful Corifeo. The speech with which Clitennestra, now coming onto the stage, greets her husband, is subtly packed with ambiguities disclosed in the music. Thus, the motive of 'murder' (Ex.6) again in triplets, is continuously recalled by the orchestra when she speaks of the burden carried for ten, long years and now about to be relieved. In lines of irresistible eloquence, and directly addressing Agamennone, she tells of her love for him, of the anguish experienced at the many rumour of his death reported to her, whilst Ex.5, combined with her clarinet theme (Ex.7) rumble in the accompaniment giving a menacing undertone to her hypocritically tender expressions(Ex.17).

Ex.17, p.78
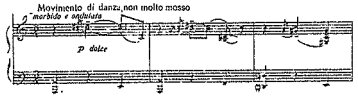


As she explains that she has sent their son Oreste to their old friend Strophius in fear of a plo. against him (Agamennone), the ominous Ev ' teals repeatedly into the orchestra to strike a further note o. . No one, least of all Agamennone, suspects Clitennestra' insincerity when she, with persuasive tenderness accentuated by passages in the harp above which the theme of 'murder'(Ex.6) asserts itself (p.84), invites the King to enter the palace on a purple carpet (usually reserved for the Gods). She concludes with the ambiguous "A quel che ancora bramo provvederà, se gli Dei lo consentano, un vigile pensiero che ben so"(To what I still wish, should the Gods be on my side, will see the thought which I well know and never allow to sleep, pp.86-7). Agamennone, whose theme (Ex.4) is brought back in C Aeolian by the bassoons over tonic pedal points, first rejects Clitennestra's proposal as unfit for men. Eventually yielding to the Queen's persuasive arguments (note the alluring passages in the clarinet, Clitennestra's instrument, pp.89-90), he enters the palace upon the purple carpets (an act of presumption calling for the Gods' vengeance) whilst the maids start a graceful dance to music delicately scored for strings and woodwind (Ex.18)
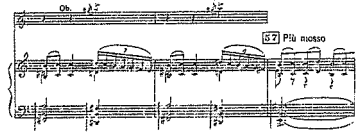
punctuated , however, by woeful appoggiaturas in the oboe (Ex.19):

Exs.18, 19, pp.94-5

Ex.18
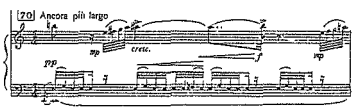


Ex.19



Clitemnestra's ensuing prayer to Zeus that 'what must be accomplished shall be accomplished', is commented upon by quotations of the ominous Ex.3 harmonized in parallel chords (p.102). The Chorus, again overcome by feelings of fear and foreboding, embark on a tense passage during which they recall the crime of Atreus, first link in a chain of evil deeds leading each to another (p.103). Unperturbed by the Chorus' utterances, Clitemnestra invites Cassandra, still waiting outside in the chariot, to join the household in the ritual ceremony that is about to take place in honour of the guardian deity of the house.

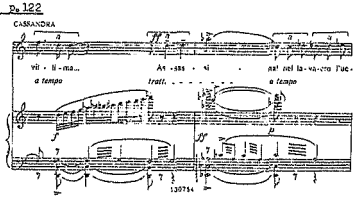
The following scene , rather long but beautifully articulated, consists of Cassandra's frightful prophecies frequently interrupted by choral interjections. As she gazes with terrible intensity at a statue of Apollo standing near the palace's staircase, her theme is heard in the orchestra:

Ex.20,p.114



Suddenly possessed by the God of prophecy she breaks into speech, first foretelling the House of Atreus' doom, then describing the scene of Clitemnestra luring Agamennone into the house, approaching the victim and striking him after entangling him in a net. Her voice hysterically leaping to the high A-flat,

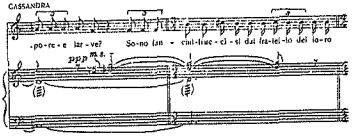
Ex.21, p.122



she denounces the treacherous murderess with tremendous passion and then invokes Apollo's mercy. When, to the horror of the Chorus, she passes on to the vision of Thyestes' children (Aegisthus' brothers, murdered by Atreus and served up to their father to eat) holding their

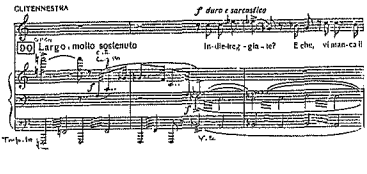
own flesh in their hands, the figure of augmented fourth - the evil tritone - recurs in the supporting texture:

Ex. 22, p. 126



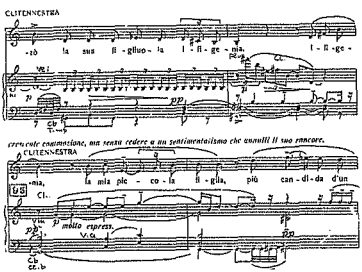
After telling of her own death at Clitennestra's hand and of the 'exile' who will take vengeance upon Clitennestra (p.130-) , she goes into the palace to meet her destiny. A Corifea and the Women's Chorus utter words of commiseration with her and a brief, despairing comment on all human happiness which is 'a dream, only a dream, the shadow of a dream' (p.141). As the Chorus, on recognising the King's death-cries, mutter and exclaim , rushing about in fearful amazement, the palace door opens, revealing Clitennestra. A blood-stained axe is in her hand. The theme of 'murder' (Ex.6B) stated by combined horn and English horn supported by a timpani tremolo in a version graphically representing the idea of the accomplished deed:

Ex. 23, p. 145



introduces the speech in which Clitennestra, exultantly and defiantly, announces her murder of Agamennone. The Chorus express their hatred of Clitennestra but she confronts their hostility bravely and arrogantly. During the course of this altercation she is allotted a besutifully lyrical passage (the pathos of which is enhanced by the delicate clarinet and string scoring)

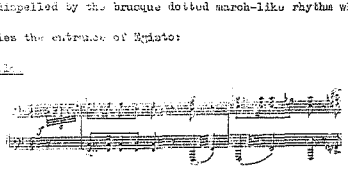
Ex. 24, p. 154



allowing a glimpse into her suppressed humanity. By recalling, with tender emotion, Ifigenia, the daughter sacrificed by Agamennone to the Gods for the sake of war, she discloses what is the deepest spring of her murderous act. Immediately resuming her cynical attitude, she challenges the Chorus saying that she does not fear them whilst her lover, Egisto, remains by her side. She also reveals, to the appalled crowd, her murder of Cassandra, 'the foreign slave-girl who uttered prophecies' whilst sharing the bed with Agamennone. The people request permission to give their King proper burial. The

... the ... After this, perhaps as if wishing to recall some feeling which formerly existed, she evokes, in a dream-like manner to ... 'Iphigenia' music (Ex.24), the vision of her dead daughter moving ... her father to welcome him on the threshold of Hades. This mood ... soon dispelled by the brusque dotted march-like rhythm wi ch ... the entrance of Egisto:

Ex.25
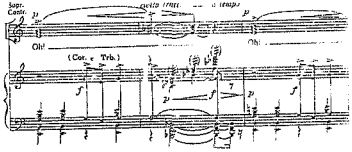


... tense, finely restrained lines (supported by Ex.25 interspersed with ... passages continuously shifting the tonal centre) and in a ... and yet controlled way which cannot fail to win him sympathy, ... after giving thanks for 'this day of justice', recalls the ... episode of his brothers being served by Atreus to be eaten ... own father, Thyestes. As this prompted him to engineer the ... to kill Agamemnone, he declares himself proud of his succesful ... The crowd, reacting with threats and insults, condemns both him ... Clitennestra, but she bids them resign themselves as she and ... will enforce obedience. Clitennestra and Egisto withdraw.

... orchestral passage of minor chords on the strings, interrupted ... horn and trumpet fanfare, contains the Women's "Oh!", also set ... minor chords.

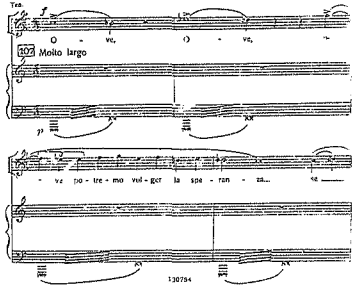
(Ex. 26)

Ex.26, p.174



An agitated instrumental passage accompanies the episode during which a group of young men busy themselves around the stretcher upon which the dead King lies clothed in his royal mantle. After a fortissimo chord of the ninth, an F pedal, decrescendo to piano, underlines the tenors' "Ove, ove, ove potremo volger la speranza...se frana e va in rovina questa casa?" (*Where, where, oh! where can we turn our hopes, if this house collapses and comes to its end?*)

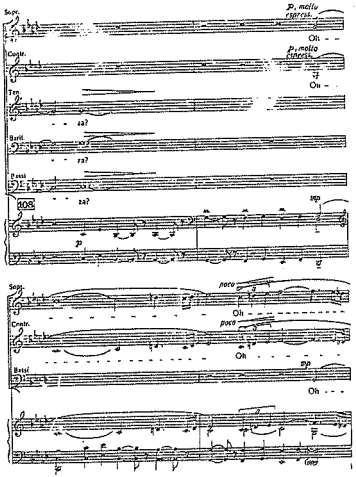
Ex.27, p.175



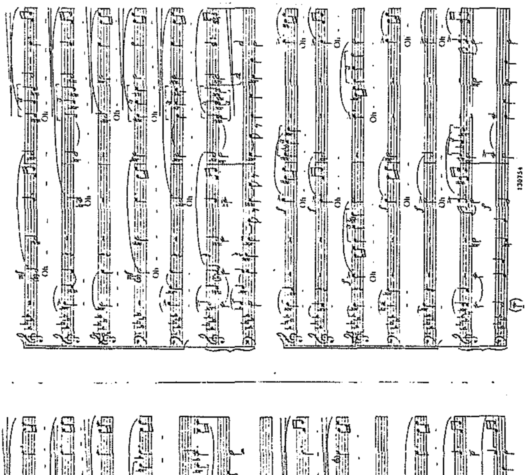
It fades away allowing the combined men's voices to repeat homophonically

a cappella the same question. Agamennone's theme (Ex.4) sounds softly in an orchestral unison and remains in the bass, as a free ostinato, whilst the upper parts of the accompaniment assist the Women's voices as they intone in octaves a lament over the dead King, starting and ending in dark C Phrygian:

Ex.28, p.177



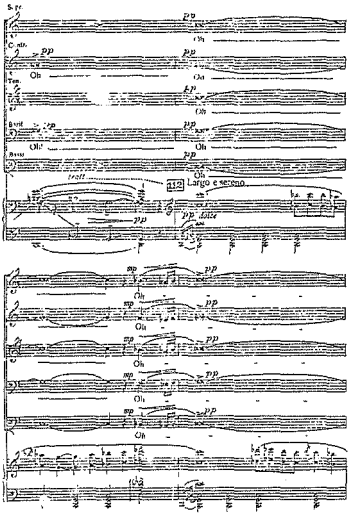
Basses, then tenors, then baritones enter in imitation taking over the theme, slightly modified, and all the voices combine in a passage of superb contrapuntal writing (Ex.29). Tension gradually builds up
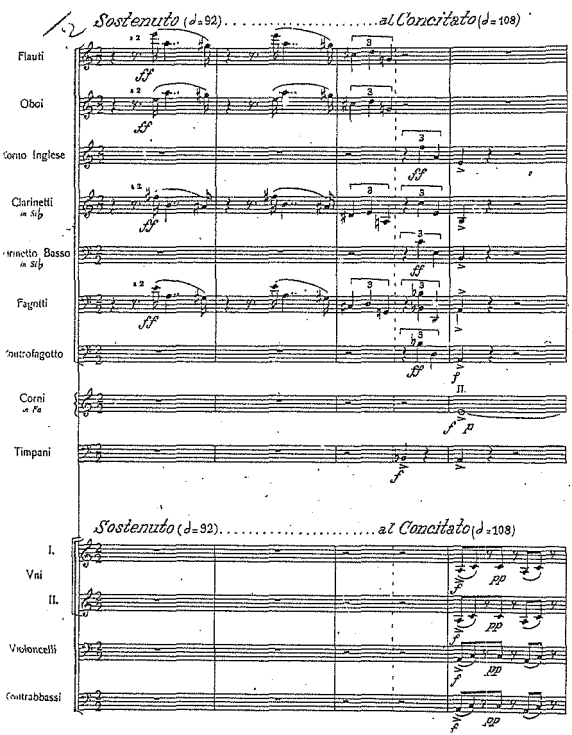


Ex.29, pp.180-81

and an impressive climax is brought about as the orchestra explodes with fortissimo major chords (with the ostinato 'Agamennone' theme hammering in the bass) and sopranos and tenors, sustained by the orchestral upper structure , bring back, in unison, the opening motive. After a purely harmonic, and very effective passage (p.184) the imitative technique is resumed. Fading away, the voices unite in a homophonic section, in C Phrygian, sung over a 'Largo e sereno' hymn-like motive outlining a broad, typically Pizzettian, arching phrase:

Ex.30, p.188



At the end of this impressive interlude, heard as Agamennone's funeral procession is seen in the background in the changing light of the dying day, the theme of 'murder' (in the version quoted at Ex.23 but rhythmically more relaxed) is restated, in octaves, by the orchestra. It is to this theme that Clitennestra and Egisto come out of the palace. Over a background of thirdless chords interspersed with the opening motive of the ubiquitous theme of Argos (Ex.9), Clitennestra, after commenting on the peace and solitude surrounding them, feels the unnaturalness of such atmosphere and, becoming almost obsessed, she cries for somebody to relieve her loneliness whilst the music pulsate with Ex.5. There is orchestral agitation accentuated by the eerie rolls on the timpani during the scene in which she accuses Egisto, now insolent and defiant, of cowardice. Terrorized by mysterious screams in the air she loses control of herself and whispers "Elettra, Oreste" repeating their names deliriously with the addition of 'Ifigenia!' and then 'Egisto'. As Clitennestra and Egisto, both seized with terror , seek refuge in each other's arms, the orchestra thunders out the aggressive C major opening motive of Clitennestra's passion (Ex.2) from which unfolds the ascending chromatic passage which had characterized it at the beginning of the opera. This comes to rest on a chord of the eleventh on F; the bass fluctuating between F and G-sharp, whilst the Clitennestra motive (Ex.7) is interspersed before coming to

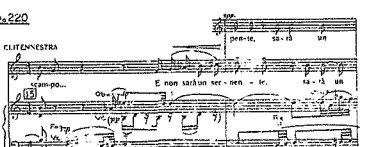

Sostenuto (♩=92)
al Concitato (♩=108)
Flauti
Oboi
Corno Inglese
Clarinetti in Sib
Clarinetto Basso in Sib
Fagotti
Controfagotto
Corni in Fa
Timpani
Sostenuto (♩=92)
al Concitato (♩=108)
I. Vni
II.
Violoncelli
Contrabbassi

Ex. 31

rest on the tonic chord of C major (with added major seventh and minor second).

The second act is prefaced by an orchestral introduction aimed at establishing the psychological mood of the scene which follows (scene i). The passing of seven years has not relieved the uneasiness to which Clitemnestra is prey. The opening dotted figure, stated full-force by the woodwind (Ex.31), is actually based on the 'murder' motive and on the theme associated with Clitemnestra (Ex.7). The meaning of this symbolic association is made clear at p.220, where the motive appears (in the oboe, over a creeping chromatic figuration) when Clitemnestra discloses to Egisto her fear of a man who will come 'to spill my blood and yours with mine'

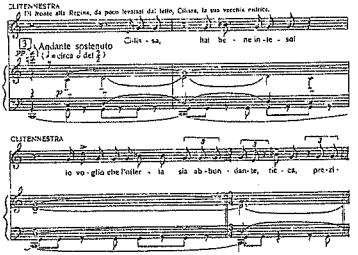
Ex.32, p.220



Apart from these opening bars the introduction is built entirely upon Ex.5, pulsating in the strings and complemented by quotations of the Clitemnestra motive (Ex.7). The interval of the minor third, characterizing the figure associated with Clitemnestra' anxiety (Ex.5) is emphasized by various instruments during this introductory section and also establishes itself as the main feature of the recitative in

which, in the scene directly following, Clitennestra orders Cilissa to organize offerings to be performed at Agamennone's tomb:
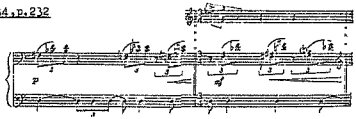
Ex. 33, p. 206



The reason for this is explained in the next episode. Clitennestra tells Egisto of a hideous dream about a snake 'with eyes like coals' which, as if it were her son, had sucked from her breast not milk, but blood. When Clitennestra, at the end of her nervous, at times elaborately accompanied speech ("Sì, paura"- Yes, fear, p.214-), deliberately insinuates the name of Oreste, Egisto loses his arrogant self-confidence and goes to alert his guards. As Clitennestra's room is plunged into dar[illegible] pattern of the orchestral introduction to the act, with [illegible] string figure (Ex.5) and minor third motives, is repeated, the a[illegible]ed Ex.31 also featuring conspicuously. After this, Clitennestra's maids and the Corifea express fear at the events soon to take place. To their anguished question 'Whose blood must soak the earth so that the rightful vengeance may be accomplished?' the orchestra

answers by quoting Clitennestra's motive (Ex.7) over throbbing syncopations and sustained pedal points whilst an expanded version of Ex.3 steals into the orchestra (p.229). The first scene ends but the music continues as the venue shifts to the open space before the royal palace in the full light of the early afternoon (scene ii). A procession of maids bearing offerings to the tomb of Agamennone issues from the palace. Elettra, who has challengingly remained apart, answers Clitennestra's remonstrations, reminding her harshly that she, who hardly deserves the name of mother, has not only committed adultery with Egisto but has murdered Agamennone ("Hai detto madre?" - Did you say mother?,p.232-). It is to be noted that the theme representing Elettra, merely anticipated during this scene,

Ex.34,p.232



will only appear in a clearly characterized shape (although almost always quoted with slight modifications, symbolic, perhaps of Electra's unstable state of mind) in the presence of people like the Old Man from Phocis, or Oreates, to whom she wishes to reveal herself. Neither Elettra nor Clitennestra are depicted in a sympathetic way during this confrontation scene (the portrayal of the former being based on Euripides', and that of the latter on Sophocles' parallel scene of their Electra plays). Thus, when Elettra condemns her mother almost entirely in terms of her sexuality
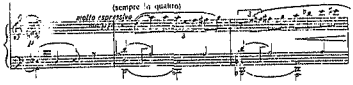
and Clitennestra contemptuously scoffs at her for being unable to love other than in 'foul dreams', we tend to forget the deeper motivations for their mutual hatred (and to alienate whatever sympathy we may feel for either) should not the music conspicuously recall the 'murder' motive (Ex.6). The quarrel between the two women is interrupted by the arrival of an old man from Phocis (actually, Oreste's tutor) bringing news of the death of Oreste in a horse-racing accident, at the Pythian games, in Delphi. The Old Man's narrative of the accident, interrupted by Elettra's expression of sorrow, opens and closes in a plaintive Parygian (in D, contr[illegible]vever, at bars 2 and 4, p.256, by the raised E). It is concise, well-articulated, and accompanied by various figures of which the most prominent are the ostinato-like pattern supporting the steadily ascending scalic figure repeated (with slight modifications and expansion) at the end of the speech:

Ex.35, p.256



and the d[illegible] motive heard at the opening of the act (Ex.31), still over the ostin[illegible], plus the Elettra motive, here clearly stated:
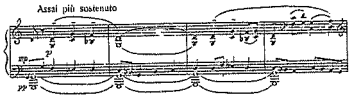
Ex.36, p.[illegible]



The news of Oreste's death is differently received by Clitennestra (who
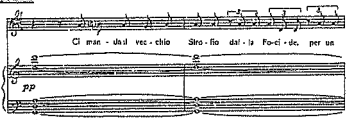
can hardly conceal her relief) and Elettra (overwhelmed with grief). The maids returning from Agamennone's grave however cast doubt on the accuracy of the Old Man's report for offerings found at the tomb seem to suggest that Oreste is in the neighbourhood. Oreste makes in fact his appearence, to a G Aeolian theme:

Ex.37, p.282



In a controlled, diatonic passage in G Mixolydian

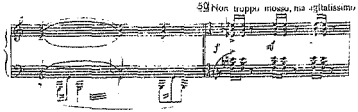
Ex.38, p.282



underlined with a multiple pedal point from which, after the first four bars, Ex.37 unfolds in the guise of parallel chords, he introduces himself as the leader of a diplomatic mission bearing an urn containing Oreste's ashes. Elettra, who dominates the second act, has, at this point, an extended passage interrupted by Oreste and the sympathetic reaction of the Chorus of her own maids. These interruptions cause the episode to fall into three well-contrasted sections. First, in an increasingly vehement recitative set to clashing chords often producing bitonality,

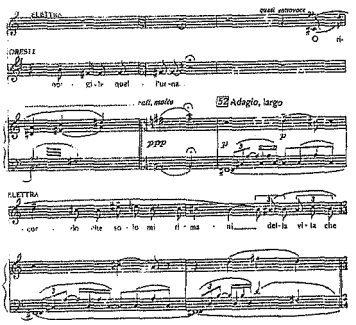
(Ex.39)

Ex. 39, p.284

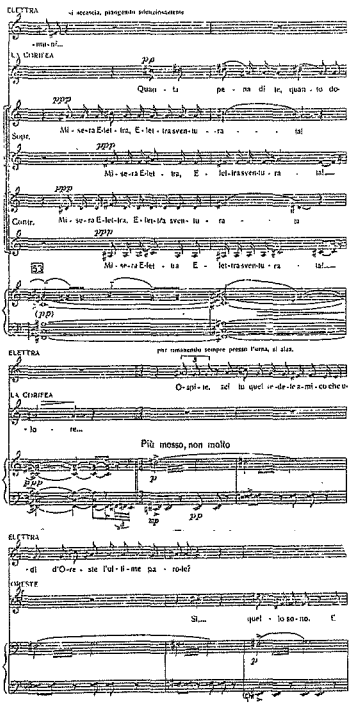


she pleads for the privilege of having the urn handed to her; second, her wish being fulfilled, she embarks on a lyrical section in which she expresses despair and mourning for her much-loved brother:

Ex. 40, p.286
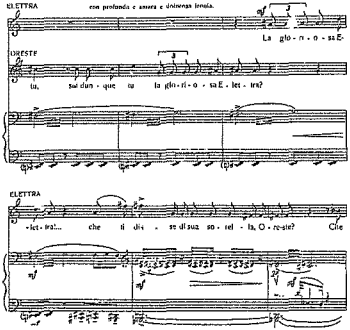


Finally, in a harsh, resentful manner, emphasized by wide leaps, she tells of her past suffering, of her present dejection, of her being a slave in the house of her father's murderers (Ex. 41 A)



Ex.40, pp.290-291

Ex.41A, p.291



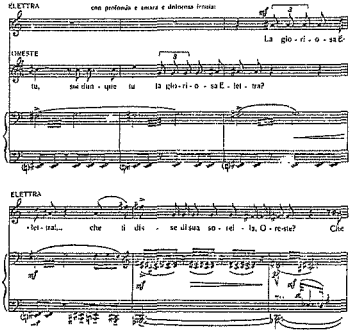
Oreste, whose identity is revealed by the F Dorian theme heard in the orchestra before it is actually disclosed,

Ex.42, p.297



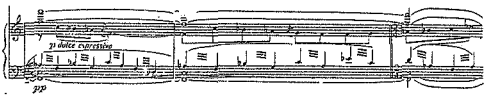
is profoundly touched by her words. References to past events eventually cause Elettra and Oreste to recognize each other (it is perhaps no coincidence that at the crucial moment of the recognition Elettra's music should assume the modal characteristic -Dorian - associated with Oreste: see the E Dorian scales in the harp accompaniment, p.300, b.2-5; then the G Dorian in both vocal and orchestral parts, p.300, last bar and p.301, b.1-3). There follows a concise, powerfully dramatic duologue

Ex.41A, p.291



Oreste, whose identity is revealed by the F Dorian theme heard in the orchestra before it is actually disclosed,

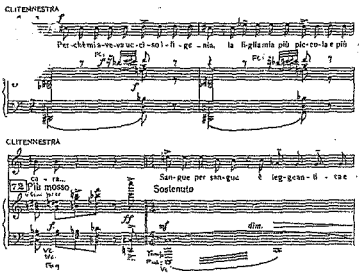
Ex.42, p.297



is profoundly touched by her words. References to past events eventually cause Elettra and Oreste to recognize each other (it is perhaps no coincidence that at the crucial moment of the recognition Elettra's music should assume the modal characteristic -Dorian - associated with Oreste: see the E Dorian scales in the harp accompaniment, p.300, b.2-5; then the G Dorian in both vocal and orchestral parts, p.300, last bar and p.301, b.1-3). There follows a concise, powerfully dramatic duologue

in which Oreste tells Elettra that the Gods have sent him home to carry out the revenge implacably demanded by his father's Furies, to quotations of Ex.42 heralded by a C major scale with the 'murder' motive (Ex.6) underneath (pp.304-5). The remainder of the act is taken up by the highly dramatic and powerfully rendered episode of the confrontation between Oreste and Clitennestra. First, with sincere grief, Clitennestra recalls the sacrifice of Ifigenia :
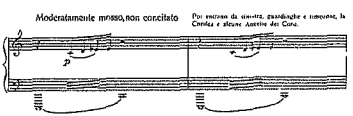
Ex.43, p.321



a wrong which only murder could have satisfied, concluding, with awful solemnity, with "Sangue per sangue, è legge antica e sacra" (Blood for blood, is ancient, sacred law).

Then, in recognizing in 'Oreste's friend' her son, her reaction is, in turn, one of indignation, blandishment, pathos and threats, after which she surrenders invoking twice the name of Egisto. To the violas' last repetitions of the motive of 'murder' (Ex.6) Oreste forces her back into the palace. The stage remains empty for a while and the orchestra is reduced to a muffled tremolo on the timpani supported by a cello pedal point. This tremolo persists until the action is resumed with the entrance of a group of maid-servants, and a four-note semiquaver figure appears above it:

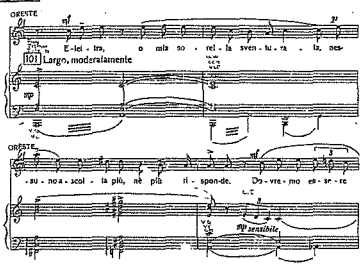
Ex.44, p.340



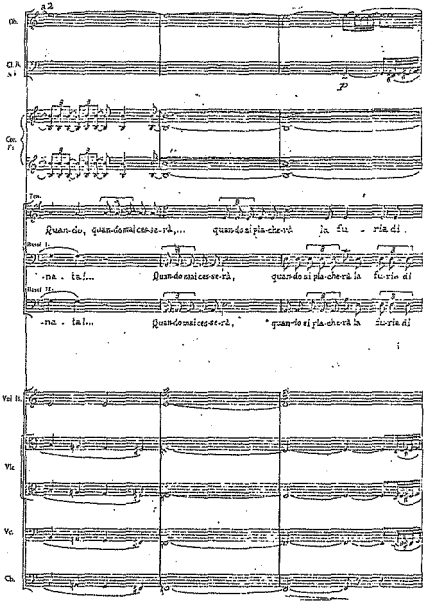
Ex.44 is used as the basis for the accompaniment of the episodes concerned with the assassination of Clitennestra and then of Egisto by Oreste. After the last murder which , like the preceding ones (and in accordance with the principles of classical dramaturgy) takes place off-stage whilst the 'visible' action continues, Oreste appears on the steps of the palace proclaiming that 'justice has been done'. At the

crowd acclaims Oreste King of Argos, he announces his withdrawal whilst trying to justify his hideous act, divinely commanded. He anticipates the agony which his soul is doomed to suffer as he sees in a vision the Furies pursuing him into emotional chaos. Oreste's last words are a poignant farewell to his tenderly loved Elettra: "Elettra, o mia sorella sventurata" (Elettra, o my unhappy sister).

Ex.45, p.372



In this expressive, intensely emotional solo supported by sombre chords and melodic material derived mainly from his own theme (Ex.42), Oreste, departing from the usual Greek drama practice of holding the Gods responsible for men's actions, tells Elettra that it is only they, mere human beings, who can decide whether they should be forgiven for the crime committed, or condemned forever. After stretching his arms towards Elettra, Oreste rushes wildly from the stage to agitated descending violin passages which come to rest on a tremolo on the major third D-sharp- B with a pedal F underneath. Ex.3 is


a 2
Ob.
Cl. A.
Cor. Fl.
Ten.
Quan-do, quan-do mi ces-se-rà,... quan-do si pia-che-rà la fu - ria di.
Sopr. I.
-na . ta!... Quan-do mi ces-se-rà, quan-do si pia-che-rà la fu-ria di
Sopr. II.
-na . ta!... Quan-do mi ces-se-rà, quan-do si pia-che-rà la fu-ria di
Vel. B.
Vle.
Vc.
Cb.

Ex. 46

heard on the strings, supported by a rhythmicized pedal in the horns and alternating with a melismatic oboe motive answered by bass clarinet, violas and cellos (Ex.46) as an accompaniment to the Men's "Quando quando mai cesserà,...quando si placherà la furia d'Até?" (When, when will this frenzy of Até end?). As the Men embark on a plea to the Gods to avoid the final destruction of the House, the Women join in, the passage being uttered pianissimo and with 'a kind of desperate sorrow' (according to the score directions). On the Chorus' last words starts the final orchestral section marked 'Largo', 'Un poco più mosso' and 'Molto lento' and reproducing, in a shortened version, the introduction to Act I. The ubiquitous theme of Argos (Ex.9), reduced to its essential shape, sounds softly in unison flutes and piccolo under an inverted A pedal sustained by the violins (harmonics until the last bars) and complemented by the four-note motive of Ex.9, seemingly hinting at the 'murder' idea of Ex.6. Bassoons and then combined oboes and English horn add their peculiar tone to the brief development which follows, and it is only in the last two bars that the tutti enters with a threefold piano thirdless chord on A reached through a long-prepared plagal cadence.

— oOo —

Of Pizzetti's operatic works CLITENNESTRA represents the embodiment of his aesthetic ideals best. The libretto, concise and well

constructed, is excellent from both literary and dramatic standpoint. The action moves on swiftly in well-balanced episodes. It is in keeping with the principles formulated by Pizzetti at the beginning of his career (and so often contradicted later). According to these principles an ideal *music drama* should consist, as far as the action is concerned, solely "of the *episodes* necessary for its development...with the verbal self-expression of the *characters* reduced to the words that are indispensable to the intelligible *manifestation* of their inner feelings... as a superfluity of words in the expression of *emotions* has no other effect that to hamper the free development of the music and to minimize its efficacy"[1]. Musically , CLITEMNESTRA fulfills Pizzetti's ideals that a music drama should be "not only the one in which music is asked to make every episode, every moment of the action, every gesture and word of the character intelligible to the spectator, but also the one in which music is given the possibility of continuously revealing the profondity of the soul beyond the limitations which poetry cannot and will never be able to exceed"[1]. Writing on the first performance of CLITEMNESTRA Claudio Sartori remarked that "here, once more, the drama is condensed and expressed in the vocal writing, and the various characters are clearly, excitingly limned by music which depicts in masterly fashion the Atrides caught up in the savage vortex of tragedy", whilst "the orchestra, intentionally, plays a secondary role but with

1. Pizzetti, Ildebrando. Essay on Paul Dukas' ARIANE ET BARBEBLEU. Rivista Musicale Italiana, 1908, No.XV, p.73 (G.M. Gatti, in op. cit. quotes however pp.87-8).

its richness and variety splendidly supports the voices and evokes the atmosphere of this tragedy of blood"[1]. To this might be added that, besides supporting and evoking, the orchestra 'supplements' the light and shade of the vocal writing, often portraying the passion and tension concealed behind the words, betraying intentions, anticipating events. Themes and motives - tense or vigorously martial, solemn, lyrical or epigrammatic - intertwine and juxtapose in a continuous, supple texture typically Pizzettian in harmonic and contrapuntal organization. Pizzetti's well-known, highly individual declamatory style, is not only flexible "enough to accomodate the fiercely dramatic word or phrase"[1], but capable of expressing moments of intensely lyrical emotion, as in the episode of the Herald kissing his native land ("O suolo d'Argo"- O land of Argos, Act I, sc.ii), or in that of Elettra mourning upon the urn supposedly containing Oreste's ashes ("O ricordo..."-O remembrance...,Act II, sc.ii). Although showing no departure from Pizzetti's usual technique, the idiom of CLITENNESTRA is more sophisticated than in earlier works, with elaborate rhythms and skilful orchestration relying on special timbric effects, and interesting harmonies exploiting the modal, traditional and modern vocabulary without any effect of eclecticism. As usual, the chorus has a paramount role and is almost always present on stage in extraordinarily beautiful scenes portraying resentment, passion and sorrow. The touching Threnody upon the dead King Agamennone (occurring

1. Sartori, Claudio. Pizzetti's new Greek tragedy. OPERA, June 1965, p.439.

towards the end of Act I) represents perhaps the culmination of Pizzetti's genius in choral writing.

The almost unanimous praise accorded to CLITENNESTRA by the press, was a tribute to the musician who, during sixty years of indefatigable activity had been an admirable example "of coherent, persevering and indefectible aesthetic austerity"[1] and of devotion to life-long theatrical ideals. In Adelmo Damerini's opinion Pizzetti, with CLITENNESTRA "had crowned all his human, theatrical and musical experiences with a technical and stylistic maturity capable of making the glory of the master"[2]. Renzo Rossellini remarked that "the humanity of Pizzetti's theatrical idiom is indeed of the loftiest, fiercest, of the most noble and passionate nature that one would expect from music and poetry alike".[3] It seems to me that some stress should also be placed upon Pizzetti's ethical approach to the drama of Clitennestra. The message he intended to convey this time is that the disaster that follows from the pursuance of revenge is spine-chilling and the survivors are as devastatingly defeated as are those who die. Oreste is condemned to 'the fury and frenzy of madness', a punishment worse that death as it lacks its merciful and everlasting oblivion. It is impossible to immagine that Elettra will be immune to the torments inflicted by pangs of conscience. The Chorus' final 'When, when will this frenzy of Ate end?' leaves little hope of peace or reconciliation. It is, in fact, difficult

1. 2. 3; Levi, Lionello (Il Resto del Carlino) ; Damerini, Adelmo (La Nazione) ; Rossellini, Renzo (Il Messaggero). All criticism on CLITENNESTRA is collected in Musica d'oggi . Anno VIII; January 1969, pp.72-5.

to think of a work more apt than CLITENNESTRA to bring home the lesson that hatred brings no satisfaction but only the ashes of failure and defeat.

--- oOo ---

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research has been to investigate Pizzetti's highly individual attitude to the musical setting of his librettos in five of his music dramas. Naturally, he applied some if not all of the principles dealt with here in the rest of his dramatic output. His approach to problems of a formal, musical, ethical and aesthetic nature connected with the libretto and its musical setting in the music drama has however also been considered in relation to his critical writings and essays on the subject as well as in terms of actual achievement.

The five music dramas which have been the object of this study are among Pizzetti's finest works, both from the point of view of the libretto and of its musical realization. They have thus provided an invaluable source for studying Pizzetti's compositional technique which we find applied here at its very best. As far as I am able to discover, these works have not previously received due attention from critics and musicologists who, apart from occasional articles and reviews, appear to have largely ignored them. Political reasons (to be found in the support accorded by the Fascist regime to Pizzetti's 'nationalistic' art); an almost total indifference towards the 'generation of the eighties'; Pizzetti's commitment to aesthetic principles the novelty of which has worn off, are possibly responsible for this neglect and also for some antagonism directed against both the man and the artist. It might be argued that some of Pizzetti's less successful music dramas are in effect

marred by a sameness of mood and a rigidity of conception bound to destroy their vitality and individuality. Pizzetti did not have the instinctive greatness of Verdi, that passionate humanity and incandescent fantasy capable of fusing human insight, dramatic awareness, intentions , even banality, into compelling music. But even when praise is given with reservation, the strength of the composer's technical resources, the sophistication of his approach to aesthetic problems, the loftiness of his inspiration are always admitted. Pizzetti's declamation, evoking the shadow of Monteverdi and of some of the great madrigalists of the Renaissance and yet with an unmistakeable physiognomy of its own, has been unanimously recognized as the most interesting element of his musical language. This is undeniably true. In my view, however, too much stress has been put on this aspect of Pizzetti's technique and too little on what seems to me to be (especially in the context of Italian operatic tradition) Pizzetti's most striking feature: the thematic construction to be found in his operas. I have paid especial attention to this feature. We cannot fail but note that, whilst Pizzetti follows the Wagnerian practice of leitmotive, his themes are not mere labels attached to a character, idea or emotion. They are almost musical symbols, containing within their construction, something illustrative of that character, idea or emotion. Moreover, they undergo a metamorphosis connected with changes within the original subject of association and also take account of the situation prevailing, even outside the original subject, at the moment they are brought into use. Remarkable instances of this practice are found in CLITENNESTRA (compare Ex.6, the 'idea of murder', with Ex.23, the 'accomplished deed') and ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE. Here Becket's theme (Ex.15), aptly derived

from the intonation and mediation of a psalmodic tone, with the exception ot its first three notes, never appears twice in the same guise. It is subjected to endless subtleties of inflection and rhythmic and harmonic changes to convey the spiritual evolution of the Archbishop/martyr, from his initial doubt and confusion to his mature and final clarity of perception.

Another peculiar (and scarcely noticed) feature of Pizzetti's technique is the persistent recurrence from work to work of certain thematic elements associated with particular moods and emotions or dramatic situations. These came to constitute a kind of individual and characteristic quasi-symbolic vocabulary:

throbbing syncopations, appearing to depict the beating of an anguished heart, are used in situations of tenseness and distress (FEDRA, Ex.9; IFIGENIA, Ex.16; LA FIGLIA DI IORIO, Ex.19; ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE, Exs. 30 and 32);

descending rhythmo-melodic patterns in a funereal, ominous vein convey a sense of foreboding, tragedy and doom (IFIGENIA, Exs.13 and 21; LA FIGLIA DI Iorio, Exs.18 and 36;)
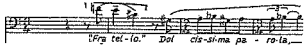
motives containing erratic skips and chromatic steps denote anguish and spiritual conflict (IFIGENIA, Exs.11 and 14; ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE, Ex.14;

ascending lines represent lofty ideals and aspirations (ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE (Exs. 36 and 49);

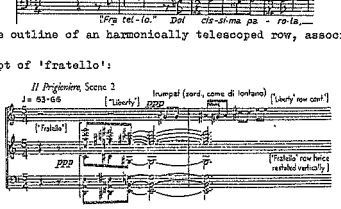
tortuous, shifty themes are associated with insidious feelings (LA FIGLIA DI IORIO, Ex.31 ; ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE, Exs.23 and 32).

Especially important is the characteristically Pizzettian three-note descending figure, which seems to approximate the inflection of the Italian 'Ahimé' (Alas!) and, in virtually every score, occurs in situation charged with

emotion, pain, sadness and despair (FEDRA, Ex.4; IFIGENIA, Ex.21; LA FIGLIA DI IORIO, Ex.13; ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE, Ex.14; CLITENNESTRA, Ex.8). It may be interesting to note that Dallapiccola was to use this figure in his opera IL PRIGIONIERO (1948), both melodically:



and as the outline of an harmonically telescoped row, associated with the concept of 'fratello':



Some of Pizzetti's technical devices contain intellectual overtones reminiscent of the Baroque technique of word painting. These are especially noticeable in FEDRA(the score of which remains, in my opinion, one of Pizzetti's most interesting and original):
the descending and ascending motion of the music related to the idea of sinking and rising (Ex.44) or e ping (Exs.23 and 28); the undulating movement in the strings suggesting an association with the Sea-God Neptune (Ex.45) and, more subtle, the bow-like shape of the theme of Fedra's death (we will recall that she dies struck by the arrow of the Moon-Goddess Artemis), Ex. 56.

Also interesting is Pizzetti's exploitation of the modes, of their 'ethos', (according to what Pizzetti thought to be more consonant wi . the spirit and meaning of the text) and of their peculiar expressive or suggestive,

peculiarities. Thus, the unquestionably bright Lydian mode is appropriately used in the opening scene of LA FIGLIA DI IORIO to convey the gaiety of the wedding preparations and to add glitter to the splendidly atmospheric 'mountain scene' with which the second act of the same work starts. The sadder and darker qualities of the Phrygian and Aeolian modes are advantageously applied to situations involving mourning, lamentation and feelings of foreboding as, for instance, at the start of the third act of LA FIGLIA DI IORIO; at the opening and concluding scenes of IFIGENIA and for the lamentation for the dead Agamennone, in CLITENNESTRA. The introduction of the Chorus in the opera, with a role which parallels that of Greek tragedy's, must be regarded as one of Pizzetti's most remarkable innovations (as regards nineteenth century opera). Choral episodes, treated in a way which is both dramatic and dynamic, often represent the highlights of an entire score. Following the tradition pointed out by Mussorgsky in his great choral pages and Debussy in some of the choruses of LE MARTYRE DE SAINT- SEBASTIEN, Pizzetti showed in his choral passages how it was possible to amalgamate succesfully the characteristic devices of the polyphonic schools with the rhythmical, harmonic and structural resources of modern music.

Whilst Pizzetti's use of harmony is frequently unadventurous, his use of the orchestra in an operatic context was, considering the time and place in which his first music dramas were written, strikingly new and advanced. Although kept in a fairly subordinate position, the orchestra is asked to provide a varied and continuously evolving background, not only mirroring the dramatic events

(or anticipating them) but also revealing the characters' inner feelings and emotions (thus adding to them a new psychological dimension). The scoring, mainly relying on subdued tones, is usually skilfully handled, and is especially suggestive in the evocation of transparent and delicate, or remote atmospheres.

Pizzetti's critical writings and essays do not deal specifically with matters of musical technique or stylistic devices. The musical problems connected with the music drama are always considered in relation to those other problems of a structural, dramatic and ideologico-ethical nature which form the basis of his operatic conception.

As already said in the concluding portion of the Introduction, Pizzetti's departure from his sound and well-formulated dramatic tenets proved detrimental to a number of his operas (especially those belonging to his middle period). He was however more consistent as aesthetic or ethico-philosophical principles were concerned. If the choice of operatic subjects testifies of the depth and breadth of his cultural interest, his preoccupation with'moral messages' is indicative of an extraordinary ethical integrity. Pizzetti's music dramas convey a view of life and of moral behaviour which is a strikingly sincere statement of personal convictions. Whether ethical issues can, or should, provide the subject matter of music is perhaps debatable. Frank Howes reminds us that "music and moral is an old conjunction of ideas - at least as old as Plato"[1]. Indeed, apart from the age-long association of music

1. Howes, Frank. MAN, MIND AND MUSIC, p.58.

with religion (which includes dramatic forms like liturgical dramas, azioni sacre, oratorios), the texts of countless operas deal with moral issues. It suffices to remember the ethically orientated librettos of Zeno and Metastasio; the didactic operatic texts of Voltaire (SAMSON, never set to music,however) and Beaumarchais (for Salieri's TARARE); the 'livret à thèse' of many French eighteenth and nineteenth century operas (as, for instance, Bouilly's libretto for Cherubini's LES DEUX JOURNEES and Zola's libretto for Bruneau's MESSIDOR). In Pizzetti's dramatic works a clearly defined message comes across. It is the lesson, shown in the moral defeat of Orseolo in the homonymous work, in the temporary insanity of Giovanni, in L'ORO, in Oreste's withdrawal into madness, in CLITENNESTRA, that hatred is a tremendous curse and that one cannot expect to escape the punishment brought about by it. It is the warning that war should be stripped of its romantic trappings and that all the 'ruins, slaughters, tears and mournings' involved in it are too high a price to compensate for the joy of victory (DEBORA E JAELE, VANNA LUPA, CLITENNESTRA). It is the suggestion that "love of humanity..., the will and strength to make sacrifices for others, the joy of giving"[1] without asking anything in return is the only possible antidote to "the forces of evil, those mysterious, obscure and manifold agencies of deception and temptation which are awake and active in every man"[2] (LO STRANIERO, FRA GHERARDO, L'ORO, LA FIGLIA DI IORIO, ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE, IL CALZARE D'ARGENTO). Always dealing with fundamental moral questions Pizzetti

1. See p. 17 in this thesis.
2. ibid.

showed the worth of qualities like love, devotion, sympathetic response to suffering, readiness to forgive. This is perhaps nowhere told so effectively and charmingly as in Pizzetti's last opera IL CALZARE D'ARGENTO. Its protagonist, Giuliano, is a gentle minstrel who wanders around the world singing 'the tale of our human love, renewed with the flower of poetry - the flower of the world'. He wins over the weaknesses and meannesses of men by means of indulgent understanding and philosophical resignation and tells 'ancient and beautiful stories' to those capable of appreciating his message of love, humility and compassion. This seems to me to adumbrate the artist-creator and his position in the world, the composer himself who, often misunderstood, yet never departs from his self-imposed ideal of bringing "to his fellow-men a word of goodness"[1], to help them to understand, suffer and accept life, to console them for the tremendous ineluctability of suffering. Like Giuliano's, Pizzetti's stories are born of human experience. We can only too easily fail to see the relation between some of his music dramas and the issues of his period. Yet, the relevance of the themes treated in *DEBORA E JAELE*, *ORSEOLO*, *L'ORO*, VANNA LUPA and IFIGENIA to particular political, historical or class situation should not be pointed out to those who have not forgotten the atrocities of two World Wars and their consequences in terms of material and moral disaster and socio-political upheaval.
However, whether Pizzetti deals with themes derived from ancient myths and legends or with subjects related to a specific historical moment,

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1. See p. 21 in this thesis.

he tries to define the meaning of his stories not in terms of contingency but in terms of that universal truth which pertains to the human condition.

Pizzetti never aimed at showing "man's misery at its blackest and man's grandeur at its greatest"[1]. He saw men as they were and simply tried to understand the meaning of human life and human behaviour. The unhappy times in which he lived, which had seen the shattering of so many illusion and the failure of so many ideals were to influence, in a negative way, his vision of the world. Almost all his characters (especially so his male heroes) are losers in the face of life, lonely wanderers moving towards some unattainable goal, trying to discover where the final truth rests. Their aimless quest associates them with the "people of all the world"[2] living no matter when "today, or yesterday, or in an even more distant and indefinite past"[3] . In this is to be found the universality of Pizzetti's art.

We may ask ourselves whether the universal themes of Pizzetti's music dramas, their ethical concern, have broadened the appeal of his music. An art which probes into the mysteries of life and death, of love and suffering and aims at inducing moral thought, is obviously not for the masses. In the light of this statement I quote the following excerpts, from Pizzetti's writings , given in the Introduction:

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1. Hamilton, Edith. THE GREEK WAY, op. cit., p.176.
2. See p.13 in this thesis.
3. The time in which the action takes place, in L'ORO.

> Should not Art... 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.[1]

and:

> 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.[2]

This must be taken in relation to the 'spectator', the listener,who approaches Pizzetti's music dramas with perhaps some previous knowledge of his aims, perhaps also of those of other composers who evolved along similar lines, or, at least, with understanding and an open mind. An introverted man and an isolated composer, Pizzetti did not write for everyone but for those capable of perceiving the relationship of his works to issues of the past and present times, of accepting his disenchanted vision of the world and of appreciating the example of moral and artistic integrity which he proposed in his works. Revealing and providing such an understanding of Pizzetti's musical setting of librettos has been an aspect of this thesis. I have also, in dealing with the individual works, assessed the extent to which Pizzetti succeeded, or failed, to realize his theories and ideals, and the manner in which the musical setting or interpretation changes

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1. See p. 5 in this thesis.
2. See p.21 in this thesis.

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).

I have little doubt that few composers of opera or music drama gave as painstaking attention to the musical setting, in every detail, of the libretto, again in all its detail, as did Ildebrando Pizzetti.

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ADDENDUM

Damerini, Adelmo
Levi, Lionello
Rossellini, Renzo

Criticism on CLITENNESTRA - Musica d'oggi, Milan: Ricordi Anno VIII, January 1969, pp. 72-5.

MUSICAL SCORES AND LIBRETTOS

by

Ildebrando Pizzetti

ASSASSINIO NELLA CATTEDRALE	
Vocal score (Piano red. I. delle Cese)	Milan: Ricordi, 1958
Orchestral score	" 1957
Libretto	" 1958
CLITENNESTRA	
Vocal score (Piano red. B. Giuranna)	Milan: Ricordi, 1964
Orchestral score	" 1964
Libretto	" 1965
FEDRA	
Vocal score (Piano red. I. Pizzetti)	Milan: Sonzogno, 1959
Orchestral score	" 1913
Libretto	" 1959
IFIGENIA	
Vocal score	Milan: Curci ,1961
Orchestral score (manuscript owned by Curci undated)	
Libretto	
LA FIGLIA DI IORIO	
Vocal score (Piano red. B. Giuranna)	Milan: Ricordi, 1954
Orchestral score (manuscript in possession of Museo della Scala)	
Libretto	Milan: Ricordi, 1954

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Author Duse Yucci Maria Orsini
Name of thesis The libretto and its musical setting in Ildebrando Pizzetti's music dramas derived from literary sources. 1984

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