

# Echoes of Folk Music in Roman Vlad's Documentary Soundtracks: Intersections between Cinema, Ethnomusicology and Exoticism

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In 'Observations on Folklore', posthumously published in 1950, Antonio Gramsci encouraged the critical study of folklore as a historically subaltern 'conception of the world', autonomous and opposed to the hegemonic culture.<sup>1</sup> Such an invitation was taken seriously by a significant number of post-war Italian intellectuals moving within leftist circles, who felt the need to find alternative models to combat the advance of capitalism and cultural homogenisation in the nascent and rapidly changing Italian Republic. Scholars like Ernesto De Martino and Alberto Mario Cirese, for instance, promoted an accurate anthropological observation of the traditional communities in rural (especially Southern) Italy with unprecedented energy, reconfiguring Italian ethnologic studies. At the same time, the discipline of ethnomusicology was vigorously developing: the pioneering travels across Italy by Diego Carpitella and Alan Lomax enabled the discovery of a wealth of folk music that had gone unheard for centuries, having been ignored by the 'official' culture.<sup>2</sup> These and other similar experiences spurred a greater and more widespread interest in folklore that went beyond academia and spilled into the public arena.

Cinema was not deaf to the call of folklore. In the early 1950s, the life and

cultural traditions of communities inhabiting the margins of the country became a preferred subject of Italian film. Screenwriter and theorist Cesare Zavattini invited directors to portray the harsh reality of the subalterns' everyday lives.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, urban and rural peripheries featured often in neorealist films, and a number of documentaries were produced on Italian folkloric traditions from the mid-1950s. At the same time, the curiosity about cultural Others transcended the Italian border finding an outlet in the representation of non-Western communities and exotic places that appeared to be yet untouched by modernity. In brief, Italian cinema remediated the experience of folk cultures through several fiction films, ethnographic documentaries, exotic films, travelogues and reportages, which were obviously informed by different ambitions. The remediation of folklore also took place at a musical level. Some film music composers developed an interest in the discoveries of ethnomusicology and started including in their soundtracks excerpts from ethnomusicological recordings or newly composed pieces inspired by folk tunes. However, a number of tensions marked this process of remediation, and these can be explored by looking at Roman Vlad's soundtracks.

Vlad combined his artistic practice with a commitment to musicological research, which led him to be involved in ethnomusicological debates of the time.<sup>4</sup> He was definitely familiar with the research of the main protagonists of Italian post-war ethnomusicology, as attested by his participation in the first Ethnomusicological Congress in Italy (Rome, 1973) and his contribution to the conference proceedings edited by Carpitella.<sup>5</sup> Vlad's interest in folk music emerged in his work on numerous occasions: the television-opera *La fantarca* (1966) and the soundtracks written for fiction films set in rural areas (e.g. *Scano Boa* by Renato Dall'Ara, 1961) or exotic places (e.g. *Die Herrin der Welt* by Wilhelm Dieterle, 1960) contain several references to folklore.<sup>6</sup> But it was especially during his work for documentaries that Vlad actively engaged with folk music. The following pages will reveal the strategies he adopted when scoring a short-film on the Arbëreshë communities in Southern Italy, and a feature-length documentary film on the life of people in 'exotic' regions of the world. Through audio-visual analysis and the study of archival documents, I will provide insights on the intersection between cinema and ethnomusicology, and on the composer's attitudes during his encounter with folk music.

### *ALBANESI IN ITALIA*

*Albanesi in Italia* [*Albanians in Italy*] (1957) is an eight-minute documentary by Alberto Pozzetti on the Albanian settlements in Southern Italy. The short film

concentrates on key moments in the history of the Arbëreshë people: the exodus of Albanians to Italy following the Turkish invasions of the fifteenth and the eighteenth century; the foundation of the Arbëreshë colonies; the development of a distinctive folklore; and the successful integration between Italians and the migrant communities. The images and the comments of the voice-over are accompanied by a symphonic score composed by Roman Vlad, with no 'intrusion' of sounds recorded in the field. This gives the impression of a conventional soundtrack. However, a different picture emerges from the study of the documents that attest to Vlad's compositional process.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, rather than writing a score comprised of generic musical themes that could vaguely support the verbal commentary, Vlad composed a soundtrack that was in some way 'ethnomusicologically informed'. This last point requires some elaboration.

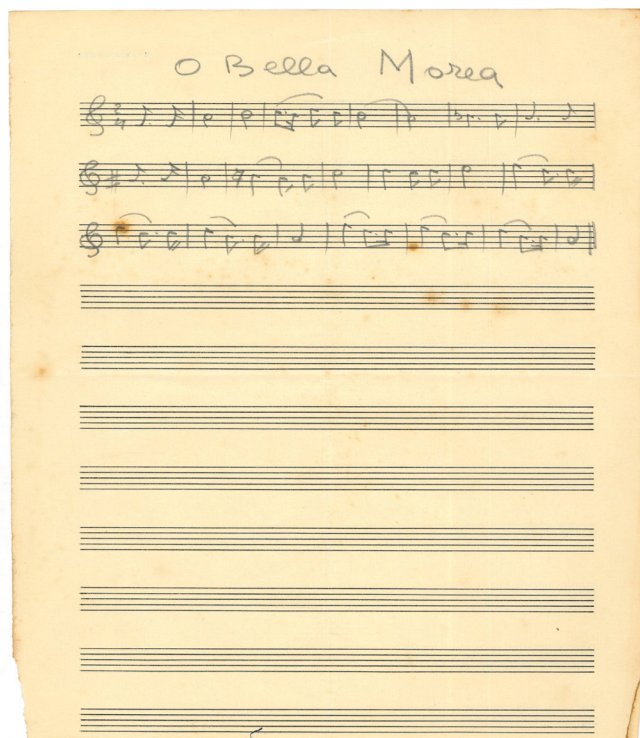
On 24 June 1954, an International Congress on Mediterranean Music (*Congresso internazionale di musica mediterranea*) took place in Piana degli Albanesi, Sicily. This was an important event, which saw the participation of famous ethnomusicologists and musicologists such as Constantin Brăiloiu, Giorgio Nataletti, Nino Pirrotta, Marius Schneider and Paolo Toschi.<sup>8</sup> While it is difficult to determine whether Vlad participated in the meeting in person, he certainly knew about it because he kept a copy of the congress pamphlet, which can be found among his documents related to the soundtrack of *Albanesi*. The four-page booklet contains information about the pontifical liturgy to which to the Arbëreshë religious tradition belongs, that of the Byzantine-Greek rite, which was celebrated in Piana degli Albanesi on the occasion of the conference. Unsurprisingly, the documentary also refers to this rite in one of its sequences. When working on *Albanesi*, Vlad also carried out some research on the musical and cultural traditions of the communities portrayed in the film.

In particular, such research was crucial for him to formulate the main theme of the soundtrack, which is derived from *O bella Morea* (original title: *O e bukura More*) [Oh my beautiful Morea]. This Arbëreshë song of lament refers to the Albanians' exile from Morea (i.e. Peloponnesus), a theme that perfectly matches the topic of the documentary; indeed, the first verses of *O e bukura More* are cited by the voice-over in the last sequence of the film (07:10):

*Oh my beautiful Morea  
 Since I left you, I never saw you again  
 There I have my father, there I have my mother, there I also have my brother<sup>9</sup>*

Vlad transcribed the tune on a piece of paper, but he did not cite its source (FIGURE 1). Ernesto De Martino, who from 12–23 April 1954 carried out an

FIGURE 1. *O bella Morea*, transcription. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad.



ethnographic expedition in Calabria with Carpitella, mentioned this song in a radiophonic programme that aired on 6 December 1954.<sup>10</sup> A performance of *O e bukura More* was also recorded by ethnomusicologist Ottavio Tiby in 1953 and was later included in *Raccolta 19* [Collection 19] of the CNSMP.<sup>11</sup> It may be important to note that Tiby was one of the speakers in the aforementioned congress.<sup>12</sup> Vlad was probably aware of his ethnomusicological research, and one should not exclude the hypothesis that he may have had access to Tiby's recording. Indeed, in spite of some simplifications that tend to normalise pitches and intervals, the transcribed melody shows a strong degree of similarity with the song in *Raccolta 19*. At any rate, Vlad was definitely interested in writing a soundtrack that took into account the musical tradition of the Arbëreshë communities, which he spent time to research. But how did he use the folkloric materials at his disposal?

The composer adopted *O e bukura More* as a *leitmotiv* in a five-part soundtrack, which accompanies the eight-minute documentary without interruption. The sections correspond to the five main sequences of the film itself (FIGURE 2), as evidenced by the composer's musical programme:

1. Opening titles (48'')
2. Stormy clouds; horse ride; fires; river flood; monument to Scanderbeg; exodus of the Albanians from their country to the sea and landing to the Italian shores (2'02'')
3. Italian land; villages that they founded; pan shot on Piana degli Albanesi (1'34'')
4. Wedding (2'38'')
5. Work in the fields; Albanians and the sound of the evening bells (1'10'')

A previous version of the programme (FIGURE 3), divided into seven parts, is more explicit in referring to the use of the folk motif and its connection to specific moods and scenes:

1. Opening titles (40'')
2. Cloudy sky and stormy sea (the Albanians flee and arrive to Italy) (1') – dramatic with reminiscences
3. Scanderbeg and waste lands to cultivate (1') – rhetoric, conformist
4. Communities of Albanians in Apulia, Lucania and Sicily (2') – generic with thematic Albanian reminiscences
5. Piana degli Albanesi: typical habits (the bride's clothing; wedding, according to the Greek rite) (3') – generic, Greek liturgy
6. Albanians cultivate the land [~~Singing group in costume~~] (1') no music
7. Italian-Albanians integration (1'20'') – generic, positive<sup>14</sup>

These programmes illustrate the two main roles of the music in *Albanesi*: to provide unity among the different sections, due to its uninterrupted flow and the iteration of the main theme derived from *O e bukura More*; and to serve as an agent that reinforces the narrative trajectory of the documentary – from the Albanians' tragic circumstances of exile, to their happy integration with the Italians – due to the alternation of different moods and the variations of the leitmotif itself. The opening titles solemnly articulate the first notes of the Arbëreshë song, which Vlad harmonises and orchestrates; the theme then acquires a dynamism in the following section, corresponding to the Albanians' difficult exodus (no. 2). The third part is a short melancholic *adagio* for strings, which is based on a reminiscence of the main theme; in this section camera pans and extreme long shots of the rural and mountainous landscapes of Apulia, Lucania and Sicily slowly unfold with the music. The fourth section is agogically similar to the third (as the pace of the montage is also similar), but it differs in orchestration and thematic materials: these are not derived from *O e bukura More*, but from a sacred chant of the Byzantine-Greek liturgy that has been rearranged here for strings and organ.<sup>15</sup> After this mystic *intermezzo*, the last sequence (no. 5) features a reprise of the main musical theme. This begins as a melancholic *adagio*, but towards the end it acquires energy and heroism, with bells and a glorious cadence that rhetorically validates the fusion between the Italians and Albanians.

FIGURE 2. Musical programme for *Albanesi in Italia*, typescript with annotations (detail). Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad.

ALBERTO POZZETTI

125" : 24 = 5.  
48" : 25 = 2"

Colonna ALBANESI IN ITALIA

- 1) Titoli mt. 28 48"
- 2) Nuvole tempestose, cavalcate, ~~incensata~~, piena di un fiume, monumento a Scanderbeg, esodo degli Albanesi dalla loro patria fino al mare e arrivo sulle coste italiane mt. ~~56~~ 115" 111"
- 3) Terra italiana, paesi da loro fondati, fino alla panoramica su Piana degli Albanesi mt. ~~43~~ 156" 134" 2'02"
- 4) Matrimonio mt. 72 2'38"
- 5) Lavoro nei campi fino ad Albanesi che si scoprono al suono della campana della sera mt. ~~32~~ 132" 1'10" 1/2

Titolo fine mt. 3 6 1/2"

*Durata degli albanesi scoperti mt. 3*  
*Da gli albanesi si scoprono fino alla fine del fotografico mt. 5 11"*

FIGURE 3. Musical programme for *Albanesi in Italia*, typescript with annotations (detail). Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad.

ALBANESI D'ITALIA

1) Titoli	40"	
2) Cielo nuvoloso e mare in burrasca (gli albanesi fuggono e arrivano in Italia)	1'	Drammatica con reminiscenze
3) Scanderberg e terre desolate da coltivare	1'	Retorica-conformista
4) Comunità albanesi in Puglia Lucania e Sicilia	2'	Generica con richiami tematici albanesi
5) Piana degli Albanesi: usi tipici (vestizione della sposa. Matrimonio di rito greco ecc.)	3'	Generica Liturgica-greca
6) <i>Albanesi: albanesi le loro</i> gruppi in costume che canta	1'	<u>Niente musica</u>
7) <i>Campolungo</i> Fusione italo-albanese	1'20"	Generica-positiva. = 2

With its sequence of passages that vary in mood (solemn introduction – *allegro* – *adagio* – *intermezzo* – heroic *finale*) yet follow a narrative arc and are connected by a type of 'idée fixe', the soundtrack achieves a structure that sounds similar to a symphonic poem. The orchestration itself is romantic in style and has nothing to do with folkloric instruments and voices (the text of the song has obviously been discarded). *O e bukura More*, then, becomes object appropriated by Vlad, who transforms its language in ways that render it able to be easily understood by the general audience of the time. Folk music evolves into a source of inspiration for the composer, who abandons his concern for an 'authentic' expression of the folk (evident in his thorough research on the Arbëreshë musical tradition) moving towards a more traditional style of film scoring, which does not call into question the dogmas of Western *musica culta*. The composer's *modus operandi* was similar in other works, such as the feature film *Scano Boa* (1961), a neorealist movie à la Giuseppe De Santis that used a melodic idea from a folk song of the Adriatic coast as a leitmotif.<sup>16</sup> However, Vlad did not always adopt the same approach to folkloric materials, as the case of his soundtrack for *Paradiso terrestre* will show.

### PARADISO TERRESTRE

Directed by Luciano Emmer and released in 1957, *Paradiso terrestre* [*Earthly Paradise*] is an 80-minute collage film coproduced with the French organisation *Connaissance du Monde*, which specialised in the subvention of documentaries from all over the world. The film provides an imaginary voyage through exotic, remote and pristine places across the globe, by assembling footage from nine reportages filmed by different troupes in Antarctica, Central Africa, Amazonia and several other locations in South America and Asia. Supposedly untouched by modernity, these 'authentic' places inhabited by wild animals and people living in a sort of state of nature are represented in their most curious aspects. The film shows, for instance, wedding ceremonies in North Cameroon, initiation rites in remote Amazonian villages, peasant communities growing rice in South Asia, the life of animals in Antarctica.

Post-war Italian audiences were fascinated by exotic subjects of this sort, and *Paradiso* was just one of a number of successful films focusing on distant and 'primitive' realities. 'Exotic films' like *Continente perduto* [*Lost Continent*] (1954) and *L'ultimo paradiso* [*The Last Paradise*] (1957) tended to sensationalise the non-Western Others by combining documentary and fiction, and by introducing technical innovations, such as the use of colour and stereophonic sound.<sup>17</sup> The presence of soundtracks that contained references to non-Western music just

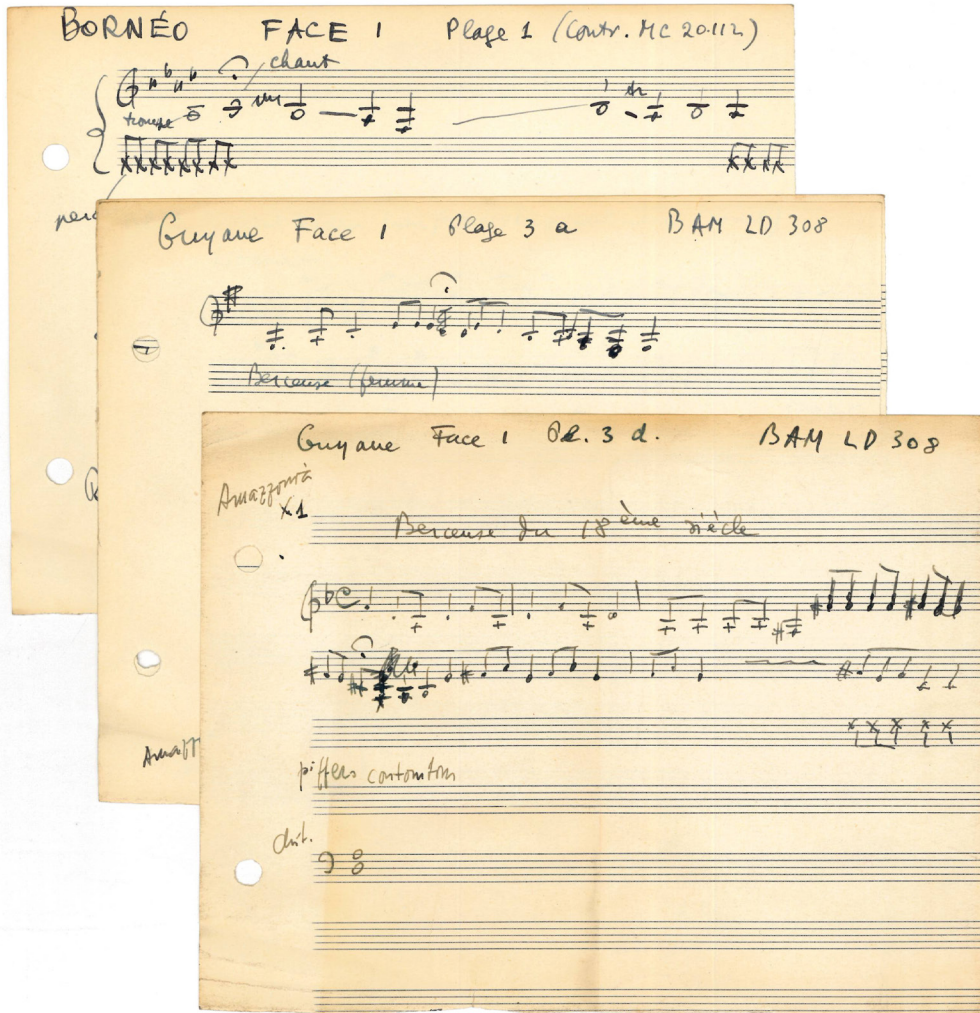
added to the spectacle of these imaginary wonder-rooms. Such references often included the use of stereotypical instrumental choices or rhythmic patterns, which provided the soundtracks with a generic ‘folkish feel’. In some cases, however, film music composers carried out research on pre-existing ethnomusicological recordings or bibliographic sources in order to offer more accurate references to the music of those represented. Roman Vlad’s soundtrack for *Paradiso* provides one such case in point. In the following pages, I will explore the strategies adopted by the composer to edit pre-existing folk music and mix it with original themes, and I will reflect on the extent of his engagement with the ethnomusicological repertoire. My audio-visual analysis is based on a rare copy of the film preserved at the CSC (Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Rome), and on documents on the soundtrack kept at the FRV and at the Biblioteca Chiarini (CSC).

The materials on *Paradiso* that can be found at FRV are surprisingly abundant; they enable us to observe the different stages of Vlad’s work and his evolving relationship with folk music. The composer kept (1) a notebook entitled ‘nastrini’, which provides a list of music and sound effects. By ‘nastrini’ Vlad refers to the numerous audio tapes that he probably received from the film’s producers, field recordings taken by the authors of the footage that made up *Paradiso*;<sup>18</sup> (2) documents for the SIAE (Italian Society of Authors and Publishers) and letters defining the contractual terms between him and the film’s producers; (3) a handwritten score with a number of annotations; (4) musical drafts; and (5) a small folder containing approximately thirty musical sheets, with notes on folk music to be used in the documentary. These notes – which I will call ‘the *vademecum*’ – are particularly interesting, because Vlad used them as a real ethnomusicological repertoire, from which to extract ideas when composing his own music. (6) In addition to this, a copy of the film script with Vlad’s handwritten comments (kept at the Biblioteca Chiarini) provides supplementary information about the composer’s work. It must be noted, however, that all the aforementioned documents provide an incomplete picture of a far more complex compositional process that involved non-written work and changes, which occurred especially during the final stages of recording and editing the soundtrack.

The *vademecum* is the most remarkable evidence of Vlad’s interest in folk music. Each sheet is the result of the composer’s research on non-Western folk music, which he carried out by examining bibliographic and discographic sources available at the time (FIGURE 4).<sup>19</sup> Vlad roughly transcribed more than thirty songs, motives and rhythmic patterns that he found in printed publications on folkloric music (e.g. *Choeurs de l’Afrique équatoriale*, edited by Eliane Barat-Pepper; *Mélodies tunisiennes*, edited by Rodolphe D’Erlanger) and LPs (e.g. *Musique populaire de Guyane*, an album by Francis Mazière; *Bornéo. Musique des chasseurs de têtes*,



FIGURE 4. Folk music transcriptions: sheets from the 'vademecum'. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad.



edited by Frantz Laforest *et al.*). Then, he selected the annotated music and used it disparately in film sequences featuring folk rituals, feasts, songs and dances.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Vlad used excerpts from the *vademecum* when the documentary seemed to require a touch of 'organic' diegetic music. He scored the other parts of the film – e.g. the opening titles, scenes of animals' life in Antarctica – in a more conventional style with completely invented material. On rare occasions, he also used ethnomusicological recordings in their original form.

When Vlad chose pre-existing melodies, he did not simply juxtapose them with the images; in most cases, he orchestrated and/or re-elaborated them, even if

the style he adopted in *Paradiso* was far from the late-romantic orchestral idiom that characterises *Albanesi*. FIGURES 5A, 5B and 5C show three of the pieces that Vlad selected from his *vademecum* to include in his draft of the soundtrack. Cue no. 3, *La carovana* [*The Caravan*] (at 01:53 in the film),<sup>21</sup> is based on a Tunisian hymn taken from the aforementioned collection by D'Erlanger. Vlad noted the instrumentation that he wanted to adopt in red: flute and guitar for the melody; tom-toms, drums and tambourine for the rhythmic accompaniment. The draft specifies that the 'African motif' should 'start with tom-toms, drums etc.', and then the melody should enter with a few instruments 'as if it was real'. A similar orchestration is indicated in cue no. 49, *Prima della cerimonia* [*Before the Ceremony*] (34:29). Cue no. 63, *Pestamento del riso* [*Threshing the rice*], is based on the second track – *Dayung* – of the LP *Bornéo. Musique des chasseurs de têtes*.<sup>22</sup> The melody in the original recording is sung by a male voice (in his *vademecum* Vlad annotates 'chant') accompanied by the pulse of a plucked rattan string. As can be heard in the film (47:09), Vlad transcribed the melody for flute and superimposed it with a new rhythm played by drums and string instruments (mandola and mandolincello).

FIGURES 5A, 5B, 5C. Music for *Albanesi in Italia*, draft. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad.

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation on aged paper. At the top left, it is titled 'III. LA CAROVANA' with a large curly brace on the left side. The main body of the page consists of several staves of musical notation. A rectangular piece of paper is pasted onto the middle of the page, containing a handwritten manuscript. This pasted-in manuscript is titled 'TUNISIE BN d'Erlanger' and includes the text 'L'Hyane à la maine (tradition arabesque)'. It features a tempo marking '♩ = 96', a key signature of one flat, and a 2/4 time signature. The notation includes a melody line and a rhythmic accompaniment line with various notes and rests. Red ink annotations are present throughout the page, including 'Fl. e Clarinete', 'Tambourin Grande', 'Rabouze', 'Pelle 3', 'Pelle 2', 'Pelle 1', 'Pelle 4', 'Pelle 5', 'Pelle 6', 'Pelle 7', 'Pelle 8', 'Pelle 9', 'Pelle 10', 'Pelle 11', 'Pelle 12', 'Pelle 13', 'Pelle 14', 'Pelle 15', 'Pelle 16', 'Pelle 17', 'Pelle 18', 'Pelle 19', 'Pelle 20', 'Pelle 21', 'Pelle 22', 'Pelle 23', 'Pelle 24', 'Pelle 25', 'Pelle 26', 'Pelle 27', 'Pelle 28', 'Pelle 29', 'Pelle 30', 'Pelle 31', 'Pelle 32', 'Pelle 33', 'Pelle 34', 'Pelle 35', 'Pelle 36', 'Pelle 37', 'Pelle 38', 'Pelle 39', 'Pelle 40', 'Pelle 41', 'Pelle 42', 'Pelle 43', 'Pelle 44', 'Pelle 45', 'Pelle 46', 'Pelle 47', 'Pelle 48', 'Pelle 49', 'Pelle 50', 'Pelle 51', 'Pelle 52', 'Pelle 53', 'Pelle 54', 'Pelle 55', 'Pelle 56', 'Pelle 57', 'Pelle 58', 'Pelle 59', 'Pelle 60', 'Pelle 61', 'Pelle 62', 'Pelle 63', 'Pelle 64', 'Pelle 65', 'Pelle 66', 'Pelle 67', 'Pelle 68', 'Pelle 69', 'Pelle 70', 'Pelle 71', 'Pelle 72', 'Pelle 73', 'Pelle 74', 'Pelle 75', 'Pelle 76', 'Pelle 77', 'Pelle 78', 'Pelle 79', 'Pelle 80', 'Pelle 81', 'Pelle 82', 'Pelle 83', 'Pelle 84', 'Pelle 85', 'Pelle 86', 'Pelle 87', 'Pelle 88', 'Pelle 89', 'Pelle 90', 'Pelle 91', 'Pelle 92', 'Pelle 93', 'Pelle 94', 'Pelle 95', 'Pelle 96', 'Pelle 97', 'Pelle 98', 'Pelle 99', 'Pelle 100'. At the bottom right of the page, the number '18' is written in red ink.

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PRIMA DELLA CERIMONIA

Guynane Face No 3 BAH LD 308

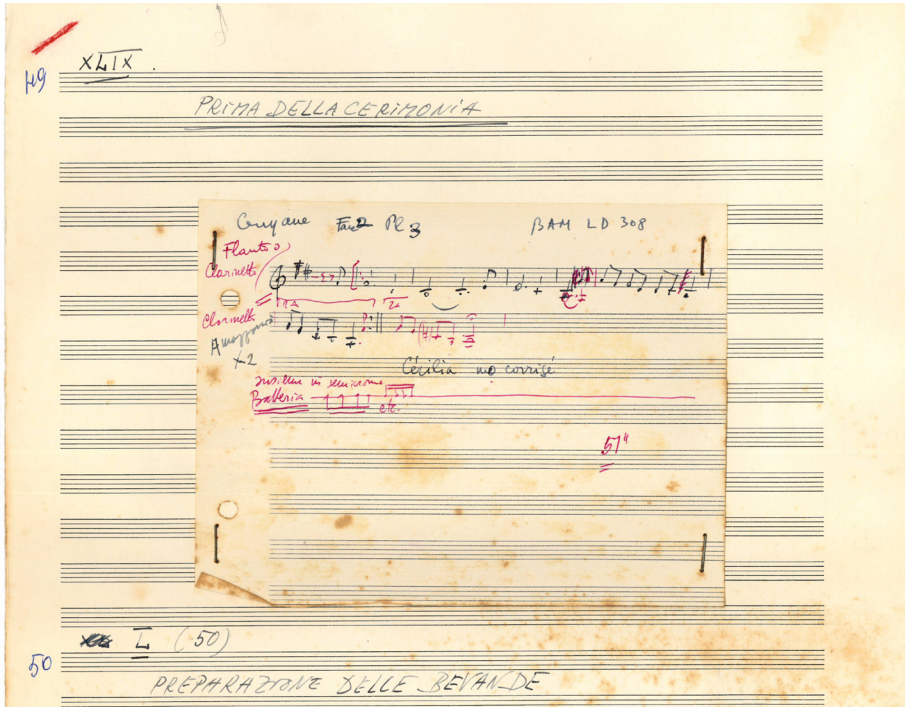
Flauto  
Clarinetti  
Clarinetti  
Fagotto  
Batteria

per il film in occasione  
Cecilia no corra

51'

50 L (50)

PREPARAZIONE DELLE BEVANDE



63 LXIII

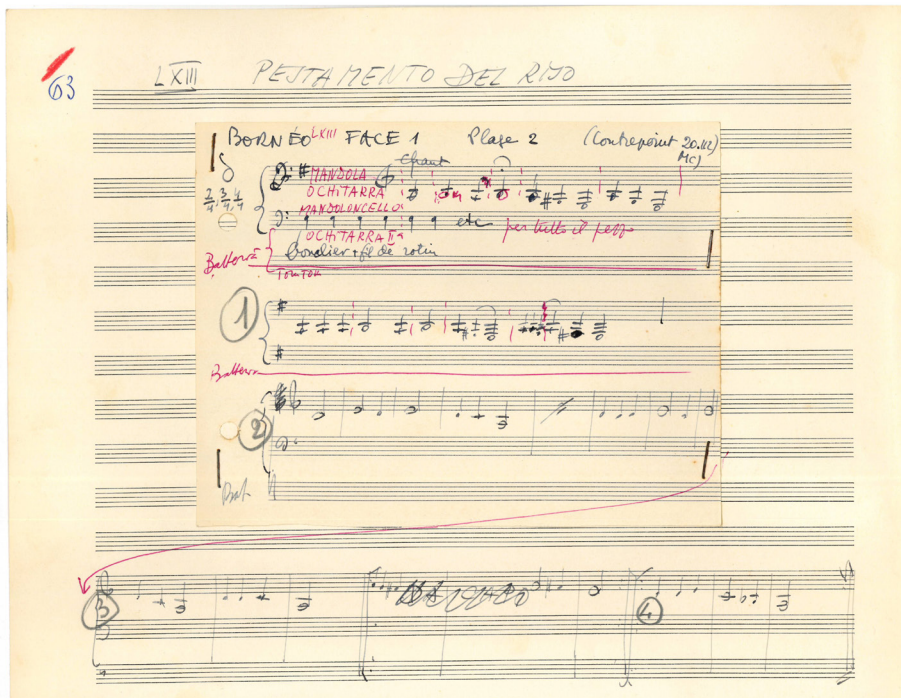
PESTAMENTO DEL RISO

BORN EO LXIII FACE 1 Plate 2 (Cochepout 20.02 Ric)

chant  
# HANZOLA  
# OCHITARRA  
# MANZOLUNCCELLI  
# OCHITARRA B  
Batteria  
Tambor

etc per batti et ferra

1  
2  
3  
4



The composer displayed a general preference for flutes, clarinets, guitars, mandolins and mandolons, tom-toms, gongs and drums; all instruments which are not completely extraneous to the western musical tradition but at the same time evoke, with a certain degree of approximation, the sounds that Vlad himself likely heard in the ethnomusicological recordings that were available to him.<sup>23</sup> In some cases, he opted for non-conventional solutions in order to enhance the impression of ‘authentic’ folk music. For instance, the handwritten score specifies that the guitar in cue no. 40 *Motivo lontano* [*Distant motif*] (24:28) should be tuned with F a quarter tone higher and B a quarter tone lower, presumably to approximate the Tunisian *maqam*. The drums that provide the rhythmic accompaniment in no. 46 *Pezzo eroico* [*Heroic piece*] (32:51) should be off-key and covered with a cloth. The harp in no. 62 *Tema del viaggio* [*Journey theme*] (46:11) should be ‘played with wooden drumsticks’ and its strings should ‘not be tempered’.

In rare cases, Vlad chose to use original field recordings in the soundtrack without modifying them. Sometimes he extracted the music from published ethnomusicological albums. For instance, a song for female voice (*Sur un cheval*) recorded by Serge Bourguignon and included in his LP *Musique tibétaine du Sikkim* (side 1, track 6)<sup>24</sup> resonates during one of the Himalayan sequences of the film (40:10). In other cases, Vlad used the music from the ‘nastrini’ provided by the producers: the list of ‘music and sound effects’ mentions a ‘dance’ recorded in North Cameroon that could be used ‘in the third reel’,<sup>25</sup> which indeed corresponds to a part of the film featuring African dances (23:04). Here Vlad probably did not rework the original recording, even if the annotated script refers to the addition of ‘ratchets in sync with wirling female dancers’, a Mickey Mousing effect that is, in fact, not present in the final soundtrack.

Admittedly, it is often difficult to pinpoint the precise usage of original folk songs, both whether and where they were deployed. On the one hand, this is because we lack documents reporting a clear outline of the finalised soundtrack; but it is also because Vlad’s creative work tended towards a certain degree of ‘inaudibility’ (i.e. he tried to camouflage his voice with the one of the folk). However, the draft of the musical programme that Vlad prepared for the SIAE can provide some important evidence (FIGURES 6A, 6B). Indeed, the document includes generic references to ‘original songs and instruments’, even if these were often mixed with Vlad’s own musical additions.

Why did the composer opt for an ‘invasive’ approach, which often implied the re-elaboration of pre-existing materials, rather than curating a soundtrack that was fully comprised of original folk songs?<sup>26</sup> This choice likely depended on a number of factors: first, ethnomusicological recordings may not have always been readily available, and it is likely that for Vlad and Emmer their quality did not always

FIGURE 6A. Musical programme of *Paradiso* for the SIAE, p. 1, draft. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad. The second line reports the generic definition of 'Songs and Dances', with no indication of the authors/recordists. I interpret 'N.N.' as 'non noto' [not known] or 'nessun nome' [no name]; P.D. means 'pubblico dominio' ['public domain': no royalties to be paid].

**SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DEGLI AUTORI ED EDITORI (S. I. A. E.)** 601  
 DIREZIONE GENERALE - ROMA - VIA E. GIANTURCO, 2  
 SEZIONE MUSICA

**PROGRAMMA MUSICALE DI FILM SONORO**

TITOLO: ITALIANO PARADISO TERRESTRE ..... ORIGINALE .....  
(PER FILM DI PRODUZIONE STRANIERA)  
 GENERE Documentario ..... LUNGHEZZA 2400 ..... DURATA MUS. 3105 ..... ANNO DI PROD. 1957 .....  
(IN METRI) (IN MINUTI SECONDI)  
 NULLA-OSTA PRES. CONS. MIN.: N° ..... DATA .....  
 PRODUTTORE NORIA-FILM ..... CONCESSIONARIO .....  
(PER FILM DI PRODUZIONE STRANIERA)  
 DISTRIBUTORE PER L'ITALIA CEI INCOM ..... INDIRIZZO Via di Villa Patrizi, 10 .....  
 PRIMA PROIEZ. IN ITALIA: DATA 16 Agosto 1957 LOCALE LUX ..... LOCALITÀ TORINO .....  
 NOTIZIE RELATIVE AL FILM - AUTORI: DEL SOGG. Luciano Emmer ; DELLA SCENEGG. Luciano Emmer ;  
 DELLA MUSICA Roman Vlad ; DIRET. ART. (REGISTA) Luciano Emmer ;  
 BREVI CENNI SUL SOGGETTO E INTERPRETI Documentario = .....

VI FU SOSTITUZIONE, AGGIUNTA O SOPPRESSIONE DI MUSICA? ..... PER QUALE RAGIONE? .....

DOCUMENTAZIONE RELATIVA .....

N° SEQUENZE MUSICALI NELLE SCENE	TITOLI DELLE COMPOSIZIONI MUSICALI DI COMMENTO AL FILM RIFERITI ALLE SINGOLE SCENE	COMPOSITORE <small>(ED EVENTUALE ELABORATORE PER LE SOLE COMPOSIZIONI DI P. D.)</small>	EDITORE	DURATA IN SECONDI	GENERE DI UTILIZZAZIONE DELLA MUSICA <small>(DI FONDO, VOCALE, STRUMENTALE, VISIBILE SULLO SCHERMO)</small>
1	PARADISO TERRESTRE	Roman Vlad		2750	
2	DANZE E CANTI	N.N.	P.D.	355	

DATA: .....

IL RESPONSABILE DELLA SINCRONIZZAZIONE  
Roman Vlad  
(FIRMA LEGGIBILE)  
XXIV Maggio 57 Roma  
(INDIRIZZO)

IL PRODUTTORE  
**NORIA-FILM** (ANIERO)  
 Il Consiglio d'Amministrazione  
Dezani G. G.  
(FIRMA LEGGIBILE)  
**NORIA-FILM**  
(INDIRIZZO)  
 Via A. Cesareo, 1/A

NOTA - L'ARTICOLO 81 DEL R. D. 1561/1948 N. 1869 (REGOLAMENTO PER L'ESECUZIONE DELLA LEGGE 22/1/1941 N. 639 PER LA PROTEZIONE DEL DIRITTO D'AUTORE) STABILISCE CHE IL PRODUTTORE O IL CONCESSIONARIO, PER LE PELLICOLE ORIGINARIAMENTE DI PRODUZIONE STRANIERA - HA L'OBBLIGO DI COMUNICARE ALLA S. I. A. E., AL MOMENTO DELLA PRIMA PROGRAMMAZIONE, L'ELENCO DI OGNI COMPOSIZIONE MUSICALE REGISTRATA SULLA PELLICOLA.

FIGURE 6B. Musical programme of *Paradiso* for the SIAE, p. 4, draft. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad. The highlighted parts mean: (1) 'Flute. Religious ceremony (Folk theme – in part)'. This note refers to the sequence representing the 'Marake Ceremony' in Tumuc-Humac (34:29). Vlad based his cue on an original motif for flute that can be heard on track B14 (*Flûte d'amour*) from the LP *Tumuc Humac. Musique de la Haute Forêt Amazonienne* (recorded by Francis Mazière, BAM LD 314, 1953; the motif is introduced in sync with images of a flutist). The original music was mixed with other melodic ideas and a number of rhythmic patterns of the percussions, so as to create a tailored effect of *crescendo* on the increasing tension of the represented ceremony; (2) 'Himalaya. Folk [song]'; (3) 'Folk flute – real'; (4) 'drums + original song'. This note refers to the cue *Pestamento del riso*.

**SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DEGLI AUTORI ED EDITORI (S. I. A. E.)**  
 DIREZIONE GENERALE - ROMA - VIA E. GIANTURCO, 2  
 SEZIONE MUSICA

601

**PROGRAMMA MUSICALE DI FILM SONORO**

TITOLO \_\_\_\_\_

GENERE \_\_\_\_\_ LUNGHEZZA \_\_\_\_\_ DURATA MUS. \_\_\_\_\_ ANNO DI PROD. \_\_\_\_\_  
(FILM - DOCUMENTARIO - ATTUALITÀ - CARTONE ANIMATO - PUBBLICITARIO) (IN METRI) (IN MINUTI SECONDI)

PRODUTTORE \_\_\_\_\_ CONCESSIONARIO \_\_\_\_\_  
(PER FILM DI PRODUZIONE STRANIERA)

DISTRIBUTORE \_\_\_\_\_ REALIZZATORE \_\_\_\_\_

INTERPRETI \_\_\_\_\_

N° ORDINE	TITOLO DELLE COMPOSIZIONI MUSICALI DI COMMENTO AL FILM	COMPOSITORE <small>(O EVENTUALE ELABORATORE PER LE SOLTE COMPOSIZIONI DI R. S.)</small>	EDITORE	DURATA IN SECONDI	GENERE DI UTILIZZA- ZIONE DELLA MUSICA <small>(SE PRIMO PIANO, SIM- FONICO, VISIBILE SULLO SCHERMO)</small>
24	Rito Concerto Annapurna			65"	
2	"			45"	1'
3	Balleri			50"	
4	flauti festa relig. proin (tema folklor. a festa)			*15 minuti	
1	Himalaya	V e VI Indra		58"	
2	Indra elefanti	Indra		30" mus	
3	Cangone	Cangone		1'10" total	
4	musica ad acqua indocinesi			60"	
5	57 organo e flauti			4'10"	
6	Balleri e canto originale			*4 1'40"	
7	bagno di fiume	62		2	
8	ballerini e scampanti festa relig. canese			0'30"	
9	flauti vero folklor *	69		65"	
10	Xeofoni e tamburi del Duffalo			45"	
11	flauti vero			1'10"	

FIRMA DEL RESPONSABILE DELLA SINCRONIZZAZIONE \_\_\_\_\_

FIRMA DEL PRODUTTORE O DEL CONCESSIONARIO PER I FILM DI ORIGINE STRANIERA \_\_\_\_\_

Totale 45" 15' 5" + 2'50" 305-60

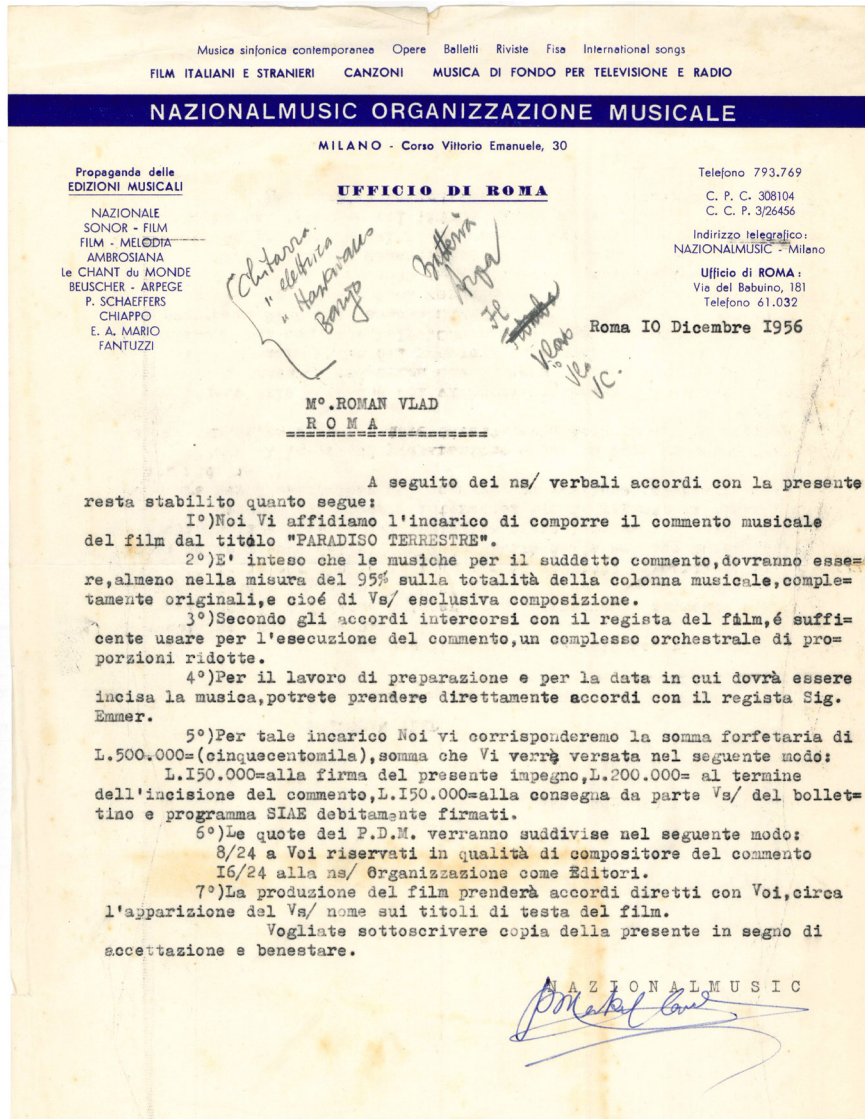
NOTA - L'ARTICOLO 51 DEL R. D. 10/1/1942 N. 1869 (REGOLAMENTO PER L'ESECUZIONE DELLA LEGGE 22/1/1941 N. 833 PER LA PROTEZIONE DEL DIRITTO D'AUTORE) STABILISCE CHE IL PRODUTTORE O IL CONCESSIONARIO, PER LE PELLICOLE ORIGINALMENTE DI PRODUZIONE STRANIERA HA L'OBBLIGO DI COMUNICARE ALLA S. I. A. E. AL MOMENTO DELLA PRIMA PROGRAMMAZIONE, L'ELENCO DI OGNI COMPOSIZIONE MUSICALE REGISTRATA SULLA PELLICOLA

meet the requirements of a film destined for a wide audience. Also, using pre-existing recordings would have implied extra costs for the film's producers, who in some cases would have had to pay royalties on the music.<sup>27</sup> Second, and more importantly, Vlad's contract explicitly stated that the majority of the music should be 'completely original, i.e. of Your exclusive composition, for a minimum of 95% of the total of the soundtrack' (FIGURE 7). This obviously forced him to invent brand new pieces, or rework most of the original tunes, rather than preparing a 'compiled' soundtrack. But the terms of Vlad's contract entail a more fundamental question: for the film's producers, why would composed music be preferable to 'authentic' voices and sounds? Why was Vlad's intervention deemed necessary in the first place? Was the contribution of a renowned composer simply a matter of prestige? Or could we advance the hypothesis that the film's producers, the popular audience of the time, and perhaps even Vlad himself, heard the folkloric Others from an ethnocentric standpoint, and thus felt the need to domesticate their voices?

In order to explore the ethnocentric hypothesis, I shall examine how Vlad combined the 'adapted' music with the various sequences of the documentary. The composer tried to ensure some coherence between the geographical provenance of the revisited tunes and the locations shown in the film. For instance, Vlad used a melody entitled *Oubangui* (for flute), taken from Barat-Pepper's collection on Equatorial Africa,<sup>28</sup> to introduce a scene set in Cameroon (19:43). Similarly, the music chosen to accompany the initiation ritual of the Wayana tribe in the Amazonas (34:29) was based on a melody coming from Mazière's recordings in Tumuc Humac. Nevertheless, sometimes such correlations were quite generic, as evidenced by the aforementioned cue no. 3: a piece based on a Tunisian tune that was used to score images of caravans in the Tibesti region (01:55). An interchangeable and stereotypical idea of Africa, and African music, seems to emerge in this case.

Moreover, Vlad's editing of original tunes sometimes works hand-in-hand with the commentary of the voice-over, which exudes Orientalism throughout the whole film. This point is well epitomised by the sequence set in North Cameroon (19:43), when the film presents a young couple described as 'Black Adam and Eve'. Adam is playing a simple melody on the flute, while Eve runs towards him: 'Here is Black Eve – explains the voice-over –, who runs as if enchanted towards the man and obeys to his call [...]. The music attracts her [...]. It is a monotonous music, but not even stones could resist it'. Then we see the naked body of the woman, in front of the man who keeps playing and seduces her. She smiles: 'What does the music say? Words that the man could not pronounce. Ancient, very ancient. Words of a man to a woman. My name is Ousi, his eyes say. I am Komara, she

FIGURE 7. Letter from Nazionalmusic Organizzazione Musicale to Roman Vlad, 10 December 1956. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad.



responds without speaking. [...] They are now promised to each other'. Images of a man who plays percussion instruments follow: the sound he produces becomes a way to communicate the news of the engagement to the other members of his tribe. Songs in the air celebrate the love between Adam and Eve, while the voice-over describes the scene using a number of trite *clichés* on folk music: monotonous, irresistible, ancient, simple and sensual. Vlad employed music from the 'nastrini'



here, but the original recordings were edited so as to perfectly match the three moments of the 'exotic love story' presented in the script. Two different motifs for guitar respectively characterise Eve's enchantment (20:40) and Adam's seduction (21:25), followed by a song accompanied by drums that plays in correspondence with the scene depicting the news of Adam and Eve's love spreading across the vast spaces of Africa (22:12). A number of shots showing African people playing the instruments we hear in the soundtrack reinforce the connection between the original music and the fictional content of the scene. In this way, the folk music is *re-semanticised* and used to support the Orientalist fantasy of a primordial love. An Orientalist approach seems to inform the concept of *Paradiso* to the core; an aspect that clearly emerges from the film's title itself, and that was effectively epitomised by one critic of the time, who stated: '[the film is based] on the bucolic concept that life would be much happier if men would wander without shoes and women without bra'. Even the sleeve of the LP derived from the soundtrack exudes Orientalism (FIGURE 8).<sup>29</sup>

FIGURE 8. *Paradis terrestres* (LP), Ducretet Thomson, 250 V 058, 1959.



As for the actual use of the music in the film, my analysis suggests that various tensions informed Vlad's work: on the one hand, he thoroughly engaged with ethnographic sources and sometimes sought to preserve the sound of pre-existing folk music and its referential – if rather generic – link with the setting of the film. Vlad tried to assimilate non-Western musical languages by adopting rhythmical patterns and instrumentation that approximated what he could hear in the 'nastrini' and in published ethnomusicological recordings. In doing so, he called into question long-established dogmas of Western music and forced the present conventions of film scoring, thus preparing the way for an encounter and exchange with the musical other. On the other hand, Vlad often hid the (inevitable) process of transformation that the non-western musical sources in his soundtrack underwent, making his folk-like 'reinventions' somehow transparent ('as if it was real'). This approach was contrary to the potential for a critical reflection of the Western composer's position in the cultural encounter triggered by the cinematic remediation of non-Western voices. Moreover, in editing the original tunes, Vlad often charged them with semantic values that were familiar and 'palatable' to the Italian audience of his time, a practice that went hand-in-hand with the stereotypical, ethnocentric comment of the voice-over.

In 'Fine dell'esotismo', Gianmario Borio reflects on the relationship between avant-garde composers, ethnography and the cultural (and musical) Other.<sup>30</sup> 'Whereas the exotic had previously provided a setting of tokens or indicated a specific semantic sphere (the savage, the barbaric, etc.) – notes Borio – now [in the twentieth century] this alien element could be incorporated for its own sake. It became part of the material available to the composers', and it helped to relativise, interrogate and redefine the basic compositional parameters of Western music. The nineteenth-century paradigm of exoticism was called into question. 'However, the end of exoticism in music was not marked by a clean break. It was a discontinuous process'.<sup>31</sup> Discontinuity entailed tensions, contradictions and detours, as is apparent in the soundtracks that I have considered. The degree of Vlad's engagement with ethnomusicological sources was different in *Albanesi* and *Paradiso*. In the first case, the soundtrack did not feature any 'original' sounds, but only a 'free' development of a melodic idea derived from an Arbëreshë song, a signifier of 'local color' used as an *idée fixe* in a sort of Romantic symphonic poem. *Paradiso* showed a more nuanced engagement with the musical Other, triggering a stronger – if not unambiguous – dialectic with non-Western music. Composed around the same time, the soundtracks of *Albanesi* and *Paradiso* are thus telling of the complexities of the process of encounter, selective assimilation, rejection, exoticisation and remediation of the Other, tensions that in all likelihood informed post-war Italian culture at a broader level.

## Notes

- 1 *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935*, ed. by David Forgacs, New York: NYU Press, 2000, p. 360.
- 2 From 1952, Carpitella participated in the ethnological team expeditions organised by De Martino to Basilicata, Calabria and Apulia, where he recorded and studied folk songs connected with traditional rites and moments of daily life. In 1953, Carpitella met Lomax, who, since 1950 had travelled throughout Europe to complete his project of LPs for *The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music*. In 1954, they embarked on a long journey across Italy, back and forth between South and North, recording thousands of folk songs. This expedition, organised with the help of the recently established Centro Nazionale di Studi di Musica Popolare [National Centre for the Study of Folk Music] (CNSMP) and the Italian National Television network (RAI), made it possible to extensively map Italian musical folklore for the first time, igniting interest in this extremely diverse repertoire.
- 3 Cesare Zavattini, 'Some Ideas on the Cinema', *Sight and Sound*, October 1953, pp. 64–69 (originally published as 'Alcune idee sul cinema', *La rivista del cinema italiano*, 2, December 1952).
- 4 In his autobiography, Vlad explained that his exposure to folk music dated back to his childhood in Vășcăuți (Romania), and he became increasingly interested in this repertoire when he got acquainted with the work of such composers as Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. See Roman Vlad, *Vivere la musica. Un racconto autobiografico*, Torino: Einaudi, 2011.
- 5 Roman Vlad, 'Tradizione orale e pratica musicale culta', in: *Letnomusicologia in Italia*, a cura di Diego Carpitella, Palermo: Flaccovio, 1975, pp. 85–96. Vlad became member of the Italian Society of Ethnomusicology, as attested by some letters kept at the Fondo Roman Vlad, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venezia (henceforth FRV). Vlad was also the coordinator of a roundtable on the relationship between Western music and extra-European civilisations at the 34<sup>th</sup> Maggio Musicale Fiorentino (*La musica occidentale e le civiltà musicali extraeuropee: atti della Tavola rotonda organizzata in occasione del 34. Maggio musicale fiorentino*, a cura di Stelio Felici, Firenze: Ente autonomo del Teatro comunale, 1971).
- 6 On *La fantarca*, see Vlad's televised introduction to the opera (1968); see also Maurizio Corbella, *Musica elettroacustica e cinema in Italia negli anni Sessanta*, Doctoral Dissertation in History and Criticism of Environmental and Artistic Heritage, University of Milano, 2010, 262 pp.: 76, and Joanna Helms, 'Telecoms, spaceship doors and singing animals: *La Fantarca* and Roman Vlad's electronic music', *Archival Notes. Sources and Research from the Institute of Music*, 4, 2019, pp. 1–15.
- 7 The archival documents I will cite in this section are kept at the FRV, and indexed as *Colonie Albanesi in Italia*.
- 8 See *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Musica Mediterranea e del Convegno dei Bibliotecari Musicali* (Palermo 26–30 giugno 1954), Palermo: s.n., 1959.
- 9 Text taken from *Musica arberëshe in Calabria. Le registrazioni di Diego Carpitella ed Ernesto De Martino (1954)*, a cura di Antonello Ricci e Roberta Tucci, Roma: Squilibri, 2006, p. 175 (my translation).
- 10 Ricci and Tucci, *Musica arberëshe in Calabria*, pp. 7 and 175–186.
- 11 See *Folk. Documenti sonori. Catalogo informativo delle registrazioni musicali originali*, Torino: Rai ERI, 1977, p. 409. The recording is available online, on the Rai Teche website: Archivio del Folklore Italiano, Sicilia, Palermo (track 114).
- 12 Title of his paper: 'La tradizione del Canto popolare in Sicilia e nelle Regioni Mediterranee'.

- 13 Typed document kept at the FRV.
- 14 Handwritten leaflet kept at the FRV.
- 15 See Girolamo Garofalo, 'I canti bizantini degli Arbëresh di Sicilia. Le registrazioni di Ottavio Tiby (Piana degli Albanesi 1952–53) e l'odierna tradizione', *EM. Rivista degli Archivi di Etnomusicologia dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia*, II/2, 2006, pp. 11–65.
- 16 Vlad's drafts are kept at the FRV.
- 17 See Alberto Farassino and Roberto Nepoti, 'L'età d'oro del documentario', in: *Storia del cinema italiano. Scuola Nazionale di Cinema. Vol. 9, 1954/1959*, Venezia: Marsilio, 2004, pp. 185–194: 191.
- 18 The list is organised in sections that correspond to the geographical locations where the original films, later edited by Emmer, were shot.
- 19 From the bibliographic references reported on the sheets (which are in Vlad's handwriting), it seems that the composer carried out part of his research at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. He obviously focused on repertoires that could be linked to the geographical locations of the various scenes of *Paradiso terrestre*.
- 20 The sheets from the *vademecum* that he finally used in the soundtrack are stapled to the manuscript score.
- 21 This and the other indications of time are based on the video kept at the CSC.
- 22 Contrepoint, MC 20.112, 1954.
- 23 Vlad used a very similar instrumentation for the 'exotic sequences' in *Herrin der Welt* [*Mistress of the World*] (Wilhelm Dieterle, 1960), a fiction film that perfectly embodies a number of orientalist clichés. See, for instance, cue no. 20 *Dawn in Bangkok*, whose instrumentation includes chinese gongs, guitars, mandolins, exotic flutes, small clarinets and harps. The score of this movie can be found at the Vlad Archive in Venice.
- 24 Contrepoint, MC 20.119, 1955.
- 25 See the 'nastrini' notebook, p. 17.
- 26 This choice was consistent with the standard practice of documentary scoring of the time. Carpitella and Clara Gallini famously criticised the use of invasive voice-over commentary and newly composed scores in the soundtracks of Italian ethnographic films. See Diego Carpitella ('Pratica e teoria nel film etnografico italiano: prime osservazioni') and Clara Gallini ('Il documentario etnografico "demartiniano"'), *La ricerca folklorica*, 3, April 1981 (special issue: *Antropologia visiva. Il cinema*), pp. 5–22 and 23–31.
- 27 As I have shown, the film includes tracks from published ethnomusicological LPs, but these sources are not cited in the programme for the SIAE. Even if the SIAE considered folk music to be in the 'public domain', royalties should have been paid to the editors and publishers of the ethnomusicological LPs whose excerpts were used in *Paradiso*.
- 28 Eliane Barat-Pepper, *Choeurs de l'Afrique équatoriale*, Paris: H. Lemoine, 1950.
- 29 The LP *Paradis Terrestres* was released in 1959 (Ducretet Thomson, 250 V 058).
- 30 Gianmario Borio, 'Fine dell'esotismo: l'infiltrazione dell'Altro nella musica d'arte dell'Occidente', in: *L'etnomusicologia e le musiche contemporanee* (Seminario internazionale di studi 2007), a cura di Francesco Giannattasio e Serena Facci, Venezia: Fondazione Cini, 2009.
- 31 These excerpts come from Borio's own English translation of his paper, as presented at the Columbia University's Italian Academy in 2013. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmShmp2vnTI> [5 March 2022].

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