

# Rendering Voices Independent: Dramaturgy and Text-Music Relationship in Fausto Razzi's *Smorfie* and *Sogni*

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## 1. COMPOSITIONAL GENESIS AND CHARACTERISTICS: OF GRIMACES AND DREAMS

It was once again Edoardo Sanguineti (1930–2010) who inspired Fausto Razzi (1932–2022) to write a new music-theatre work. Having already drawn on a pre-existing work by Sanguineti for the ‘azione scenica [dramatic action]’ *Protocolli* (1989–1992; rev. 2018), Razzi took the same approach for the one-hour long azione scenica, *Smorfie* (1997).<sup>1</sup> Both times he adopted the titles of the reference works. Razzi recently gave *Smorfie* a thorough overhaul, changing the title to *Sogni* (2021). The title *Smorfie* refers to the Neapolitan popular tradition to link topics of dreams to numbers people then play in the lotto, so the connection with the new title, *Sogni* (dreams), is obvious. The term ‘smorfie’ of the original title, meaning ‘grimace’, or scoffing ‘face’, already plays with references and contains multiple, also irreverent, meanings.

Sanguineti's *Smorfie*, published with surrealistic drawings by Tommaso Cascella illustrating the oneiric text on facing pages,<sup>2</sup> is conceived as a kind of tale by a narrating self between prose and poem (its structure resembles verses

and strophes). The text of Razzi's version, *Sogni*, differs from the poet's original due to changes the composer made for the dramaturgical realisation of the music, consisting of the elimination of passages, sequence inversion of episodes, and substitution of single words. It goes without saying that words and verses are repeated, fragmented, turned around, and finally, juxtaposed.

Razzi's approach to musical theatre was at once subtle and radical. Of great prominence is the sound of words in their vocal realization along with the sound of musical instruments, up to the finest detail. In both versions, *Smorfie* and *Sogni*, the voices of actors and singers carry same weight. The radicality lies in concentrating the drama in a flow of sound cores. Razzi is interested in the autonomous poetic nature of the dramatic text, far removed from any kind of narration. In his music theatre, he dispenses with both stories and characters. *Smorfie/Sogni* is characterised by a sound intrinsic music-dramaturgy that is not aimed at a traditional theatre stage. Just as in very early music theatre, it is rather well suited for tinier, more intimate spaces. *Smorfie* is indeed conceived for a small vocal and instrumental ensemble consisting of a singer with a 'medium/dark voice', two actors, 'A' with a clear voice and 'B' with a dark voice, violin, flute and piano. The ensemble is underpinned by an audio tape with a recorded, multiplied 'dark voice',<sup>3</sup> the output of which would be placed behind the audience, while performing voices and instruments would be amplified through speakers placed in front of the audience. In Razzi's revision, *Sogni*, the electronic part is omitted, while the singer's voice is expected to be soprano. Other significant changes were applied to single parts of the work. Accomplished shortly before he passed away in 2022, performances of *Smorfie* took place in various places and occasions between 1997 and 1999.<sup>4</sup> *Sogni* was premiered at the Galleria Doria Pamphilij in Rome on 8 July 2022.

If the independence of individual voices was already of great importance in *Smorfie*, by the will of the composer, it becomes fundamental in *Sogni*:

The need for a new version of *Smorfie* stems from one consideration: in a stable ensemble (such as a string quartet), the necessary, long-standing habit of working together allows each of the performers to keep the autonomous characteristics – the 'personality' – of their own intervention intact without, however, disregarding the evaluation of their 'weight' in the overall discourse. [...] This new version of *Smorfie* differs from its previous one in that the voices and instruments are conceived as totally autonomous – and independent – elements [...]: each intervention must therefore be carried out with the freedom and flexibility of progression normally reserved for a 'solo'.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, in the same preface, Razzi describes the discrete attitude expected

from the conductor – another argument in favour of increased authenticity, attentiveness and humbleness in playing together. The conductor is asked to reduce the amplitude of his gesture to just enough to communicate it to the performers, and delicate enough to be invisible to the audience. Concerning agogics, which is also a major issue in Razzi's writings on the performance of early music, he becomes explicit in stating that, as for the conductor's task, 'it is extremely important to prevent the latter from perceiving the overall sound as being proposed in a regular scansion rather than [...] in a "timeless" dimension'.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. MOTIVES FOR SANGUINETTI'S TEXT: OF DRAMATURGY, POETICS AND ELECTIVE AFFINITIES

In the preface to *Smorfie*, Razzi had already emphasised motivations for choosing Sanguineti's text: 'the lack of a real story "with a beginning and an end" and, on the contrary, the presence of many intersecting stories, which intensify each other, but also to some extent mutually elide each other'.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, he demands a performance in which the work's sections are to follow one another seamlessly without – even minimal – interruption, with the end of one and the beginning of the other largely overlapping, 'like *dreams* fading into one another'.<sup>8</sup> Razzi understands his music theatre to consist of three discernible channels, which can alternate, juxtapose or be wedged together: sung, recited or instrumental sound, each equally serving as 'actors'. In *Smorfie*, the tape recording is added to these three 'voices', in a different dimension of space and time, where, once again, fragments – words, syllables, phonemes – are presented in a sphere between sung and spoken text, in turn multiplying 'polyphonic' aspects.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Razzi expects each artistic medium contributing to the dramaturgy of his music theatre to be autonomous – to be proposed as itself, radically pure, with its own structure and character: be it the poetic text, optional stage direction, light design or choreography.<sup>10</sup>

Sanguineti acted as central figure for Razzi's work, both music theatre and vocal work, and in general. He is the most frequent text author of this body of work.<sup>11</sup> A component of the Italian literary movements *Novissimi* and Gruppo 63, from the publication of his experimental poem *Laborintus* (1956) onwards, the poet Sanguineti became a ground-breaking figure of the Italian neo-avantgarde, encouraging significant collaborations in diverse artistic fields with a sound result in music and music theatre since the 1960s.<sup>12</sup> His poetry itself resembles dreamlike structures and contains numerous allegorical, ideological, historical and physical allusions to everyday life. On various occasions, Sanguineti expressed that he was

attracted by the value that vocal manifestation and imaginary corporeality take on when his texts are realised in music, qualities not necessarily linked to explicit musical or visual gestures or to a theatrical representation. He considers his texts to be conceived with a vocal function in mind and recognises that the transformative process of a musical realisation has the power to broaden and multiply meanings, thus he appreciates ‘delegating’ to the composers-collaborators what he would not be able to do himself.<sup>13</sup> The challenging complexity of Sanguineti’s poetry lies in its supposed simplicity, being inhabited by everyday images and stereotypes, weird figures, ironic elaborations and listings, mesalliance between cultured and popular language, parodies of and allusions to quotations, or plays on and distortion of idiomatic expressions. Linguistic characteristics of his writing are alliterations, assonances, other emphasized phonetic varieties, as well as deictics oneirically blurring time-space relationships (cf. recurrent ‘allora [then]’, ‘adesso [now]’). What appears to tend towards the excessive and unlimited in his poetic language reveals nothing ornamental, superfluous or redundant but rather a nude, ‘realistic’ and tactile criticism. The imagery refuses stories or sceneries, and yet they penetrate in a dreamlike, visionary way – always with a right amount of friction and critical consciousness.<sup>14</sup> In Sanguineti’s *Smorfie*, a fragmentary poetry-like work of prose in five sections, the dissimulated and iridescent narrating and judging ego traces a discrete ‘precariousness of the subject’<sup>15</sup> which, in turn, is reflected in Razzi’s music theatre work.

### 3. DRAMATURGY AND PERFORMANCE: RECONNECTING AND REINTERPRETING OLD AND NEW

Razzi’s creative attitude towards music theatre is particular, mainly in two respects: the first concerns the music-word relationship, which differs greatly from compositions of his contemporaries and is also related to aspects of rhythm, time and ‘breath’; the second concerns essentialism not only with regard to the musical composition, sometimes condensed to sounding nuclei, presupposing the possibility to play and perceive harmonics, but also to the relationship of sound with the performance space, hence the acoustical space in which the communicative act of performance takes place, as well as the inclusion of silence.

Moreover, I dare note that his experimental approach to the text-sound-voice-space relationship is reminiscent of his assiduous work as a conductor-performer of early seventeenth-century vocal music and indeed musical theatre, which he defined from a music-historical perspective as mannerist. In Razzi’s view, a decisive stylistic breakthrough with completely innovative features, especially regarding

the conception of the word-music relationship and the understanding of musical time and space, took place between the end of the sixteenth and the first decades of the seventeenth century – a musical epoch that Razzi has indeed repeatedly compared to Mannerism in fine arts.<sup>16</sup> The dramaturgical forces that underpinned these renewals had, in Razzi's view, incisive consequences for musical performance and interpretation. These dramaturgical forces though, as Razzi complains in his writings, cannot emerge if they are not perceivable in performance and interpretation, which he believes to often be the case. At the same time, he tried to set an example in the interpretation of music from this period by directing the Roman university choir "Franco Maria Saraceni",<sup>17</sup> but above all by founding and directing the group *Recitar cantando* (for about two decades from 1976).<sup>18</sup>

Behind both fields of Razzi's activities, in his identity as avantgarde composer and in his work as performer, as conductor and harpsichordist of early vocal music and music theatre, lies the intention to revalue the word and to draw on and creatively connect to the research of other artists of the avantgardes. The 'avantgarde' from Razzi's perspective is regarded not only as a notion of a cyclical event in cultural history, but above all as a necessity to be continually aspired to – in music from any era. With regard to vocal music, Razzi declares to be particularly interested in 'that different focus that constitutes the central point of research of the "seconda prattica" composers, namely the close interdependence between word and music', which always presupposes an interpretation of text.<sup>19</sup> Unlike other composers from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, in his phonematic interpretation of words, Razzi seeks the intelligibility of the text, just as, according to him, composers of the early seventeenth century sought to distance themselves from polyphonic Renaissance works, in which musical structure, in his opinion, had the upper hand over the intelligibility of the word. Razzi states that possibly the conciseness and structural sharpness of early seventeenth-century musical writing, 'far from the redundancy of the later Baroque era', influenced his tendency towards essentiality.<sup>20</sup> In a critical writing, Razzi compares his compositional approach to Sanguineti's *Smorfie*, in which he assigns the original text to three different sources of vocal emission – singing, recitation by actors, and recorded voice on tape –, with Claudio Monteverdi's approach to Torquato Tasso's text in *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, in which Monteverdi makes certain text passages stand out through both 'recitar cantando', where rhythmic scansion becomes 'precise' and 'obsessive', and interruptive rhythmical interpolations by the instruments. Razzi claims the text in both cases to be 'thought by music',<sup>21</sup> opening up access to further levels of meaning through music.

Also through the perspective of musical time, it is useful to reconnect Razzi's conception of performance both to early and contemporary music. In his opinion

there is an inherent risk of a historically informed philologically ‘objective’ performance that is subservient to the written sign. It trivialises the word-sound-time-space relationship, and ‘thus reductively distorts the conception of music, preventing an understanding of the sensibilities, interests and culture of an entire era’. More precisely, as the word-sound relationship is, in Razzi’s opinion, tightly interconnected with the time-space relationship, complete attention must be paid to the type of both *andamento* (or recitation) and sound. Razzi believes many performances that appear philological to instead be firmly anchored to an invariability of *tactus* that was alien to the practice of that time.<sup>22</sup> Razzi strives for ‘a natural, varied and flexible recitation, with constantly changing course and dynamics corresponding to those of speech’, both common and poetic, to set a counterbalance to a ‘rigid, monotonous, undifferentiated reading’ that, in his opinion, ignores the ‘internal motivations of the poetic-musical structure’.<sup>23</sup>

If it is especially the case for the works from the era of Razzi’s group, *Recitar cantando*, where only pitch and duration of the single notes are indicated, the composer in various occasions emphasised that still in twentieth and twenty-first-century music ‘the sign is to be considered not as an end but as a means, therefore nothing more than a suggestion, not being able to indicate everything that must be kept in mind in order to restore in time and space the overall sense of the thought entrusted to a sound structure’.<sup>24</sup> Musical notation in its importance but non-exhaustiveness thus conceals a knowledge that can ultimately only be acquired through a deep understanding accumulated through reference to the practice of performance. Singers and instrumentalists, in early seventeenth-century music just as in *Smorfie/Sogni*, are required to free themselves from a rigid conception of *tactus* and to instead proceed deliberately, comparable to the manner of recitation in acting (which indeed was considered a point of reference in early seventeenth-century vocal music), while progression, *andamento* and measure should be guided both by the interpretations of the single meaning of the word – I would add, ‘musical meaning’ – and by the understanding of the comprehensive sense of the text.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. REFLECTIONS ON DRAMATURGY AND TEXT-MUSIC RELATIONSHIP

No coincidence, thus, that Razzi’s approach to music theatre goes hand in hand with his interest in Sanguineti’s work and the repeated collaboration with the avantgarde poet. Both categorically refuse ‘melodramatic models’ in vocal composition and performance just as in diegetic structure.<sup>26</sup> The same applies to predominant behaviour in vocal performance, regarding which the composer

complains that far too many singers were not aware of the need to offer stylistically differentiated interpretations. If prose-theatre actors, according to Razzi, are usually more attentive to differentiated acting, music-theatre performers often tend to emphasise more external aspects, at the expense of expressing the deeper meanings of the text.<sup>27</sup> Beyond issues of employing voice from a phonic and expressive point of view, Razzi's music theatre combines singing and recitation, dividing the vocal performance between singers and actors, whose voices alternate, overlap and intertwine according to musical principles. Roles and characters are excluded from Razzi's music theatre from the outset; they rather form a direct transition to instrumental voices – in a continuous dialogue of equal, though independent voices. It is precisely here that we find the interface between Razzi's theatre and Sanguineti's abstract, dreamlike associative poetic language, in an encounter of their unique vanguard artistic manifestations vibrantly in tune with each other.

Autonomous voices, rhythm, research into the word-sound relationship as well as the type of performance, *andamento*, recitation and sound<sup>28</sup> are crucial both to Razzi's music-theatrical oeuvre and to his interpretation of early music theatre. Not only concerning musical structure, the use of words, voice and gesture, but also concerning the use of space, stage design and stage direction, Razzi strives for rigorous essentiality. With regard to *Protocolli* and *Smorfie*, Razzi states: 'I am thinking precisely of several channels (word, sound, image) that unfold with a parallel and autonomous path, in absolute parity, without one of them ever prevaricating the other: all, of course, held together by a structure organised by the composer.' More generally, he advocates for a theatre that is based 'on the presence of an overall rhythm for the eye and the ear', on formal rigour, on the absence of 'rhetoric of the grandiose' and that leaves the necessary margin of imagination. At the same time Razzi does not preclude a possible solution of stage direction substituted by a very open choreography that skilfully knows to 'compose, decompose and recompose', hence giving once again a wink to his recurrent idea of mobility and flexibility in time and space.<sup>29</sup> In addition, for a possible future performance of *Sogni*, in his life's late stage, Razzi had envisaged the use of stage lights in different colours,<sup>30</sup> thus a stage setting reduced to essentiality.

## 5. FROM *SMORFIE* TO *SOGNI*: RENDERING VOICES INDEPENDENT

With the above in mind, I would like to offer a closer look at the character of the work, while pointing out some developmental trends between *Smorfie* (S1) and the revision *Sogni* (S2). Questions should be raised as to how relationships between word, sound, time, space, intelligibility, complexity, simplicity,



essentiality, noise, silence, performativity and independence of voices are further crystallised. A selection of examples ought to illustrate particularities of the text-music relationship and the interaction of the vocal, reciting and instrumental voices as well as characteristics and transformation, from S1 to S2, in Razzi's dramaturgy. They are intended to enlighten how Sanguineti's avantgarde work is dramaturgically realised in music, what it means e.g. to artistically incorporate sound of (poetic) everyday language in music theatre, how instrumental voices gain dramaturgical weight, how complexity is condensed to conciseness and how voices become increasingly autonomous, though reinforced as a coherent whole.

The opening part, section I, is profoundly characterized by monotonously reiterated incisive rhythmical modules voice and instruments proceed through. None of the words 'minimalism', 'reductionism', 'parody' may describe the musical kind of statement, which reveals a complexity, yet deceptive simplicity, far away from rhetorical convention. With its detachment from textual or musical emotional expressiveness and its repetitiousness it seems to take on a clear position through music, against any foreseeability and preconception. As always in Razzi's music theatre, every single word, syllable, and phoneme must be pronounced and sonorously rendered with highest precision and attentiveness, since the exclusiveness of the text rendered through music lies exactly in its sonority. It is typical for Razzi's compositions to start from a rhythmic module, as a basic cell, a sequence of durations organised following principles of canon, from which the parts develop. In this case, however, the repetition of an incisive rhythmic module takes centre stage. Likewise, Razzi's particular style of musical writing, congruent with his thinking about relationships between word, voice, sound, time and space, stands out in a special way: in sketches and score of S1 the text is realized by writing all words attached to each other in minuscule, while vowels to be stressed are denoted by capital letters. According to Sanguineti's working with alliterations, the vowel 'o' is put into the sound focus, also shifting to the vowels 'i' and 'a'. Furthermore, breaks/silences between musical phrasing connected to rhythmic patterning, not Sanguineti's poetic structuring, are rendered in the 'libretto' through obliques (FIGURE 1).<sup>31</sup>

Each phrase in the singer's part, in S2 voice B's part, is divided by a semiquaver break. As a trait of the reiterated rhythmical patterns, some vowels at the end of words or phrases, following stressed vowels of plain stressed words, are brought out by a repetitive minor-third leap upwards, from lower G to Bb, thus emphasising through unconventional intonation the last two and creating displacement by this regular irregularity. The recitation of the entire opening section I results by its very nature put into relief as a whole. Rhythmical aspects seem to prevail in this section over tuneful ones. A footnote states that, if the singer does not feel comfortable



RENDERING VOICES INDEPENDENT

FIGURE 1. Fausto Razzi, *Smorfie*, section I, text. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Fausto Razzi.

VOCE A	CANTO / <b>NASTRO</b>	VOCE B
SEZIONE PRIMA v.A/ v.B/ canto / violino B / <b>pj</b> <b>nastro</b>		
PIANOFORTE, poi CANTO (PARTITURA n° 1)		
<p>adesso /            incomincio /            chetidico /            chelovlistosubito /            liinAlto /            asinIstrA /            ilmondorotondo /            quasigOnfio /            incoloresospo /            dentro /            ilvuoto /            amezzAria /            liinAltoasinIstrailmOndO /            rotOndO /            quasigonfioincolore /            sospEsOdentroilvuOtO /            rotondoquasi /            gOnfiOasinistra /            dorotondo /            tOndO /            rotOndO /            [1^volta—&gt;] adesso / (ripetere una volta DA CAPO)            [2^volta—&gt;] A/</p> <p>inAlto//            asinIstrailmOndO//            rotOndOquasi//            gOnfiOincolOresospEso//            dEntroil//            vuOtoa//            mezzA//            riA//            quasi gonfio,            incolore,            liinAltoasinistra,            asinIstrA/            ilmOndoilmOndoilmOn/            dorotOndO rotOndorOtOndorotOn/            doquasigOn fioincolO resO/            spEsoamezz/            Aria/            liinAltoasinIstrA/</p>	<p>adesso /            incomincio /            chetidico /            chelovlistosubito /            liinAlto /            asinIstrA /            ilmondorotondo /            quasigOnfio /            incoloresospo /            dentro /            ilvuoto /            amezzAria /            liinAltoasinIstrailmOndO /            rotOndO /            quasigonfioincolore /            sospEsOdentroilvuOtO /            rotondoquasi /            gOnfiOasinistra /            dorotondo /            tOndO /            rotOndO /            [1^volta—&gt;] adesso / (ripetere una volta DA CAPO)            [2^volta—&gt;] A/</p>	<p>liinAltoasinIstrailmOndO/            rotOndO quasigOnfio incolOre/            sospEsOdentroilvuOtO//            amezzAria//            li in alto,            a sinistra/            il mondo/            rotondo/            sospeso            dentro il vuoto/            a mezz'aria/            li in alto/            rotondo/            quasi gonfio/            incolore/            sospeso/            nel vuoto a mezz'aria,</p>
<p> <b>NASTRO</b> ON (1'37") 1'38   OFF [speso nell'a / ria -ria]   PARTITURA n° 1 PIANOFORTE / VIOLINO            TERMINANO STRUMENTI  <b>giustosopralaschienadiunasinio.</b>            [SUBITO INIZIA CANTO]         </p>		

with the lower G pitch, the reiteration may take place on another note of the middle lower register, if rendered 'decisively' and 'sonorously'.

S1/S2 starts with a keen, loud, low piano sound (*fff* in S1, *sf* in S2), a quaver, obtained by striking the extreme bass strings with the palm of the right hand and the pedal engaged. In S1, immediately thereafter, the singer's voice enters with its prominent rhythmic part (over alternating 2/8 and 3/8-time signatures), repeating it twice on same text. After its strong entrance sound, the piano in S1 pauses for ten measures, thenceforth repeats a similar sound, a quaver on the upbeat, first irregularly, then regularly. In the second and third refrain (the third along with the violin, after an extended vocal insertion from tape) the piano passes on to insistently repeat sequences of *p* semiquavers with the right hand and, preceded by a break on the beat, *f* single semiquavers with the left hand. The violin wedges into it by adamantly repeating a dry sound, a *ff* semiquaver on the upbeat, which complements the vocal rhythmical patterns exactly on the semiquaver breaks after each vocal phrase. Voices A and B enter only at the end of the second refrain of the rhythmic module sequence, followed by voice on tape. With rotative repetitions in continuous sonorous play, their recitation emphasises alliterations of the vowel 'o' and consonant 'r'. They alternate, overlap, intersect. The recorded voice on tape is sequenced polyphonically, the text is fragmented into phonemes, turned around and echoed, with a strong focus on the vowel 'o', consonants 's' and 'r' and the words 'mondo' and 'rotondo'. A further refrain of violin and piano solo follows. Voice B concludes pulling the leg of 'the world to the left': 'giusto sopra la schiena di un asino [just on a donkey's back]' (FIGURE 2).

In S2, a move towards simplification is emerging. The incisive rhythmic pattern is performed by dark voice B, not anymore by the singer, and is precluded by two mere instrumental module refrains: the bare solo piano part first, then piano and violin, only on the third occurrence of the rhythmic module sequence is the section realized with the vocal part by voice B, starting on the upbeat, along with violin and piano parts, which differ slightly from those of S1. In the first occurrence of the rhythmic module sequence, the solo piano continues to insistently repeat the initial *fz* low sound cluster (achieved as in S1), a quaver on the beat. In the second occurrence, the piano resolves into consistently repeated *mp* very low sound semiquavers and is joined by the violin, as against S1, on the beat<sup>32</sup> (and over a different alternation of 2/8 and 3/8 meters), with an equally dry and insistent sound, a *fffz* 'noise obtained by attacking the strings with great energy and minimum traction of the bow'. Both instruments pause over the twentieth bar of each refrain. Some minor adaptations appear in the vocal part, which at large maintains the rhythmic patterning as in S1, but when recited by the actor's voice seems soberer. Razzi's musical writing in S2 becomes humbler, the





the singer's part in S2 overtakes the motive on the words 'in quel cielo stava [in that sky/heaven it was]' of S1 (bb. 21–22). In contrast to S1, the pitch field of the singer's voice is considerably reduced, starting a fifth interval below, on the E, insistently repeated, progressing to a limited pitch field (C–F), then extended (to upper F#, G, A) and reaching the upper B while concluding on the truncated expression 'a de-' (B–A). In S1 on place of this descending second interval stood the ascending octave leap E<sub>3</sub>-E<sub>4</sub>, which already appeared pronouncing the full expression 'a destra' quite in the beginning (bb. 7–9; 12–13), and in its truncated form towards the end (b. 30). In both S1 and S2 the singer finishes on the truncated 'a de-', enriched in ambiguity.<sup>33</sup> Although the musical statement may be associated with ideological connotations from the paired expressions 'a destra [on the right]', 'a sinistra [on the left]', both Razzi's music and Sanguineti's texts are never inviting to prompt interpretations; rather, 'ideology and language',<sup>34</sup> content and form create a whole. In fact, though Sanguineti's *Smorfie* makes heavy use of repetitive images/words, also his specific use of topics, which Razzi incidentally attempts to enumerate in a sketch, is only kept at a level allusive to the topics linked to numbers in the Neapolitan smorfie.<sup>35</sup> In S2, Razzi however, renounces to a series of truncated words that ended the correspondent singer's part in S1, leaving it only at the 'a de-'. He seems to prefer intelligibility to textual ambiguity. After the conclusion of the first sung strophe, the three voices of the singer and the two actors share parts of the same text, while the actors' textual parts seem more marginal, though through their commentary-like scrutinising or parodying character not less important parts, as it is commonly the case in Sanguineti's work. The singer's text says that besides the world also the sun stood in top of the heaven splendiferously 'full' (thus alluding to the moon), albeit slightly set to the right. While Razzi reproduces the word order of Sanguineti's text in the first stanza, he rearranges word groupings in the following three stanzas in a similar way to musical permutation techniques – leading through word shifting to a dream-like nonsense. The actors' text, instead, is subdivided horizontally into syllables and phonemes as is typical of Razzi's vocal writing (at times even interspersing fragments with pauses).<sup>36</sup>

In S2 the violin enters on the last two notes of the soprano (on the 'a de-') to start into section III, in both S1 and S2 gradually followed by the flute, then the piano to build an instrumental trio proceeding at slow pace. Characteristic of the flute's part during the whole section are the long-held notes in S1 from F# up and down a major seventh, while violin and piano form an interesting support with oscillating held pitch fields. In S2 the lower major seventh is taken on by the piano part, while the lower note of the flute corresponds to an augmented fourth (C). Only after a while do the three voices join this trio. Razzi notes, 'the

singer's voice and the two actors' voices proceed in close connection with each other, but completely regardless of the instruments'. The three voices take indeed turns in the recitation of the text. Compared to S1, in S2 Razzi strikingly cuts and deliberately shifts parts of the text of voices A and B. The singing also changes slightly in the part that roughly corresponds to the part left over from S1. All in all, Razzi streamlines text and vocal parts, as well as the final part of the entire section:

<i>Smorfie</i> (1997)	<i>Sogni</i> (2022)
Questa può essere una storia di metamorfosi, in un certo senso. <del>Posso essere diventato la capra, infatti, tanto per dire. E forse è l'asino, invece, che è diventato lui, la capra, che gli rassomiglia, persino, all'asino. Che forse era un mulo, invece, non me ne intendo niente. E la frusta, che forse era la coda del mulo, e che magari era un mazzo di code di muli, e che si vede che l'hai preso in mano, alla fine, e che l'hai menato un po' in giro, sta sopra la capra; tutto storto, piegato verso il sole, che gli ha portato via tutti i suoi raggi, che fa una faccia molto brutta.</del>	[Voce A (A)] Forse è l'asino, invece, che è diventato lui, la capra, [Voce B (B)] che gli rassomiglia, persino, all'asino. [Canto (C)] La capra [B] che forse era [C] in un certo senso [B] un mulo, invece, non me ne intendo niente [C] ha portato via [A] la frusta, che era la coda del mulo, e che magari era un mazzo di code, [B] si vede che l'hai preso in mano, alla fine, e che l'hai menato un po' in giro, [C] sta sopra la capra.

Section IV consists of an extended solo violin part, played 'with great freedom', written without bars, only indicating the note values of held notes and impressive held accords built of changing intervals, including long pauses. Alternating voices A and B enter after the violin's solo entrance over the part and finish their respective sections during pauses of the violin. For S2 Razzi rewrites the violin part especially regarding pitches, note values, pauses and dynamics. Note lengths become more extended, while the notes themselves become fewer. Dynamics and modes of sound productions change frequently. The expressive violin voice concludes on a held D, first oscillating over microtonal quarter notes, followed by vibrato, then played without. Razzi writes a separate approximate text-division scheme for voices A and B that alternate and overlap – reciting independently over the violin part. As a whole, the section in S2 gains in plainness and essentiality and becomes in its expressiveness more meaningful dramaturgically.

On the same held D, with which the solo violin builds a transition, the solo piano attacks section V, ‘slowly and freely’, without any beat indications, proceeding by leaps of single unbound notes (black only, without note value) and pauses. With the attack of the soprano, singing and piano move ‘in a completely autonomous manner’, yet coherently with intercalations of actors’ A and B, which alternate with and contrast the singer. After the piano part the actors’ voices take the overhand, with only one last intervention by the singer. In S2 compared to S1 the singer’s part is written on a separate sheet with respect to the piano – thus increasing autonomy between singing, reciting voices and piano.

Section VI/S2 (=VII/S1) also differs from S1, starting with the fact that while the voices in S1 were still associated with the flute, in S2 this is replaced by the violin, ‘imitating the sound of the violin in popular feasts’. The rhythmical pattern is reminiscent of a nursery rhyme. Though changing tonally, it coincides approximately with the rhythmic setting in S1 (still for flute) and then is taken up and performed by the singing, ‘freely, without rigour of tempo’. Violin and singing parts initially alternate; after abandoning the rhythmic module, they begin to partially overlap and to enter into dialogue with each other,<sup>37</sup> while actors’ voices, A and B, are superimposed independently. Here too, as in preceding and following sections, changes tend to major autonomy.

In section VII of S2 compared to S1 it can be shown that voices A and B alternate more closely, perhaps to compensate the parts of extended ‘polyphonic’ voices from tape in S1. Other changes though, such as performance techniques (and captions), regard reduction.

It becomes evident how important the subdivision of phrases and words into phonemes (incl. stresses and breaks) was for Razzi, if one considers that in section VIII/S2 (=IX/S1) the ‘libretto’ of S2 is not only simplified with respect to S1, but also changes between the revisions S2/2022 and S2/2021. In S1 it reads:

allora / èsuccesso / chetuscEndI / incantina / permododidIrE / perché / ilfAttoÈ  
 / chetu / scEndI / conuna / tuagambanUdA / soltanto / dalsoffittodellacantInA /  
 chesivede / chetu / haiscavatounabucacIrcO / lArE / osemi / circolaresOttO /  
 imieipiEdI / alloraèsuccessochetu / scendiincantInA / permo / dodidireper / cheilfa /  
 ttoèchetuscendiIncAn / ti / na / conunatUA / gambanu / banuda / nUdA / nudAnU  
 / nudAdAl / dalsoffittoinca / ntInachesivEdE / chetu / tu / haiscavatounabUca / cIrcO  
 / lareosemi / circolaresOttO / sottO / sottoimiei / imieipiedi / alloraèsuccEssO /  
 alloraèsuccEssO / alloraèsuccEssO / succEssO /

S1 and S2 follow the same structure of strong rhythmic modules performed by the singer, roughly corresponding to those in section I, yet in an overall distorted form. In S1 the piano only intersperses single quavers on the low F, attacking



the note in *fff* with the pedal and then immediately removing the pedal, whereas in S2 the piano seamlessly repeats the note A in the very low register without pedal. Furthermore, in S2 no precise note is indicated for singing, but only the upper-minor-third switches.<sup>38</sup> Thus, once again, in S2 the singer is granted greater freedom. Words in S1 created *ex novo* by conversion from Sanguineti's text, e.g. 'circo' from 'circolare', are eliminated in S2. Here too, in the revision Razzi tends to major clearness and comprehensiveness. In both S1 and S2 Razzi inserts humorous parts: while in S1 both expressions 'nuda' and the final '(è) successo' are repeated, in S2 it is more concentrated, only the latter is highlighted through repetition. Both emphasise, however, only some of the text's many implicit erotic allusions. More commentary-like parts of voices A and B conclude the section of rhythmic modules.

Section X/S1 (IX/S2) represents one of the various examples of how Razzi's highly dramaturgical writing for instruments known from instrumental works, is included in his music theatre as autonomous equally significant voice. This 'dreamy' section started by the actors' voices, is in S1 followed by a long segment of 'polyphonic' voice on tape, with which they alternate, and then again by solo voices A and B. Only after this extended vocal part, do the piano and flute play their individual parts independently, developing an informal dramaturgy through mere instrumental voices. Razzi writes the parts of both instruments on separate pages and specifies: 'The first note at will (before, together, after) the first note of the piano'. Throughout the piece, the two instruments play independently, but together: the piano ought to repeat, at intervals, the last note once or twice, should it end its part much earlier than the flute. The piano proceeds 'without time rigour' with the right hand for notes kept within the pitch range of an augmented second, Eb-E-F-F#, while the left hand reposes, close to the pyron, its fingertip on the corresponding strings, F and F#. Dynamics are moderate, moving between *pp* and *mp* (after a *ppp* attack). The course of the flute is somewhat more dynamic though evenly slow and steady, consisting of a pitch field complementary to that of the piano, in a range of augmented fourth G-C#, G-Ab-A-Bb-B-C#, leaving out the D in both parts, piano and flute. Reaffirming these characteristics of dramaturgy, in S2 the piano and flute parts are reposed with only a few variations.<sup>39</sup>

In other cases, complex writing for voice is simplified and in part substituted by instruments. Section X/S2 begins with flute and violin, while the corresponding section XII in S1 was realized by merely vocal contributions in a highly complex, narrow interplay between the consecutively rotating recitation of Sanguineti's lines, suggestive, once again through oneiric enigmas, of a bare, vulnerable, dubious and indecipherable reality of life, 'Anche il mondo era come bendato, ma / bendato male, fasciato largo [Even the world was like blindfolded, but / blindfolded



badly, bandaged wide]’, subdivided even within fragments of words, by voice A, (then) soprano, (then) voice B. Words and phonemes, mainly ‘o’, ‘a’ and ‘r’, were musically highlighted, decomposed, repeated and sonorously recomposed (FIGURE 3). As always Sanguineti’s language counts on ambiguities such as subtly hinted words, associated expressions and multifaceted meanings (‘bene’, ‘dato’, ‘male’, ‘ad occhi bendati’, ‘fascia’, ‘largo’) which can be played through gesture, sound and voice.

An evenly experimental passage by the ‘polyphonically’ rendered voice on tape, then a sung part by the soprano and a further vocal part from tape followed. The corresponding section of S2 differs greatly: in fact, only the two reciting voices, A and B, in far less experimental parts, where the text maintains its intelligibility, and words are not subdivided hoquetus-like as in S1, continue over autonomous flute and violin parts, playing independently from each other. The

FIGURE 3. Fausto Razzi, *Smorfie*, section XII, extract text. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Fausto Razzi.

SEZIONE DODICESIMA v.A/ v.B  
canto  
nastro V

→ , ANche il mONdo  
era come bENdato,  
ma  
bENdato male,  
fa SCiato laRgo.

[CANTO (PARTITURA n° 11)]

ancheilmOn	→	doeracO	→	mebendA
tomaben	→	datomA	→	lefa
sciatolAr	→	tolAr	→	tolArgo.
An	→	cheilmOn	→	doE
racOme	→	bendAt	→	omaben
dAtom	→	Alefasc	→	sciatolAr.
omalefAsc/	→	dAt/	→	'ndoEra?/
golAr/	→	sciatolAr/	→	omabendAt/
cOmeben/	→	goancheilmO/		
				golAr
rtolAr	→	rgolar	→	rtolAr
rgolAr	→	rtolAr	→	rigo
lAr	→	rgolAr	→	RRRRRR
RRRRRRRRRRRR		RRRRRRRRRRRR		RRRRRRRRRR

GO  
[tutt'e 3]

flute's part begins after the violin and should last about four minutes. It alternates multiple high-pitched and multiple low-pitched sounds, interspersed with the single note D $\flat$ . The violin, instead, remains with its expressive part in the lower register, proceeding with changing dynamics and different attack and execution techniques. Alternating voices A and B recite over the instrumental voices. This radical difference between musical-dramaturgical realisation in S1 and S2 is probably due to Razzi's concern to restore the text's intelligibility, to simplify it in general, to favour clarity over ambiguity, to strengthen the independence between participating vocal and instrumental voices and to recognise the instrumental voices as an essential part of dramaturgy.

The following section, XIII/S1, XI/S2, opens with only recited voices, A and B. Another duo episode enters in S1 by piano and flute, in S2 by piano and violin, on which only after two and a half minutes voices A and B continue, always alternating.<sup>40</sup> The piano part reflects the creative flair of Razzi's solo piano works, with most varied, radical and innovative ways of emitting sounds from the instrument. Just a glance at the caption for the piano-performance techniques is enough. The caption in S2 indicates: 'swipe a low string with the fingernail with extreme slowness and strong pressure or at moderate speed or very quickly; strike several adjacent medium/low strings with the palm; pluck a medium/low string with the fingernail; hold the thumb of the right hand on the two strings beyond the damper, then play the two keys'. The caption and performance techniques appear less complex compared to S1. In S1 the flute proceeds by wide eleventh-interval leaps from the low D to the high G playing low and high multiple sounds with whistles and short attacks on interspersed D $\flat$  notes. It optionally may repeat the final six notes in case it finishes early comparing to the piano. As mentioned, while in S1 the instrument alongside the piano was the flute, in S2 it is the violin (simultaneously 6–8 min.). Razzi writes the part for violin *ex novo*, though also based on the intonation of harmonics, mainly multiple high sounds.

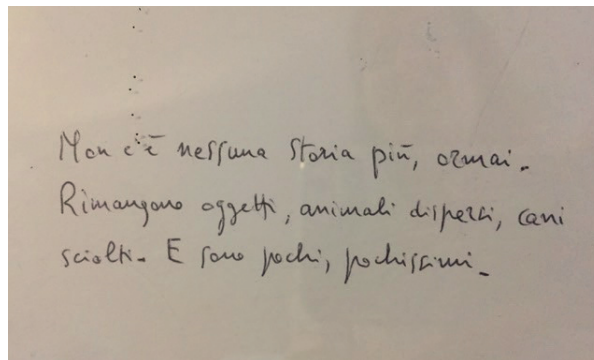
One further example regarding the dramaturgy between voices and instruments can be found in section XVII/S1 (=XIV/S2) when the singer intones 'with great expression' the simple words 'È un caso che c'è, ah, sì, è un caso' in an extensive passage followed by voice A echoing the singer and a strong low-register sound with fermata by the piano. In S2, what was previously written for singing alone is now very interestingly divided between two voices: singing and flute. The flute takes some of the more expressive parts previously written for singing, while both should perform 'freely, like a cadenza'.<sup>41</sup>

A very slow, expressive finale (section XVIII (S1) / XVI (S2)) of the instrumental trio and singer's voice ends the 'azione scenica' by approaching a dialogue with silence. With the first sound of the (bass) flute on held low C# and

the two subsequent flute interventions on held notes, the flute sound must 'appear a little more present than that of the other instruments', moreover not 'fixed', but 'variously mobile and expressive'. Singing (S) and instrumental voices (trio), between S1 and S2, remain substantially unaltered. They all become dramatic voices to end the work with distinct slowed down delicateness. Razzi elected to close *Smorfie/Sogni* with three lines that stem from a central part (beginning of IV) of Sanguinetti's text transpiring desolateness, thus he requested permission from the poet. Sanguinetti answered by sending the composer a postcard (FIGURE 4) on which he wrote solely and exclusively the three lines chosen by Razzi that would conclude the music theatre work while leaving it open to a polyphony of meanings and interpretations:

Non c'è nessuna storia più, ormai.  
Rimangono oggetti, animali dispersi, cani  
sciolti. E sono pochi, pochissimi.

**FIGURE 4. Postcard from Edoardo Sanguinetti to Fausto Razzi, w.d. With kind permission of Orietta Razzi.**



## Notes

- 1 A third collaboration with Sanguineti for a music theatre piece was *Incastro* (2001; rev. 2010). The score of the latter just as those of both *Smorfie* and *Sogni* are unpublished. Scores and sketches of all music theatrical works are held by the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venice), Istituto per la Musica, Fondo Fausto Razzi (henceforth FFR).
- 2 Edoardo Sanguineti, *Smorfie*, Roma: Etrusculudens, 1986.
- 3 Performed by Orietta Moffa, Razzi's widow. Razzi also counts an impressive output of electronic music.
- 4 Abbazia di Fossanova, Priverno (XXXIII Festival Pontino di Musica), 19 June 1997; Chiesa di S. Giacomo, Sassari (Rassegna di Teatro Musicale Contemporaneo), 22 November 1997; Teatro Vascello, Rome, 9 March 1998; Teatro Fenaroli, Lanciano (XXVIII Estate Musicale Frentana), 5 November 1999.
- 5 Fausto Razzi, Preface to *Sogni*. The translation here and elsewhere is mine.
- 6 Razzi, Preface to *Sogni*. Late Razzi reaffirmed the weight of this core concern in conversations I had with him in October 2022.
- 7 Razzi, Preface to *Sogni*.
- 8 'come *sogni* che sfumano uno nell'altro'. Annotation on the last page of the score of *Smorfie*.
- 9 Cf. Razzi, Preface to *Sogni*.
- 10 Cf. [w.n.], 'Guida all'ascolto', programme leaflet *Smorfie*, Lanciano, 1999.
- 11 Works based on a text by Sanguineti: *Colori* for 2 female voices and 54 strings (1985–86); *Protocolli*, azione scenica for 5 voices [S, B, 3 actors; 1st version: 6 voices: 2 S, B, 3 actors] and 11 instruments (1989/1992; 2012; 2018); *E chi è passato resta per memoria* for voice, piano, doublebass (from *Ballata del lavoro*, 1990); *Frammento 3* for voice, viola, cello (1991); *Ostinato* for narrator, flute, bass clarinet, violin, piano (1995); n. 1 of *Six Haiku* for voice, violin, harp (1996); *Ostinato 2* for narrator on tape (1996); *Smorfie* for 3 voices [S medium/dark voice, 2 actors], flute, violin, piano, tape (1997); *Incastro*, azione scenica for 9 voices [2 S, MS, T, B, 3 female actors, 1 male actor; 1st version: 12 voices] and 5 instruments (2001; 2010; 2020); *Dittico* [*Ballata delle donne* and *Ballata del lavoro*] for voice, oboe/violin, cello (2006; 2022); *Una cosa più lieve che la brina* for voice, violin, viola, cello (1st version); 2 voices (2nd version); voice, violin (3rd version); voices (4th version) (from *Novissimum Testamentum*, 2010; 2019; 2019/2020; 2022); between other authors *Manifesto/Memoria* for 2 voices [S, A], 2 guitars, violin, cello, tape (2017); *Sogni* [rev. *Smorfie*] for 3 voices [S, 2 actors], flute, violin, piano (2021); *Colori 2* for voice (2022). This information stems from my research at FFR.
- 12 The first were *Esposizione* (1963), then transferred into *Laborintus II* (1963), and *Passaggio* (1963) by Luciano Berio and *Traumdeutung* (1967) by Vinko Globokar.
- 13 Cf. e.g. Franco Vazzoler, 'La scena, il corpo, il travestimento. Conversazione con Edoardo Sanguineti', in: Edoardo Sanguineti, *Per Musica*, a cura di Luigi Pestalozza, Modena–Milano: Mucchi–Ricordi, 1993, pp. 187–211: 189.
- 14 Lorenzini puts it like this: 'È questa una poesia che si teatralizza sempre, in acrobatica intertestualità, non solo nei "travestimenti" intenzionalmente confezionati, di destinazione teatrale, ma nella pratica quotidiana di chi intende la scrittura poetica essenzialmente come montaggio di dati selezionati su "precisi elementi di realtà": che però gli si smaterializzano tra le mani, per iperreferenzialità e iperdeterminazione, nella casualità e istantaneità del proprio darsi'. Niva Lorenzini, *La poesia. Tecniche d'ascolto*, Lecce: Manni, 2003, p. 11.
- 15 Stefano Giovanardi, 'Tutta la prosa di Sanguineti', *la Repubblica*, Almanacco dei libri, 21 July 2007, available at <https://ilmiolibro.kataweb.it/recensione/catalogo/5820/tutta-la-prosa-di->

- sanguineti/.
- 16 For controverse musicological discussion of the concept in music see Ludwig Finscher, entry ‘Manierismus’, in: *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. V, 1996, col. 1627–1635; Tim Carter, ‘Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque’, in: *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Music*, ed. by Tim Carter and John Butt, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 1–26.
  - 17 As Razzi states, both his composition teacher Goffredo Petrassi and Franco Maria Saraceni, who called him in 1958 as vice-conductor of the choir at the University of Rome, inspired and nurtured his interest in early vocal music performance from the early 1950s.
  - 18 Profound insight into Razzi’s activities in early music is given by Alessandro Maras, ‘Fausto Razzi e la “parola” di Monteverdi’, in: *Rivisitazioni e innovazioni. La ricezione di Monteverdi nei compositori italiani dalla seconda metà del XX secolo*, a cura di Gianmario Borio e Angela Carone, Venezia: Fondazione Giorgio Cini (online), 2022, pp. 119–140.
  - 19 Edoardo Sanguineti, ‘Avanguardia e coscienza del passato. A colloquio con Fausto Razzi’, *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana*, XXXIII/1, 1999, pp. 71–92: 73.
  - 20 Razzi in Sanguineti, ‘Avanguardia e coscienza del passato’, p. 74.
  - 21 Fausto Razzi, ‘Il sole, in quel momento’, *Anterem*, XXVI/63, 2001, pp. 66–72: 69–71.
  - 22 Fausto Razzi, ‘Considerazioni sul “Recitar cantando”’, *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana*, XLI/3, 2007, pp. 353–390: 355 s.
  - 23 Fausto Razzi, ‘Considerazioni sul “Recitar cantando”’, p. 356.
  - 24 Fausto Razzi, ‘Considerazioni sul “Recitar cantando”’, p. 365.
  - 25 Fausto Razzi, ‘Considerazioni sul “Recitar cantando”’, pp. 370, 372.
  - 26 Concerning Sanguineti’s view I am referring to three interviews I had with him (2005–2006). Cf. Claudia di Luzio, *Vielstimmigkeit und Bedeutungsvielfalt im Musiktheater von Luciano Berio*, Mainz: Schott, 2010, pp. 99 s.
  - 27 Razzi in Sanguineti, ‘Avanguardia e coscienza del passato’, p. 77.
  - 28 Razzi (‘Considerazioni sul “Recitar cantando”’, p. 355) states: ‘Il tipo di andamento e il tipo di suono [...] rappresentano due facce intrinsecamente collegate’.
  - 29 Sanguineti, ‘Avanguardia e coscienza del passato’, p. 79 ss.
  - 30 Information I received by Razzi himself.
  - 31 This is no longer the case in S2, where in the ‘libretto’ Razzi roughly maintains Sanguineti’s ‘verse’ structure.
  - 32 Except after the word ‘gonfio [blown]’, where it appears on the upbeat.
  - 33 Razzi asks it in S1 to be pronounced as German ‘Adé’.
  - 34 Cf. Sanguineti’s well-known critical statement through his essay collection: *Ideologia e linguaggio*, a cura di Erminio Risso, Milano: Feltrinelli, 2001 (rev. and exp. edition of 1965).
  - 35 Allusions to the Neapolitan smorfie may be ‘caduta’, ‘capra’, ‘carabinieri’, ‘fiori’, ‘mano’, ‘peli’, ‘pianto’, ‘testa’, ‘vino’, ‘zuppa’. With ‘tu guardavi verso il niente’ Sanguineti may be mocking the Neapolitan ‘chella ca guarda ‘nderra’; through the repeated addressing of the above and below may be alluded to ‘sott’e ‘ncoppa’.
  - 36 Voice A, to be repeated almost whispering: ‘lasuafa/cciainf/cciaperò/maimpassi/bilegri/gioeconu/ttelerighe/ttedeiragge/ttiintor/no/tornotornotor/notor!’. Voice B to be repeated enhancing consonants: ‘eraconlasua/ facciain/facciapè/ròmaimpa/ssibile/grigioecon/tutteleri/ghttedeira/ggettiin/torno, come tanti peli’. In S1, after the third stanza, the voice on tape adds to the other voices.

## RENDERING VOICES INDEPENDENT

- 37 Over the words 'due righe sole di canzone' the singer is required to imitate the evergreen song *Un'ora solo ti vorrei* (1938) by composer Paola Marchetti.
- 38 In S1 Razzi still indicated the notes low G and B $\flat$ .
- 39 E.g. only the F piano string, not also F $\sharp$ , is 'struck'; from b. 68 the flute plays part of the tone sequence a fourth above and slightly changes sound sequencing at the end; moreover, the flute's phrasing changes.
- 40 First piano and flute sound synchronise, thereafter the voices proceed independently (for about 4 min.).
- 41 The grave-sound piano part of S1 is replaced in S2 by trills and high-pitched sounds with, then without vibrato.

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