I wish to begin by quoting a phrase from one of the most compelling exchanges of letters I have read, the correspondence between Rainer Maria Rilke, Boris Pasternak and Marina Tsvetaeva, published in Italian with the title *Il settimo sogno.*¹ It seems to me appropriate to start with a correspondence between three figures who are outside the musical world, not least because it enables me to state right at the outset that in my editorial work on musicians’ correspondences, solutions to the most relevant editorial concerns were often suggested to me by non-musicological publications.²

The phrase was written by Tsvetaeva herself: letters are ‘not thoughts, but the body of thoughts.’³ Anyone who has ever edited a correspondence knows how hard it is to make intelligible that ‘body of thoughts’: read for themselves and without any adequate commentary, the documents could in fact remain completely ‘silent’. In other words, it is the commentary which reveals the ‘thoughts’, and the work of collecting-reconstructing-transcribing an epistolary dialogue is not enough – on its own – to make clear to readers (and future scholars) a context which requires reconstructing just as much as, if not more than, the dialogue between the correspondents. Any editor indeed knows that
the most delicate part of the job begins after collecting the correspondence, and that the archives involved in the research never come down to that/those which usually conserve the outgoing and incoming letters. The materials and information are often so scattered that verifications and research are necessary in other institutions or archives (whether public or private), even though at the outset this could be neither programmed nor even imagined.

Since 1998 I have had various experiences of editing exchanges of letters, invariably primary sources in my research and musicological work. Each of these experiences has been different in terms of extent, type of editing and publisher’s location; here the list in a schematic form:

1. edition of the Luigi Nono – Angelo Maria Ripellino correspondence (1998), leading to the publication of the complete exchange concerning Intolleranza 1960 (2011);
2. publication of the Luigi Nono – Erwin Piscator correspondence (1999–2000);
3. publication of selected passages of Bruno Maderna’s correspondence (2007);
4. publication of the Massimo Mila – Luigi Nono correspondence (2010);
5. publication of the Helmut Lachenmann – Luigi Nono correspondence (2012).

As we will see, these editorial works concern collections of letters which differ in terms of size, time span, the nature or interlacing of the correspondence, subject matter, personality and profession of the correspondents, and so on. In fact in each one the ‘body of thoughts’ that has to be clarified involves a different focus. Reviewed one by one, these exchanges of letters may involve respectively:

1. the relationship between a composer and one or more collaborators involved in the genesis of a work;
2. the relationship between a composer and an artist (a non-musician) who played a decisive role in different stages of the composer’s life or his creative activity;
3. the human, intellectual and artistic biography of a composer;
4. the relationship between a composer and a music critic;
5. the relationship between two composers.

In all these cases I found myself working with correspondences that were largely or completely unpublished. I feel I should specify this because, especially in the case of the two volumes featuring Nono–Mila and Nono–Lachenmann, I am sure that the work involved in editing unpublished correspondence led me to make choices which were to some extent different from the choices I may have made if the material had already been published.¹

I would like to provide a simple overview of the editorial work done on the first three exchanges of letters, and spend more time on the two larger volumes containing Nono’s correspondence with Massimo Mila and Helmut Lachenmann.
1. INTOLERANZA 1960

In 1998, as an appendix to an essay on the genesis of Intolleranza 1960, I published 20 letters between Luigi Nono and Angelo Maria Ripellino, the Slavonic literature specialist who was asked by Nono to write the libretto for his first ‘azione scenica’. The reference archive was the Archivio Luigi Nono, which holds the originals of the letters received by the composer and collects copies of letters written by him and preserved in other archives. Over the years, as my research on Intolleranza 1960 progressed, a number of parallel epistolary exchanges emerged which cast new light on this work’s intricate genesis. In fact, thirteen years later, in 2011, I was able to publish in a celebratory book 76 epistolary documents concerning the composition and staging of Intolleranza 1960. Taken as a whole, these documents cover the network of relationships established in the years 1960–1961 by Nono with several people involved in various aspects of the first performance of Intolleranza 1960. As well as Ripellino, there was Massimo Mila, various exponents of the publishing houses Schott in Mainz and Einaudi in Turin, Nuria Schoenberg Nono, Mario Labroca, Maurice Béjart, Alfred Radok and Bruno Maderna, Gian Francesco Malipiero, Erwin Piscator, Emilio Vedova and still others, making a total of 23 ‘characters in search of a work’, to paraphrase Pirandello. Starting from my sole ‘reference archive’, the Archivio Luigi Nono, the research had spread to all the archives which could contain letters linked to the work’s genesis: the Paul Sacher Foundation (for letters of Nono and others conserved in the Mila and Maderna Collections), the Schott Archive in Mainz, the Einaudi archives in Turin, the Akademie der Künste in Berlin (for Piscator), the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (for Malipiero), the Biennale archives in Venice (ASAC; for Labroca and others), and also private, personal archives which can be very difficult to access such as the personal archive of Emilio Vedova.

In the Marsilio volume all the letters are transcribed within a separate chapter: they can be read as an autonomous epistolary exchange, or as a documentary appendix to two further chapters of the book. Since the volume was intended for an essentially Italian readership, I had agreed with the publisher to translate into Italian the letters originally written in German (10 in all). Again taking into account the nature of the volume, designed for a wide readership and not just for specialists, I decided to give no more than an outline of the physical object and thus, while respecting elementary academic and philological norms, not make the reading heavy going.
2. NONO‒PISCATOR

The correspondence between Luigi Nono and Erwin Piscator comprises 17 documents, all in German, dating from the years 1952–1965 and related to three different periods: 9 letters from 1952–1953, which document the early days of their relationship and their first projects; 2 letters from 1961 concerning the genesis of *Intolleranza 1960*; and lastly 6 letters from 1965 devoted to their collaboration on *Die Ermittlung*.

This correspondence was published as Appendix to an article about the relations between Nono and Piscator. All the letters were translated into Italian and published almost in their entirety. Since these documents are primary sources for the study of an important work from the 1960s (*Die Ermittlung*), and contain surprising revelations concerning the intricate preparations for the first performance of *Intolleranza 1960*, I still hope – 15 years on – to be able to publish these letters in their original language one day.

3. MADERNA

I have similar regrets about the publication of *Bruno Maderna. Extraits de la correspondance choisis et annotés*, a selection from 154 letters (all translated into French) published in 2007 among the ‘Annexes documentaires’ to the first of two volumes devoted to Maderna’s music. The letters cover roughly 40 years (from 1934 to 1973) and are almost all conserved at the Paul Sacher Foundation, the archive where I did the greater part of this research (using not only the Maderna collection but also others, including those of Edgar Varèse and Luciano Berio, where I found further letters by Maderna). The selection was based on a much larger volume of letters (approximately a thousand) and was significantly conditioned by the volume’s planned readership and size.

The two volumes featuring the correspondence between Nono and Mila and Nono and Lachenmann illustrate a much more complex experience of research and editing.

Each of the volumes publishes an intense two-way correspondence. Both of them are complete but not all-inclusive, in the sense that, as transpires implicitly or explicitly from the documents published, some items have not survived or have not yet been found (at least 6 documents for the Mila–Nono correspondence and 2 letters for the Nono–Lachenmann). In both cases, however, in spite of these small gaps, one can speak of an ‘exhaustive edition’,...
since they show the complete exchange and relationships between the two friends, from the time they met through to the death of one of the two men.

4. NONO–MILA

In the case of the correspondence between Luigi Nono and Massimo Mila (one of the foremost Italian music critics in the last century) there are 103 unpublished documents covering 36 years, from 1952 to 1988 (the year of the Mila’s death). The volume was published by Il Saggiatore in Milan, a non-academic, traditional publishing house. In their correspondence, the composer and the critic do not limit themselves to musical subjects: they cover culture, Italian and international politics, history, practical and social questions, theorising, aesthetics, strictly personal matters, and so on. Nono and Mila communicate both as observers of the other’s sphere of action and as protagonists whose ways cross, leading them to confront (and even challenge) one another in their respective fields. In some cases, there is a sort of subtle complicity between the two, so that the public verdict of the critic is the outcome of private input received from the composer.\(^{10}\) In order to make all the data and context as intelligible as possible, Veniero Rizzardi and I decided to enrich the correspondence with further documentation reflecting their intense network of intellectual and human relations. This enlargement first took form in the two Appendices, one comprising the publication of a further epistolary covering 16 important letters Nono exchanged with various figures in the Einaudi publishing house, and the other devoted to the articles Mila wrote concerning works by Nono (17 anthologised).\(^{11}\)

This collection of letters preserved in Einaudi’s archives perhaps merits a moment’s attention. At the beginning of our research, Rizzardi and I had had no intention of integrating this volume with this epistolary Appendix, not least because no one knew of the existence of the letters from Nono to Einaudi, even though some letters by the publisher were already preserved in the composer’s archives. We worked on the epistolary material conserved above all in two archives (Archivio Luigi Nono and Paul Sacher Foundation) and carried out cross-checks with other correspondences or secondary bibliographic material located in other public and private institutions. Certainly we knew of the important role Mila played at Einaudi as editorial consultant for the musical sector, and as we worked on the correspondence we realised that, thanks to Mila among others, Nono was able to submit opinions and proposals of a certain
importance to the publishing house, not only in the domain of music. The existence of further correspondence between Nono and the publisher Einaudi became clear to me quite by chance during a visit to the publisher’s archives carried out in a context that was far removed from my research on Mila or Nono. Many of these letters ran parallel to and were often interlaced with the correspondence with Mila we were preparing, and some of them expanded on or clarified details that were difficult to interpret. Contrary to any plan, the inclusion of a selection of this new correspondence between Nono and Einaudi in the Nono–Mila volume imposed itself as both opportune and necessary, enabling us to provide a more comprehensive account of Nono’s complex and intense relationship with cultural policy in Turin and Italy at large in the post-war years. With this integration the correspondence between Nono, Mila and Einaudi provides a lot of information that was previously completely unknown. Above all it reveals the significance of the initiatives which the two correspondents promoted in the field of music publishing in Italy during the 1950s and 1960s, such as the surprising campaign Nono waged during the 1960s to have the writings of Stockhausen, Cage and Boulez published in Italy.

The Nono–Mila exchange was faithfully transcribed in its entirety, keeping the use of *omissis* to a minimum (solely for very rare personal matters and never for artistic questions or arbitrary censorship). All the letters were numbered progressively in chronological order; for the letters that were missing (but that had *certainly* existed) we decided not to number the document but to indicate it (in its chronological collocation) with an asterisk (see, for example, p. 146 of the book). Other documents which we could only suppose had gone missing were referred to in our commentary. This solution was suggested by the impossibility of arriving at an exact estimate of the number of missing documents, and, as we shall see, this caution proved to be sensible. One other deliberate choice was not to alter, standardise or correct in any way the style or punctuation of Luigi Nono, even when it was wrong. We were (and are) convinced that his graphic and stylistic idiosyncrasies should be respected, since they reflect an attitude that is often iconoclastic and explosive.

Each letter is followed by a description of the source and a commentary that accompanies and completes the individual items. This choice reflects our determination to spare the reader excessive footnotes and at the same time facilitate a fluid and informative reading, for non specialist readers as well. The specific nature of the dialogue between the two correspondents and the sheer amount of information touched on in the letters suggested to myself and Rizzardi the possibility of distinguishing between an editors’ commentary and editors’ notes: in the first case all explanations, clarifications or specifications
relating to facts, contexts or works cited in the letters were presented in an organic fashion and linked to the single epistolary items in smaller print. This commentary had a structure, as if we were speaking to readers and leaving them free either to read and satisfy any curiosity they might have about passages which would otherwise have been obscure, or simply to skip the part in small print and go on to the next letter. The notes proper were reserved for cross-references within the volume, bibliographical specifications and corrections, and were placed not at the bottom of the page but all together at the end of each section.

In this correspondence we also found a solution to a problem of transcription which became fundamental in the Lachenmann–Nono edition. In a number of typewritten letters both Nono and Mila added handwritten greetings or, in the case of Nono, also handwritten post-scripts: we used the grey text to make visible the difference between what was originally typewritten (in black) and what was handwritten (in grey) as is shown in Figures 1 and 2.

5. NONO–LACHENMANN

The Nono–Lachenmann correspondence required an editing approach which was in some ways different from the one adopted for the Mila–Nono book. The first difference between the two correspondences is substantial, affecting specific choices concerning the commentary and annotation of the individual letters. While at the time of their epistolary dialogue Nono and Mila occupied two quite distinct roles in the Italian and European musical panorama, the protagonists of the Nono–Lachenmann correspondences were two composers who met on the same ground, that of musical creation, but whose dialogue involved different ‘platforms of experience’: between the two, from beginning to end, there was the senior and the junior, the maestro and the pupil, the latter initially adoring but then increasingly seeking his autonomy. This imbalance persisted even when, more than 30 years after the beginning of their correspondence, the junior had become a recognised composer in his own right. A second important difference derives from the publication’s destination: figuring in the publications of the Archivio Nono and published by Olschki, in the series of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, the Nono–Lachenmann volume was conceived for a specialised circuit.13

The correspondence comprises 124 letters that passed between the two composers between 1957 and 1990 (the year of Nono’s death). Unlike the Mila–Nono correspondence, the dialogue was not continuous over these 33 years but
3. Nono a Giulio Einaudi, Venezia, 17 dicembre 1960

caro Giulio Einaudi

in giugno prossimo eseguiranno a Monaco nei concerti di “musica viva” la terra e la compagnia – testi di Cesare Pavese e musica mia. (anche il III programma Rai Roma concerti del sabato).
da Monaco Karl Amadeus Hartmann – compositore e organizzatore dei concerti ‘musica viva’ – mi chiede una fotografia di Pavese da stampare sul programma.
i suoi programmi stampati sono molto belli. (te ne mando alcuni).
puoi tu farmi avere una foto di Pavese?
grazie.
in seguito al libro di Helms – da te fattomi inviare e da me restituito con mio parere –, ti mando MOVENS.\textsuperscript{10} è un documento di un movimento attuale tedesco, in cui anche l’Helms rientra, non limitato alla poesia, ma alle varie arti. come documento mi sembra buono. come validità del movimento meno. ma in ogni caso se tu riteni di dover documentare quanto si sviluppa all’esero di sperimentale, MOVENS per la Germania di Adenauer è indicativo. naturalmente inquadrandolo come si merita. cari saluti
tuo Luigi Nono
luigi nono giudecca 882 venezia 17 12 1960

in caso: come documentazione\textsuperscript{11}

un’altra volta ti scriverei su Max Bense
è interessante la sua posizione teorica nell’analisi della poesia, basata su analisi statistica del comportamento dei fonemi usati


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EPISTOLARIO LACHENMANN – NONO 1958

...ueberlegen Sie: das alles wie in Leben: man kann jedes Mensch als Ereignis in sich selbst verstehen, und genau “mit Tonband” isolieren, aber man kann das nie verstehen, wenn nicht in Beziehung zum Ganze.


aber das auch ist (solche Analisis) etwas abstrakt, weil die Grenze um jedes Ereignis in sich selbst zu fixiren sind sehr relativ.

zu n. 2 das kommt von den 3 Klangform:

```latex
\begin{itemize}
  \item hier es gibt
    \begin{itemize}
      \item qui esiste una libertà, sempre calcolata, per cui è possibile
        \begin{itemize}
          \item a) Ansatz rigorosa, nach dem Schema.
          \item b) ” rigorosa, nach Vorpausen = wie Sie haben bemerkt.
        \end{itemize}
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}
```

so daß ist möglich Ansatz zu wehlen [sic], und zu schieben, also nur in Prinzip nach Schemata,\(^{14}\) aber, immer genau in der Moment (also: nach wo – wann – und wie) nach jedem Moment erkannt

das im Grunde ist mein Prinzip.

es gibt eine Mentalitaet (Denken–Kompositionstechnik) die auf besondere und praetise Basis steht, aber die immer in der Moment in Leben kommt:

also che si determina sempre nel momento stesso, secondo la realtà del momento: cioè bisogna conoscere e vedere dove quando come e cosa accade, per agire–interpretare–intervenire esattamente, come a ciascuno è possibile: mai rigidamente con troneggiore vedere sempre o in ogni caso importare dall’esterno o dall’alto. (etwas wie in *structures* von Boulez; predeterminazione–meccanica).

das genau wie in Leben.

n. 4 werden wir zusammen besprechen: ich verstehe nicht genau was Sie meinen (Sprachschwierigkeit)

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\(^{14}\) Una freccia collega la parola al disegno, qui aggiunto in facsimile. Essa è parzialmente visibile (estremità inferiore) nella riproduzione.
came and went, with moments of intense exchange and long silences. These gaps are not the result of any loss of material, but simply reflect the discontinuity in their relationship. Above all they discuss musical and cultural topics; often the dialogue takes the form of an up-to-the-minute account of musical or political events or circumstances. In this case too, in order to clarify and complete these accounts, the edition was provided with three Appendices collecting materials of various kinds. The first presents seven documents which could not be included in the central corpus of the correspondence, i.e. letters or drafts of letters to Nono that Lachenmann never sent. The second contains 20 letters (found in various different archives) which the two correspondents exchanged with other figures or institutions that are directly linked to their correspondence. The third Appendix features seven articles Lachenmann wrote about Nono or his music in various circumstances. With respect to the Mila–Nono volume, here we took a further step in terms of ‘systematising’ the material: at the end of the volume all the published letters are listed in a specific index of incoming and outgoing epistolary items, as a practical research tool facilitating consultation (pp. 283–286 of the book).

Perhaps the most prominent dilemma posed by this edition was the language in which to publish the correspondence: the two composers use Italian, German and Venetian dialect, and may even mix them up in the same letter and inverting their roles, so that Nono wrote in German and Lachenmann in Italian or Venetian (see, just as examples, the letters on pp. 54 and 41, and Ex. 2). This linguistic melting-pot represents an added value for the correspondence, giving the dialogue between the two composers a further degree of expressiveness that would be literally ‘lost in translation’ if rendered in one or another of the languages. After much heart-searching, and after consulting our editors in the publishing house, Ulrich Mosch and I decided not to translate the texts from the German and to preserve the languages in which the letters were written. Since this was the first edition of this correspondence, we chose to give readers a faithful reproduction of the original documents as they were written, with all their verbal expressiveness as well as their linguistic approximations and grammatical errors in the various languages. Publishing such a volume, bilingual in content and in a single language (Italian) for the commentary and editing input, was a difficult choice which necessarily involved reducing the readership. But this is in effect a sort of editio princeps, leaving future editors free to publish, on the basis of our work, new translations into a single language (whether Italian, or German, or indeed a language that does not feature in the correspondence).
As in the case of the Mila–Nono correspondence, here too each letter is followed by an accurate physical description of the object. For the editors’ notes and commentary we came instead to slightly different conclusions. Given the target of the volume, originally intended for specialised readers, we started with the intention of limiting the notes and commentary to merely bibliographical indications or clarifications regarding the context (dates of concerts, details of names, etc.). However, once we set about the editing, we realised that here too it was necessary to clarify – both for more curious readers and for younger scholars – allusions to facts, people and contexts which are now fading into the mists of time. Thus once again it was decided to provide each letter with an editors’ commentary but, unlike the Mila–Nono correspondence, here it is not a ‘narrative’ commentary. The tone and the language are more technical and documentary. Moreover, the abundance of references occurring in some letters made it impossible to provide an organic commentary: the comments or clarifications of some passages are given in the order in which these are presented by the two correspondents, in keeping with the often erratic and cluttered style that characterises their communications. Furthermore, in the Lachenmann–Nono correspondence it was decided to place the bibliographical and technical notes not at the end of each section, as in the Nono–Mila, but in footnotes, to facilitate a more immediate reading. Here too the letters were put in chronological order but our greater certainty concerning the number of missing documents (apparently only two) enabled us to number even the letters which had not been found. This decision to include missing documents in a chronological series can be seen as a legitimate aspiration that such letters will soon come to light, meaning that they can be inserted into the correspondence without requiring any awkward changes in the numbering.

At the same time, however, this does not mean that in the near future research in other archives or more extensive research will not lead to the discovery of new documents associated with this correspondence. My various experiences, as well as the publishing history of other correspondences (such as the one between Boulez and Cage), lead me to see this typology of edition as ‘definitely provisional’ (to paraphrase Berio) and thus potentially subject to revisions or extensions. A paradigmatic case happened to me with the Nono–Mila correspondence, which today could be expanded to include seven other documents which are not strictly letters but ‘epistolary dedications’ that Nono wrote on scores he presented to Mila (these materials were inaccessible and unknown, stored in the cellar of Mila’s house, until December 2013, and only found their way to the Paul Sacher Foundation in January 2014).
This mention of ‘epistolary dedications’ brings us to another problem that conditioned some of the choices made in preparing both the Nono–Mila and Lachenmann–Nono volumes: in publishing a correspondence, what is to be considered an ‘epistolary item’ or ‘letter’, and what is not? When speaking of a ‘correspondence’ one usually thinks of letters, but actually the concept should be extended to any form of communication including those in non-verbal form (which may or may not be set down on paper) and involving different objects. With my collaborators, I have favoured a very broad notion of ‘correspondence’ or ‘epistolary’: we collected a composite set of materials which the correspondents used to communicate, a heterogeneous documentary corpus which would be difficult to assimilate into a single modality of communication at a distance. Thus in these two volumes there are of course letters and postcards, but also dedications and annotations on unconventional objects; for example, reviews sent by post between the two correspondents, newspaper or other cuttings, notes attached to tapes or LPs sent from one to the other, and other objects as well.

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Whoever has undertaken such editorial tasks knows just how complex, exciting and at times obsessive is the work that enables one to finally arrive at the publication of the complete exchanges of letters. Often the philological and musicological work verges on the profession of the bloodhound or detective; often the pursuit of data needed for a cross-check or commentary means consulting public or private archives that are completely extraneous to the sphere of action of the correspondents; often a marginal annotation near a date or name, the identification of a secondary source cited in the letters or various other kinds of verification require much longer than the time needed to establish and transcribe the whole corpus of the correspondence.

Once it has been summed up and illustrated in all its complexity, the work involved in assembling correspondences, in transcription and description, in their analytical examinations, annotation and in the identification of documentary data, leaves no room for theoretical statements, which each editor hopes other researchers will be able to carry out on the basis of his/her editing.
Notes


2 I must mention two models that remain for me, among Italian publications, unsurpassed: the correspondence between Cesare Cases and Sebastiano Timpanaro (*Un lapsus di Marx. Carteggio 1956–1990*, ed. by Luca Baranelli, Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2004) and all the editions of the correspondence of Marina Cvetaeva published in Italy by Serena Vitale.


4 There is clearly a difference between bringing together in one volume materials previously available in various different publications, and/or presenting them to readers in an organic and complete form for the first time.


10 To give just one eloquent example: some letters show how, in writing in 1960 his major essay on the composer, entitled ‘La linea Nono’, Mila prepared himself using analytical notes and interpretations provided by Nono himself (see Mila and Nono, *Nulla di oscuro tra noi*, pp. 41–43 and passim).

This involved initiating negotiations, which could be complex and quite delicate, to obtain multiple authorizations, quite apart from the permission granted by the heirs of Nono and Mila and the archives where the materials are conserved.

A third difference could be recognised in the fact that one of the correspondents, Lachenmann, was still alive and in contact with Ulrich Mosch and myself at the time of the editorial process.

Most of the letters are concentrated in the years 1957–1966 (82 items); for the years 1970–1971 there are only two letters from Lachenmann, after which correspondence resumes less intensely but with significant content from 1981.
