Hermeneutics and Creative Process: Roman Vlad's Reception of Stravinsky

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Roman Vlad's experience of music was a complex universe, which manifested itself in various forms.[1] His research on musical composition went hand in hand with an extraordinary intellectual activity, which resulted in the publication of several studies on the theory and history of music, and a constant activity as a promoter and critic of music. Vlad was capable of switching with great nonchalance from the role of the composer interested in new experimental forms to that of a scholar working with great methodological rigour on the music of the past and of the present. It was inevitable that these two activities would have an impact on his interpretation of music.

In an effort to illustrate the complexity of this dialectic, the present article focuses on Vlad's reception of Stravinsky's work, analysing in parallel Vlad's essays on Stravinsky published in the 1950s and his musical compositions written in the same period. In his writings, Vlad repeatedly underlines the centrality of the sacred in Stravinsky's work, a rather original interpretation, which is unique in the critical debate of the time. During those same years, the sacred acquired great importance also in his musical compositions, a fact that already evidences the close relation between Vlad's interpretation of Stravinsky's work and his own

creative activity. The fact that Vlad's scholarly interpretation of Stravinsky was highly influenced by his own creative tendencies does not weaken in any way its quality and interest. In fact, what Vlad's experience suggests is that even an explicitly one-sided reading can be fruitful in the area of historical studies, so long as it remains to some extent anchored to a concrete musical experience.

THE FIGURE OF STRAVINSKY IN ROMAN VLAD'S WRITINGS

Vlad's most important contribution to the study of Stravinsky's music was his monographic study published in 1958. The book was published in Italian and English and was widely read also abroad; it was also repeatedly revised and extended by the author in the course of its various editions.[2] Stravinsky himself, in a letter to Vlad of 1958, gave a flattering opinion: 'I consider this the best book on my music ever written till now'.[3]

The tone of the book is pleasantly discursive. In fact, Vlad's study originated as a re-elaboration of a series of radio transmissions on Stravinsky that the Italian public television (RAI) had commissioned to him in 1955. In the book, the author kept the colloquial tone of a popular radio programme, but integrated the contents with more in-depth information in the notes and with bibliographical references.[4]

The book follows a chronological order, going from Stravinsky's early works to his mature ones. Chapter 18, entitled 'Stravinsky's Religious Music' discusses the *Three Sacred Choruses* (*Pater Noster*, 1926; *Credo*, 1932; *Ave Maria*, 1934) the *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), the cantata *Babel* (1944), and the *Mass* (1948). As one can see, this particular chapter does not follow the rigid chronological order that characterises the rest of the book. Vlad explains the reason at the beginning of the chapter: 'The religious side of Stravinsky, and particularly the way in which this comes out in his music, has not been properly appreciated by most of his commentators, or else it has been ill-judged and even misinterpreted'.[5]

To understand this comment it is necessary to remember the widespread controversy on Stravinsky's sacred music, which had started with the very first performance of his *Symphony of Psalms,* in 1930. On the one hand, there were those who thought Stravinsky was a cynical and unprincipled artist, who had turned to sacred music solely to surprise his public with a new, unexpected stylistic metamorphosis. On the other hand, there were those who believed Stravinsky to be moved by a profound religious faith.[6] Vlad himself firmly sided with the latter party stating that Stravinsky's music was not only motivated by a sincere faith, but also had a far from marginal role in his artistic evolution:

The number of Stravinsky's works composed before 1950 which were inspired by sacred texts is not great. Apart from the *Symphony of Psalms* and the *Mass*, there is only a group of three short *a cappella* choruses and a very short cantata, *Babel* – a mere fifty minutes of music all told. But the intrinsic significance and the scope of these works within the framework of his music as a whole seem to justify the view that a study of these religious works is the key to Stravinsky's real self and to the logic of his entire development.[7]

Vlad here takes a rather bold stance, admitting that in quantitative terms sacred music has a marginal role in Stravinsky's production, at least up to 1950, yet stressing that those few sacred works hold the key to Stravinsky's 'real self' and to the understanding of the 'logic' underlying his artistic development.

In the following chapters, Vlad repeatedly returns to this question, showing how, starting in the 1950s, compositions based on sacred texts, or in any case, texts animated by a strong religious component, become increasingly important in Stravinsky's production. To cite only some among the more significant works: *Canticum Sacrum* in 1955, *Threni: id est Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae* in 1958; the cantata *A Sermon, a Narrative and a Prayer* in 1961, *Anthem* for choir a cappella and the sacred representation *The Flood*, both composed in 1962 and, finally, his last major work, the *Requiem Canticles* in 1966.

Vlad however is not satisfied with stressing the importance of sacred music in the last phase of Stravinsky's career, and proceeds to look for sacred aspects in works that have no explicit relation with religion. The search for the 'sacred' in the 'non sacred' begins with Stravinsky's *Le roi des étoiles* (1911), a cantata based on a text by Balmont, which is indeed characterised by a strong religious mysticism. Vlad similarly finds traces of the sacred in *Tre pezzi per quartetto d'archi* (1914), in *Les Noces*, in *Sinfonie di strumenti a fiato*, in *Apollon Musagète*, *Oedipus Rex* and even in *Perséphone*, even arriving at interpreting all of Stravinsky's compositions based on classical works as a re-interpretation of the Greek myth from a Christian perspective.[8]

Vlad's interest in Stravinsky's sacred music had developed well before his book of 1958; in particular, the chapter entitled 'Stravinsky's Religious Music' had been published elsewhere more than once. The original manuscript is in Venezia, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Fondo Roman Vlad.[9] The text, which also has a number of footnotes, has many crossed-out passages, suggesting a troubled birth with many doubts and afterthoughts, unlike any other manuscript by Vlad.

The text is not dated but we can suppose it was written in the early 1950s, considering that it was printed with four different publishers between 1952 and 1958. The work appeared for the first time in the journal *La Rassegna Musicale* in 1952;[10] it then became one of the chapters of Vlad's *Modernità e*

tradizione nella musica contemporanea published in 1955;[11] the following year it was published with a different title in a collection of essays by various authors on Stravinsky's sacred music;[12] and finally it was included in Vlad's book on Stravinsky published in 1958. In the first three publications, the text was that of the original manuscript. In the last print, the author made some slight modifications to the text, to adapt it to the context of a monography.

These publications in various forms suggest that Vlad was particularly fond of this text and thought it deserved the greatest circulation. Particularly significant is its inclusion in Vlad's *Modernità e tradizione nella musica contemporanea*, which also included other already published essays. The book offers an ample review of the development of twentieth-century music, focusing on a number of fundamental historical turning points. The topics are carefully selected as documented by the two indexes shown in FIGURES 1 and 2. The indexes clearly indicate Vlad's intention of evidencing the continuities with the past, highlighting the modern elements found in the work of nineteenth-century musicians like Chopin, Rossini, Verdi and Busoni. In the chapter on neo-classicism, Stravinsky's music is examined along with that of other authors. The only chapter entirely dedicated to Stravinsky is that on sacred music, a further confirmation of Vlad's belief in the fundamental importance of these compositions for the history of twentieth-century contemporary music.

FIGURE 1. Roman Vlad, *Modernità e tradizione nella musica contemporanea*, typewritten index with autograph corrections, first draft. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad
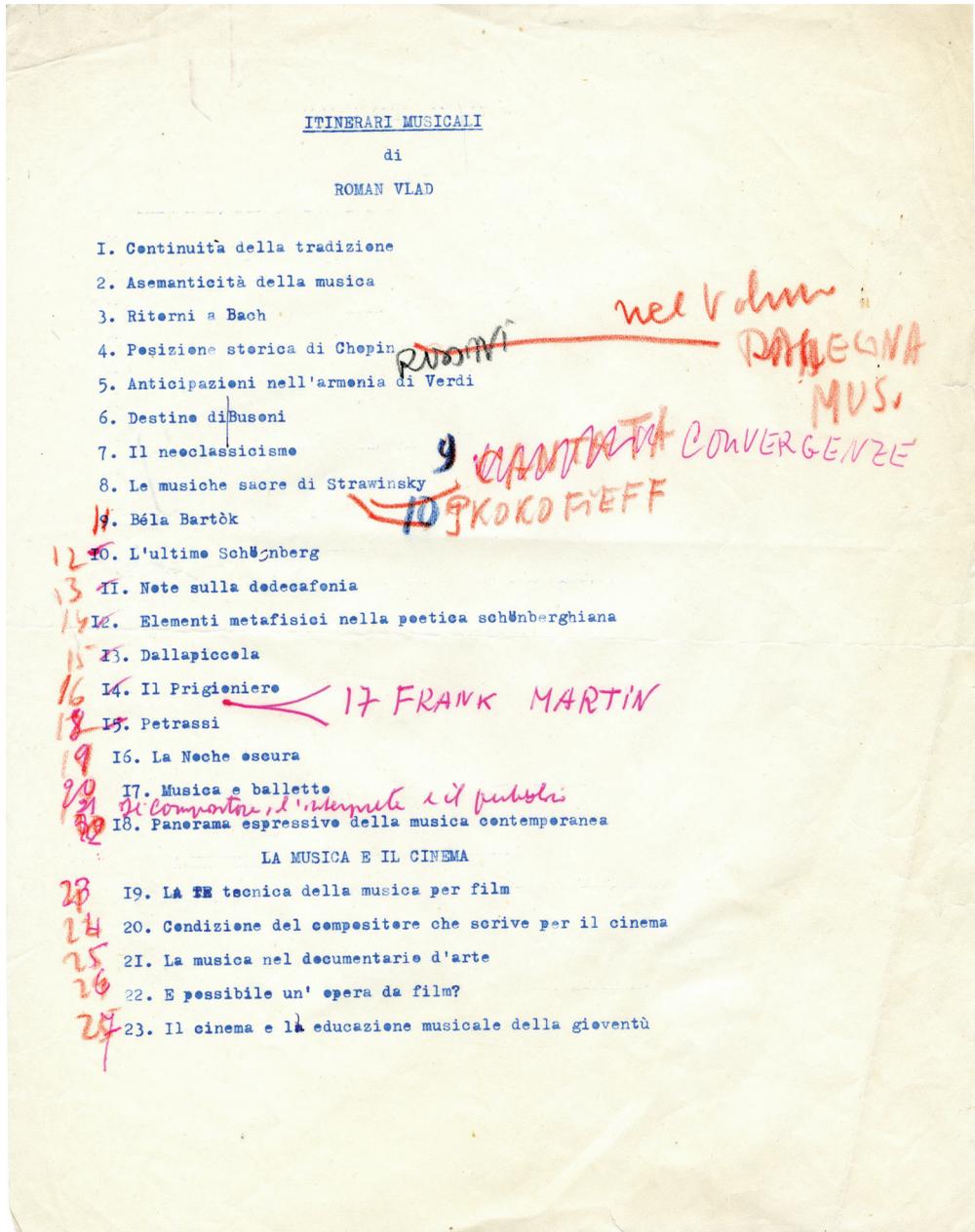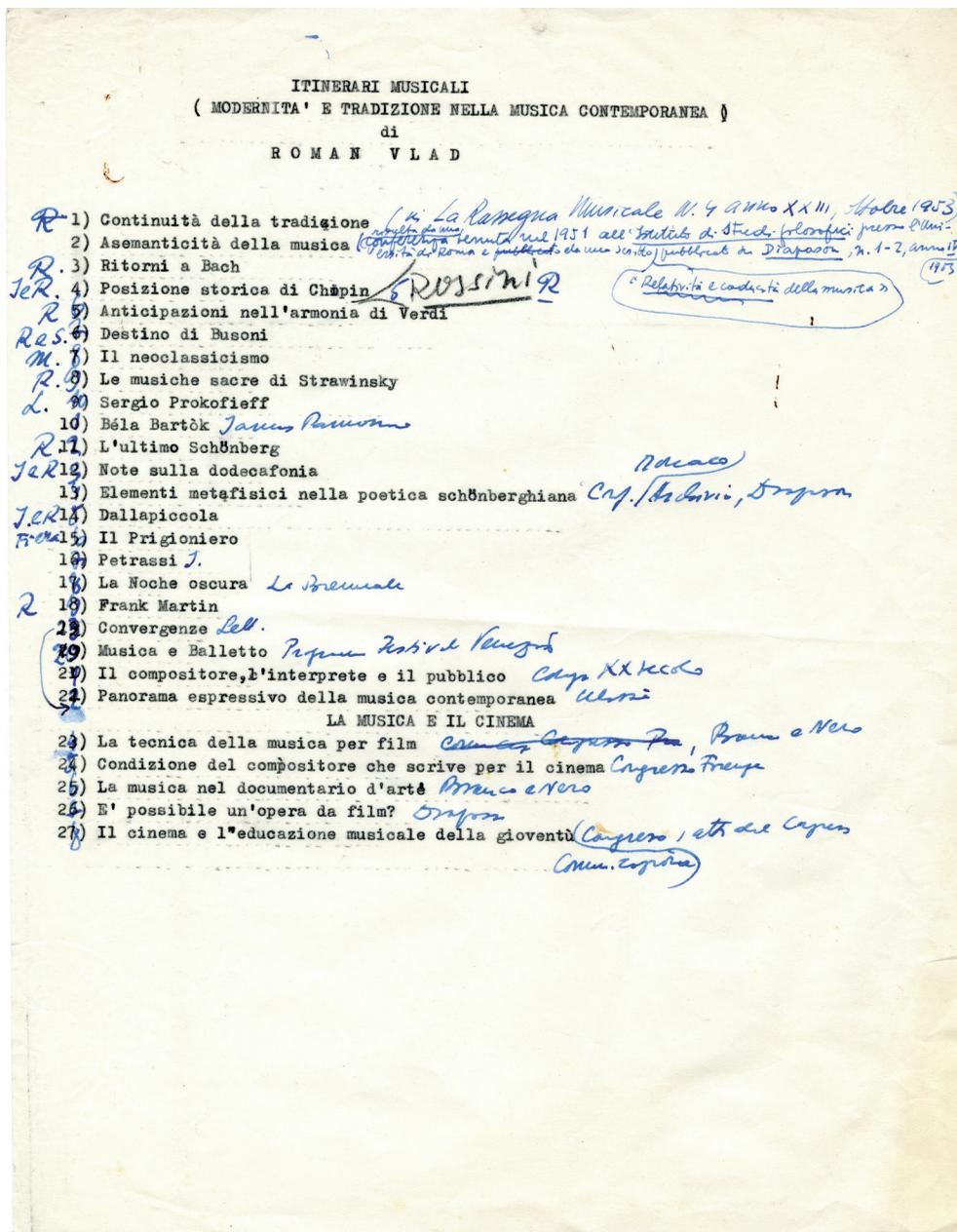
FIGURE 2. Roman Vlad, *Modernità e tradizione nella musica contemporanea*, typewritten index with autograph corrections, second draft. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad

The topic of religion is taken up again also in the chapter dedicated to 'Elementi metafisici nella poetica schönberghiana [Metaphysical elements in Schoenberg's poetics]' – which was later included in the volume *Storia della dodecafonia* (1958) – in which Vlad discusses the influence of religious faith on the poetics of Schoenberg and Stravinsky.[13] Vlad openly condemns certain metaphysical aspects of dodecaphony in Schoeberg, which he attributes to the influence of Swedenborg's theosophy, and in particular he criticises Schoenberg's tendency to consider himself as a sort of medium, as the vehicle for an idea that transcended his individual will. Schoenberg's mystical religion is contrasted with the religion of Stravinsky: a more human religion, closer to the values of Christianity and at the same time more respectful of the ontological reality of Being. Vlad recognises that even Stravinsky's dodecaphony may have ontological implications, but it cannot be regarded as a key to metaphysical knowledge because 'the relationship between music and transcendentalism can be established [only] on a purely symbolic level, or at best it admits of indirect correlations'.[14] In *Canticum Sacrum*, for instance, it is not by chance that the final movement consists of the *cancrizans* form of the first:

> The reversal of time which the music of the first piece undergoes in the fifth can also be correlated with the grammatical form of the texts. In the first ("Euntes in mundum universum, praedicate evangelium omni creaturae") the imperative has a future implication; in the last ("Illi autem profecti, praedicaverunt ubique") this future has become past. On a higher level of symbolism, the relationship may be referred to the word of God given back to God. Further, through the reversibility of time implied metaphorically by the *cancrizans* treatment which the musical argument of the first piece is given in the fifth piece, the music seems to reach towards a reality greater not only than itself but greater than the span it encompasses, namely the span of our experience of life.[15]

A few years before the publication of *Modernità e tradizione nella musica contemporanea*, Vlad had already published a book offering a historical survey of twentieth-century music. The text was never published but Vlad re-used many of its passages for his later writings. In the FRV there are two copies of the text: a manuscript copy entitled *Tra Schoenberg e Strawinsky*,[16] and a typescript entitled *Da Wagner a Strawinsky*.[17]

The book was born, as Vlad states in the introduction, as a series of lectures on modern music held at the Circle 'Il Ritrovo' in Rome, in 1947. On p. 121 of the typescript, in a chapter on Stravinsky, Vlad makes some observations on his *Three Sacred Choruses*:

These three Choruses bear the imprint of his unique personality: indeed, there are some who think that the study of these sacred compositions, in revealing the true foundation of the interiority of this musician, may offer the key to understanding the "formidable logic of Stravinsky's entire evolution, the profound variety of this art" (De' Paoli, *Igor Strawinsky*, Paravia, 1934, p. 132) [anche questi Cori portano il crisma della sua personalità inconfondibile: anzi, c'è chi pensa che lo studio di queste composizioni sacre, svelando il vero fondo dell'interiorità di questo musicista, possa offrire la chiave per comprendere la "logica formidabile di tutta l'evoluzione strawinskyana, la profonda unità di quest'arte"].

The passage shows how already in 1947 Vlad had developed the idea that to understand Stravinsky's stylistic evolution it was necessary to pay special attention to his sacred music. Vlad does not claim the paternity of this intuition, but he takes it from a book by Domenico De' Paoli in which, however, the question is treated only marginally in a footnote.[18] In any case, this short hint had evidently fired Vlad's imagination, who had turned it into the starting point and guiding principle of his interpretation of Stravinsky's music.

In the early 1950s, Vlad continued his study of Stravinsky's sacred music, publishing an article on the *Mass* and,[19] more importantly, extending his focus to other twentieth-century composers. In 1951, he published a long essay entitled 'Spiritualità nella musica moderna',[20] in which he clearly outlines the goals of his research:

I think I am not mistaken in supposing that not only the great mass of the public but also many scholars and professional musicians would not think it is possible to speak of spirituality in contemporary music. [...] It is not my intention to speak of the compositions of the likes of Don Lorenzo Perosi or Licinio Refice, to cite only two among the most illustrious and official representatives of contemporary sacred music. [...] What I intend to do, instead, is to see if even in the production of the composers belonging to the most advanced currents in modern music, one can find works that can be qualified as spiritual, in the sense that their imaginative and expressive contents transcend sentimental contingencies and, by appealing to the highest areas of our feelings, imply the contemplation of human existence in the light of its eternal destiny.[21]

According to Vlad, what is surprising is that, during the twentieth century, much more sacred music was written than in the previous century, a point he demonstrates by citing a long list of works: *Sancta Susanna* by Hindemith, *Le Roi David* by Honegger, *Motets per un temps de pénitence* by Poulenc, *Messe des pauvres* by Satie, *San Francesco d'Assisi* by Malipiero, *Psalmus Hungaricus* by Kodály, *Magnificat* by Petrassi, *Tre Laudi* by Dallapiccola, *Lauda per la natività*

del Signore by Respighi, *Moses und Aron* by Schoenberg and many others. He notes that spiritual and religious-subjects appear to exercise a greater attraction on the musicians who are in the front lines of the experimentation of new expressive forms. This leads him to the belief that in the modern horizon there is an intimate relation between artistic research and spiritual research.

From this principle also descends his interpretation of Stravinsky's music and in particular the idea that the attraction of the sacred had been the guiding principle of Stravinsky's development and of his stylistic choices. Vlad's unique ideas have not been taken up by other critics. Stravinsky's sacred works (especially those belonging to his last creative phase) have been the subject of many studies, but no critic has ever attributed such a crucial role to their religious aspect, or arrived at arguing that all of Stravinsky's works, even those that have no ties to sacred texts or subjects, are animated by a strong spiritual tension. Vlad however believed firmly in his theory and forcefully reaffirmed it in the closing sentence of the last edition of his book on Stravinsky: 'Stravinsky, incarnation of all that is paradoxical in our lives and guide in overcoming the tragically adverse circumstances of human life; Stravinsky, dateless up-to-date composer who looked beyond all fashion towards eternal values'.[22]

The sentence contains a keyword, 'guide', that perhaps can help us understand what led Vlad to advance such a surprising interpretation of Stravinsky's creative experience. But before we pursue this line of inquiry it is necessary to perform a brief incursion into Vlad's creative workshop.

THE ECHO OF STRAVINSKY IN ROMAN VLAD'S COMPOSITIONS

What were the main interests of Vlad the composer in the period in which Vlad the scholar was immersed in the study of Stravinsky's music? In his autobiography *Vivere la musica*, published in 2011, Vlad tells that in 1952 he spent a long time on the island of Lemnos along with his wife Licia, who worked as an archaeologist on an excavation:

> Licia worked with enthusiasm and I composed music sitting on a rock on the edge of a mythological, transparent sea. It was there that I wrote two works I consider fundamental, *Cinque elegie su testi biblici*, dedicated to Licia, and the Cantata *Le ciel est vide* [*The sky is empty*]; I attribute so much importance to these works because they are part of a fundamental question in my spiritual life. I refer to the tragedy of human existence, the need to believe, which Man will never be able to renounce and the immanence of doubt, which undermines the Faith; much of my music deals with this question, which is present from the first Cantata, which I wrote in Rome, in 1942, in Romanian.[23]

If one examines the catalogue of Vlad's work, one sees that between 1942 and 1953 he composed a large body of works based on sacred texts and the Bible in particular:

- *Cantata I 'Dove sei Elohim?'* for mixed choir and orchestra (1942);[24]

- *De Profundis (II Cantata)* for soprano solo, mixed choir and orchestra (1946);

- *Tre canti sacri* for voice and organ (1947);[25]

- *Tre invocazioni* [texts from the Bible] for voice and piano (1948–1949);[26]

- *Tre invocazioni* [texts from the Bible] for soprano and orchestra (1950);[27]

- *Piccola suite natalizia* for organ (1950);[28]

- *Canti biblici* for voice and piano (1951–1952);[29]

- *Cinque elegie (texts from the Bible)* for voice and string orchestra or for voice and piano (1950–1952);[30]

- *Le ciel est vide (III Cantata)* for mixed choir and orchestra (1952–1953).

Let us focus our attention on *Cinque elegie su testi biblici*, one of the two works the author cited as 'fundamental' in his entire production. The texts of these works are based on a selection of passages from the Bible, mostly from the Book of Job, interpolated with passages from Genesis, Ecclesiastes, and a few brief passages written by the author himself. The selection and assembling work was very accurate, indicating not only a profound knowledge of the Bible, but also Vlad's tendency to use the sacred texts in a very personal fashion. The elaboration of the text is attested by a series of preliminary notes and drafts: besides collecting the sources in Latin (FIGURE 3), the language of the final work, Vlad also felt the need to work with an Italian translation (FIGURE 4), to grasp and reflect more carefully on the nuances of the textual meaning.

FIGURE 3. Roman Vlad, *Cinque elegie su testi biblici,* draft of the Latin text. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad

FIGURE 4. Roman Vlad, *Cinque elegie su testi biblici*, draft of the text in Italian translation. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad

The case of the second *Elegia* is different. The work is based exclusively on lines 5–7 of Psalm 38, a work that had been set to music also by Stravinsky in his *Symphony of Psalms*. The texts of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* are from three different Psalms: two lines from Psalm 38 for the first movement, three lines from Psalm 39 for the second movement, and the entire Psalm 150 for the last movement. The lines in succession delineate a journey of spiritual research articulated into three stages: an invocation for help, a manifestation of hope, and a prayer thanking and praising the Lord.[31] The texts set to music by Vlad in *Cinque elegie* present a similar journey of spiritual research, which, however, arrives only at the second stage. Notwithstanding its inevitable and profound character, Vlad's research is destined to remain unanswered, because undermined at the core by the worm of doubt.

Stravinsky thus represents a model not only for Vlad's musical research, but also for his spiritual research, which after all, for Vlad, are one and the same thing. Vlad follows the path indicated by Stravinsky in a discrete fashion, using the texts of the Psalms only in the second of his *Cinque elegie*; furthermore, he carefully avoids using the same lines chosen by Stravinsky (13–14), opting instead for lines 5–7, which are similar in content.

On the other hand, the hypothesis that the starting point for Vlad's work was Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* is also confirmed by the texts of *Tre invocazioni* for voice and piano, written a few years earlier. Unlike in the *Cinque elegie*, in the *Tre invocazioni,* Vlad does not specify his sources in the score. These however can be identified through a careful analysis of the text. As in the *Cinque elegie,* Vlad uses a complex mosaic of Latin fragments, but in this case he takes them exclusively from the *Book of Psalms.* Let us consider in detail the text and the sources of the first *Invocazione* (the differences with the original are highlighted in italics):

Fuerunt mihi lacrimae meae panis die ac nocte,	Psalm 41.3
dum dicitur mihi per singulos dies: 'Ubi est Deus [tuus]?'	
Deus tuus?	
Ubi est Deus?	
Deus meus?	
Tibi dixit cor meum, quaesivit vultum tuum:	Psalm 26, 8–9
Domine Deus, Pater omnipotens	
vultum tuum Domine requirem.	
Ne avertes faciem tuam.	
Ne sileas.	Psalm 34, 22
Ne discedas a me.	
Domine Deus, in Te speravi.	Psalm 7, 2
Domine Deus, salutis meae, in die clamavi et nocte coram Te.	Psalm 87, 2

It is a highly dramatic text, which documents a troubled and suffering search for faith. Particularly interesting are the highlighted passages in italics. In the first one, Vlad concentrates on the question taken from the Bible – 'Ubi est Deus tuus?' – and replicates it several times, also in the first person ('[…] Deus meus?'). In the second case, he inserts in Psalm 26 a fragment of a prayer from the Christian Mass, taken from the text of *Gloria.* These references to his personal experience emphasise the demand for faith, which, however, in this case too is destined to remain without a response.

The same demand for faith is expressed in a more direct and dramatic fashion in certain passages of *Cinque elegie*, and in particular at the beginning of the fourth *Elegia*:

Quid est homo?	Job 7, 17
Quid est Deus?	Job 21,15
Quid est? Quod fuit?	Ecclesiastes 1, 9

The beginning of the fourth *Elegia*, entrusted to solo voice, is reproduced in EXAMPLE 1.[32] The four questions in the text correspond to four distinct musical phrases, separated by pauses. Each question corresponds to three different notes, and the succession of the four questions completes the twelve-tone collection. What we have is therefore a twelve-tone series, divided into four segments of three notes each and characterised by a strong internal symmetry, given that the only intervals used within each segment are the semitone and the whole-tone. The first segment contains the notes C# – B# – D#; the second, F – D# – E, is the retrograde of the first; the third segment, B♭ – C♭ – A, is the inversion of the first; and the fourth segment, F# – A♭ – G, is the retrograde inversion of the first.

EXAMPLE 1. **Roman Vlad,** *Cinque elegie su testi biblici*, **fourth** *Elegia*, **bb. 1–14**
© **Sugarmusic S.p.A. - Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, Milano**

As one can see, the series already includes all the possible development of the serial technique, which in the course of the piece is then used in more extensive ways. This choice has a strong symbolical significance in relation to the text.

The four questions on the identity of the human being and of God condense all the possible developments of human existence – 'who is man? who is God? who is? who was?' – while the four segments of the series present all four possible transformations of a single basic cell (the first segment). As a result, the twelve-tone row corresponds to the totality of Being, in which the image of man (the cell in its original form) reflects itself in the image of God (the cell in retrograde form), in the horizon of the present (the cell in inversion form) and in that of the past (the cell in its retrograde inversion form). This deep correlation between the different dimensions of Being is also emphasised through the choice of the rhythmic values: the durations of the original cell are retrograded in the retrograde cell, and in the same way the durations of the inverse cell (which are derived by permutation from those of the original cell) are retrograded in the retrograde inversion cell. Through this complex network of mirroring, which involves both the notes and the rhythmic values, the music activates a strongly symbolic interpretation of the textual content, which is realised with very similar procedures to those highlighted by Vlad in his analysis of Stravinsky's *Canticum Sacrum*.

Vlad's spiritual research continued in the Cantata *Le ciel est vide*, completed one year after the *Cinque elegie.* In this work, Vlad did not use Biblical texts but the novel *Siebenkäs* by Jean Paul, setting to music a passage taken from the second chapter, *Die Rede des todten Christis vom Weltgebäude herab dass kein Gott sei.* This is a terrifying nightmarish vision in which Christ appears to announce that 'the sky is empty' and that God does not exist. In reality, Jean Paul's objective is to show the absurdity of the atheist vision of the world and to make them aware of the immense blessing of faith. The work was set to music in two versions: a German one and a French one based on lines from *Le Christ aux Oliviers*, a poem by Gérard de Nerval, in which the author had freely imitated Jean Paul's poetic prose, and has Christ pronounce his speech during his tragic vigil on the Mount of Olives, when he feels abandoned by the Father.

The Cantata is divided into three movements and appears as an immense variation of a single three-note motive, where the possible variants are explored in various ways producing a number of always different dodecaphonic series. It is the same cell based on the intervals of semitone and whole-tone that Vlad had already used in the fourth *Elegia*, and that even in the Cantata assumes the same function of the fundamental core of the work. The analogies between

the two pieces are evident from the very outset: EXAMPLE 2 shows bars 4–6 of the score of *Le ciel est vide*, in which the dodecaphonic series of the fourth *Elegia* is used again in the same form for the violas (EXAMPLE 1).

EXAMPLE 2. Roman Vlad, *Le ciel est vide (III Cantata)* for mixed choir and orchestra, score, bb. 4–6 © Sugarmusic S.p.A. - Edizioni Suvini Zerboni, Milano

While in the fourth *Elegia* the composer uses a single twelve-tone row, in the Cantata we are witnessing a real multiplication of serial forms. The creative development of the composition was characterised by a very complex preparatory work, attested by various notebooks with notes, drafts and preliminary versions. FIGURE 5 shows a page relative to the first phase of the composition, in which Vlad jotted down various dodecaphonic series obtained through the combination of different three-note segments based on the same tone-semitone sequence used in the fourth *Elegia*.

FIGURE 5. Roman Vlad, *Le ciel est vide (III Cantata)* for mixed choir and orchestra, serial sketch. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad

The *Cinque elegie* and *Le ciel est vide* are the works in which, as Vlad wrote in his autobiography, 'The fundamental question of my inner life and of my most significant works is expressed in its most intense form'.[33] In both works, Vlad uses the same material: the tone-semitone three-note segment. A very flexible material, that allows him to generate a large number of dodecaphonic series, but at the same time, as noted above, has a strong symbolic import.

On the other hand, the use of a generative technique based on the proliferation of a cell of three or four notes is also a characteristic process of Stravinsky's music. In recent decades, his tendency to create his motivic shapes – his characteristic trichords and tetrachords – by 'composing with intervals', has been highlighted by numerous studies based on the analysis of its sketches.[34] Even in Vlad's book published at the end of the 1950s there are some hints about the structural function of these cells in Stravinsky's music, but the theme is not enlarged upon because the book is aimed at a large audience, and consequently it cannot dwell on a technical analysis of the scores. However, this interpretation emerges very clearly in other more specialised writings published in the following years. For example, in his analysis of the *Le sacre du printemps* published in 1983,[35] Vlad focuses on a generative technique based on the elaboration of three to four-tone cells that show strong analogies with the compositional technique he himself used in the Cantata *Le ciel est vide*. In particular, Vlad seems very inclined to direct his analysis of *Le sacre* in a 'proto-serial' perspective, and even the graphics and the symbols of his analysis are very similar to those he used in his sketch of the Cantata reproduced in FIGURE 5.[36]

Vlad had begun using dodecaphony from the late 1940s because he had become convinced that it was a particularly effective means of expanding the potential of traditional contrapuntal techniques. Stravinsky instead arrived at dodecaphony much later, toward the mid-1950s. On the other hand, although in terms of technique, the young Vlad had achieved a degree of autonomy, Stravinsky always remained for him the main model for his creative imagination.

It is no coincidence that, also in his book published in 1958, Vlad tends to interpret Stravinsky's approach to dodecaphony not so much as a true turning point, but rather as the natural outcome of some suggestions that were already present in his earlier works. In particular, Vlad shows that there were hints of Stravinsky's most recent development in earlier works such as the *Three Pieces for String Quartet* (1914), *The Five Fingers* (1921) and in the Symphonies of 1940 and 1945, where certain instrumental parts are restricted to one set of notes while others complete the twelve-note collection:

> Thus, there are advance warnings of a 'serial' phase in Stravinsky's music in works written long before 1950 [...]. We saw how [Stravinsky's development] was a kind of secret germination, in which certain elements matured unseen and then burst forth suddenly, so that anyone who had not been aware of this slow process of incubation was caught off guard.[37]

It should also be considered that three to four-tone cells and motives based on intervals of semitone and whole-tone are among the most recurring devices

in all Stravinsky's music: a predilection that probably comes from his octatonic routine. This topic is dealt with by Joseph N. Straus in his volume devoted to Stravinsky's last serial works. In particular, Straus focuses on the three-tone motives in which the semitone and the whole-tone move in opposite directions, and define this combination as 'twist motive':

> The most characteristic motives of Stravinsky's serial melodies can thus be understood in terms of combinations of either the semitone or the whole-tone with its transpositions. Other intervals also come to play a generative role, particularly in Stravinsky's last works, but the semitone and whole-tone remain Stravinsky's most common and characteristic intervallic points of departure. [...]

> In many cases, these two primary intervals are combined not only with themselves, but also with each other. When 1 and 2 move in the same direction, as in <+1, +2>, <–1, –2>, or <–2, –1>, segment of an octatonic or diatonic scale is produced, as is a form of a scalar trichord, sc(013). When the 1 and 2 move in different directions, as in <+1, –2>, <–1, +2>, <+2, –1>, or <–2, +1>, a "twist" motive results, as does a form of chromatic trichord, (012). The twist motive is particularly prevalent in Stravinsky's series.[38]

Straus emphasises how the twist motive is embedded in twelve-tone series from Stravinsky's works: *Canticum Sacrum; Agon*; *Movements*; *A Sermon, a Narrative, and a Prayer*; *The Flood*; *Anthem*; *Abraham and Isaac*; *Fanfare for a New Theatre*; *Introitus*; *Requiem Canticles*. The list is particularly meaningful, since in most cases these are works based on sacred texts, or otherwise linked to spiritual and religious themes. But the most significant issue for our investigation is that – in the same way – the twist motive is also embedded in the twelve-tone series from Vlad's sacred works composed in the 1950s: in fact, in the three-note segments that make up his series, the semitone and whole-tone intervals always move in opposite directions (EXAMPLE 1 and FIGURE 5).

Stravinsky had approached religion only towards the mid-1920s, in a period of profound creative crisis. To overcome this crisis, he engaged in a journey of spiritual discovery that allowed him to recover his faith and compose his first great work of sacred music, the *Symphony of Psalms*.[39] Struck by the example of the *Symphony of Psalms*, Vlad engaged in a journey of discovery that was at the same time both artistic and spiritual: he immersed himself in the study of the Bible and began writing the texts of his composition using Stravinsky's same method.

It is possible that the 'eternal values' were not always at the centre of Stravinsky's attention in all phases of his career.[40] But those same 'eternal values' are the guiding principle of Vlad's entire creative experience:

In composing music, I always aspired to be consistent with my ethical and aesthetic beliefs, following my own inner direction, the one I feel more deeply. The fundamental element of my creative being lives in me, the tragedy of human existence, the need to Believe and the doubt that undermines the Faith: a great part of my music continuously elaborates on this wrenching paradox. [...] The search for God and the impossibility of finding Him.[41]

Vlad's interpretation of Stravinsky's music is therefore the result of a virtuous dialectic, nourished by the interaction of two different subjects: Vlad the scholar and Vlad the composer. In the act of interrogating their object, the two subjects engage in a dialogue and interrogate one another, following basically different priorities. While the scholar looks for a key to interpret the musical reality, the composer looks above all for a 'guide', a reference point that will help him orient himself in his own creative development. The dynamics of this process are particularly complex because the composer Vlad was not looking for a stylistic model to imitate, in the conventional sense of the term. What Vlad sought (and found) in Stravinsky is above all an object on which to project a dense network of patterns, intuitions and meanings that populate his own creative imagination. Looking at Stravinsky through the lens of his own musical experience, Vlad discovered a Stravinsky that no other scholar had seen. An unconventional image of Stravinsky, but certainly a true one in many ways.

Notes

1   The present article has been translated into English by Gabriele Poole, including all citations unless otherwise indicated.

2   Roman Vlad, *Strawinsky, Torino: Einaudi,* 1958, 1973[2], 1983[3]; English ed. *Stravinsky,* trans. by Frederick and Ann Fuller, London – New York: Oxford University Press, 1960, 1967[2], 1978[3] (reprinted in 1985). Compared to the original edition of 1958, the second edition (published in English in 1967 and in Italian 1973) contains additional chapters which deal with Stravinsky's latest works.

3   Roman Vlad, 'Memorie su Stravinsky (raccolte da Gianfranco Vinay)', in: *Igor Stravinsky: Sounds and Gestures of Modernism*, ed. by Massimiliano Locanto, Lucca: Brepols, 2014, pp. 467–475: 470; see also Roman Vlad, *Vivere la musica. Un racconto autobiografico*, Torino: Einaudi, 2011, p. 111.

4   Most of the numerous reviews of the book – both positive and negative – underline the radio genesis of this book and the author's biased approach: 'It is obvious that a worthwhile book about any composer must stress certain works and neglect others. [...] But things like the *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* and the *Symphony in Three Movements* – to take only two examples – these, I should have thought, were obligatory objects of detailed study and exhaustive examination for any book that seriously pretended to assess Stravinsky's status and character as a composer. It is not possible to read them scantily'; Donald Mitchell, 'Review of *Stravinsky* by Roman Vlad', *The Musical Times*, CI/1413, 1960, p. 707. 'What I value in Vlad is his sympathetic attitude. Those who do not like it will call it a partisan attitude. He is well informed about Stravinsky's music, and he wants to share its pleasures with you. His purpose is to enhance your enjoyment. [...] Whether or not I decide that Stravinsky's thing is mine as well, I can thank Vlad for telling me, often with precision, what the thing involved is all about'; John Vinton, 'Review of *Stravinsky* by Roman Vlad', *Notes*, Second Series, XXV/3, 1969, pp. 496–497: 497.

5   Roman Vlad, *Stravinsky*, Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 153–154.

6   Susanna Pasticci, *Sinfonia di Salmi: l'esperienza del sacro in Stravinskij*, Lucca: LIM, 2012, pp. 41–51.

7   Vlad, *Stravinsky*, p. 155.

8   Vlad's assumption that religious issues have had a decisive role in the whole of Stravinsky's production – and not only in his latest works – has not been developed by other scholars except for a study published by Robert Copeland in 1982, which resumes and expands the core of Vlad's thesis: 'Indeed, both believers and unbelievers have found it difficult to understand Stravinsky's faith and its expression in his music. As a result [as Roman Vlad writes], "it has been ill-judged and even misinterpreted"'; Robert M. Copeland, 'The Christian Message of Igor Stravinsky', *The Musical Quarterly*, LVIII/4, 1982, pp. 563–579: 563.

9   Manuscript entitled 'Le musiche sacre di Strawinsky', written with blue pen on 9 double sheets totalling 14 numbered pages. Venezia, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Fondo Roman Vlad (from here on FRV).

10   'Le musiche sacre di Strawinsky', *La Rassegna Musicale*, XII/3, 1952, pp. 212-219.

11   'Le musiche sacre di Strawinsky', in: Roman Vlad, *Modernità e tradizione nella musica contemporanea*, Torino: Einaudi, 1955, pp. 128–139.

12 'Le musiche religiose di Igor Strawinsky', in: Robert Craft, Alessandro Piovesan, Roma Vlad, *Le musiche religiose di Igor Strawinsky con il catalogo analitico completo di tutte le sue opere*, Venezia: Lombroso, [1956], pp. 11–22.

13 Roman Vlad, *Storia della dodecafonia,* Milano: Suvini Zerboni, 1958, pp. 85–94.

14 Vlad, *Stravinsky*, p. 188; also in Vlad, *Storia della dodecafonia*, p. 170.

15 Vlad, *Stravinsky*, p. 187; also in Vlad, *Storia della dodecafonia*, p. 169.

16 *Tra Schoenberg e Strawinsky*, booklet containing 200 manuscript pages with typescript additions (not numbered progressively), not dated. FRV, fasc. 'Tra Schoenberg e Strawinsky'.

17 ~~*Tra Schoenberg e*~~ *Da Wagner a Strawinsky*, booklet containing 203 typescript pages with corrections by the author (progressively numbered), not dated. The volume is dedicated to Margherita Caetani, principess of Bassiano. FRV, fasc. 'Da Wagner a Strawinsky'.

18 Domenico De' Paoli, *Igor Strawinsky: da 'L'Oiseau de feu' a 'Perséphone'*, Torino: Paravia, 1934, pp. 131–132, note 1.

19 Roman Vlad, 'La Messa di Strawinsky', *Ricerca. Quindicinale della Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana*, VII/9, May 7, 1951, p. 3. In the FRV there is a typescript of this text (5 pages).

20 Roman Vlad, 'Spiritualità della musica moderna', *Responsabilità del Sapere*, 25–26, 1951, pp. 96–108. In the FRV there are two sources for this text, both bearing the title 'Spiritualità della musica contemporanea': a manuscript copy (booklet with four penciled sheets, not dated) and a typescript copy (17 sheets booklet, non dated). The published version is basically identical to the typescript copy, which however has a number of footnotes that are absent in the printed version. Some passages in the text are also reproduced in an article published in the following year: Roman Vlad, 'Per un catalogo di musica spirituale: Busoni Hindemith', *Ricerca. Quindicinale della Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana*, VIII/3, 1 February 1952, p. 3.

21 Vlad, 'Spiritualità della musica moderna', p. 96.

22 Vlad, *Stravinsky*, p. 271.

23 Vlad, *Vivere la musica*, pp. 158–159.

24 The score was printed only in 2009, by a Romanian publisher (Iași: Editura Ars).

25 The title of the three songs are: *Agnus Dei (Aria all'antica)*, *De profundis (Corale)* and *Puer natus est (Canto natalizio)*. In the FRV there are: a manuscript copy of *Agnus Dei*, dated 1947; a manuscript of the three complete songs, on glossy paper.

26 In the printed score of *Tre Invocazioni,* published by De Santis, in Rome, we find the date 1951. In the FRV there are various preparatory materials and drafts, besides the complete manuscript of the last version of the work (identical to the printed version), dated 1948–1949. There is also a copy of the printed edition, in which the date 1951 on the title page is crossed out with a pen stroke and the date 1948–1949 has been added on the first page of the score.

27 Transcription for voice and orchestra of *Tre invocazioni* for voice and piano. In the FRV, there is the manuscript of the score (57 pages, rather disorderly, with notes written with pens in different colors).

28 In the FRV there is a manuscript of the work dedicated to Flavio Benedetti Michelangeli.

29 The cycle consists of four songs. In the FRV there are several drafts and a fair copy manuscript of the complete work dated 1951–1952. It seems however that Vlad had already begun working on the project in 1950, given that the preliminary draft of the first song (in which he uses the text *Notum fac mihi Domine,* which in the final version will be used instead for the second song) is dated 1950.

30 Transcription for voice and string orchestra of the four *Canti biblici* for voice and piano, with the addition of a fifth piece. In the FRV, there is also the manuscript of a brief orchestral prelude (one page) entitled *Preludio per le Cinque Elegie*, dated 1975.

31 Pasticci, *Sinfonia di Salmi*, pp. 77–88.

32 The *Cinque elegie* can be sung either by a female voice or male voice and both versions are present in the score.

33 Vlad, *Vivere la musica*, p. 221.

34 See, among others, Massimiliano Locanto, 'Composing with Intervals: Intervallic Syntax and Serial Technique in the Late Stravinsky', *Music Analysis*, XXVIII/2, 2009, pp. 221–266.

35 Roman Vlad, 'Rilettura della «Sagra»', *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana*, XVII/3–4, 1983, pp. 426–492. See also Roman Vlad, 'Architettura di un capolavoro. Ancora sulla «Sagra della primavera»', *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana*, XXXII/1, 1999, pp. 29–70; and Roman Vlad, *Architettura di un capolavoro. Analisi della 'Sagra della primavera' di Igor Stravinsky,* Torino: BMG, 2005.

36 I thank one of the anonymous reviewers of this article for reporting this analogy.

37 Vlad, *Stravinsky*, p. 176.

38 Joseph N. Straus, *Stravinsky's Late Music*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 90.

39 Susanna Pasticci, 'Stravinsky and the Spiritual World of Orthodox Theology', in: *Igor Stravinsky: Sounds and Gestures of Modernism,* pp. 31–48.

40 See note 22.

41 Vlad, *Vivere la musica*, pp. 220–221.