

# *Tre poesie di Montale* by Roman Vlad: compositional techniques and text correspondences

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## AN 'UNSOLVED MATTER': SETTING CONTEMPORARY POETRY TO MUSIC. VOCAL MUSIC BY ROMAN VLAD

The life of Roman Vlad (1919–2013) is an example of total dedication to music declined in different professions: from teaching to artistic direction, from commitment as a music critic and communicator to musicological contributions, from his position as President of the International Association of Authors and Composers [Confédération Internationale des Auteurs et Compositeurs] and of the Italian Society of Authors and Publishers [SIAE] to composing activity. The complexity of Vlad's personality is reflected in his rich, articulated and varied vocal production, which has always occupied a relevant place in the composer's career. His last vocal composition dates back to just one month before his death in Rome on 21 September 2013;<sup>1</sup> the first works written by the very young composer immediately before he moved to Rome from Romania (November 1938) are composed for voice and piano.<sup>2</sup>

The abundance of the vocal repertoire in Vlad's catalogue should not just be evaluated in chronological terms, but also in terms of heterogeneity and divergence

among the compositions: the variety of textual sources, including biblical passages, medieval and Renaissance verses, with a certain predilection for contemporary poetry, is remarkable.<sup>3</sup> The use of multilingualism is also notable; Vlad spoke several languages fluently and employed them in his works, also combined together in the same compositions: Italian (old and modern), Latin, English, French and German (as well as Russian, in theatre music). This is a fundamental point in the poetics of the composer, since one of Vlad's most interesting cues is his interest in the sound of languages and words, especially because of phonetic singularity (e.g. Japanese), and its musical application. In presenting his own vocal repertoire, Vlad says that 'the "music" inherent in poetic texts and in the phonemes that constitute them should be made as explicit as possible, also extending the parallelism between music and text to the formal organisation'.<sup>4</sup> In this context, an important case study is represented by *Tre poesie di Montale* for baritone and piano (whose composition started in 1975), published by Ricordi in 1978 (the second version, for *voce media* and orchestra, was published in 1980).<sup>5</sup> In this case, in fact, the role played by the text in the musical conception is supported by a long reflection which Vlad made through an exchange of letters with Eugenio Montale, author of the poems he set to music (*Forse un mattino andando*, *Strana pietà* and *Suoni*).<sup>6</sup>

As regards his own works, Montale often writes on 'the tormented issue of marital and extramarital relations between Word and Music';<sup>7</sup> he repeatedly discusses the difficulty of setting poems of high artistic value to music, arguing that the truly poetic word already contains its own music and does not tolerate another: only words not poetic enough or not at all poetic can be 'the hanger [l'attaccapanni]' for a subsequent poem.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, 'most of the times, musicians who rely on words use ugly words. [...] There are few exceptions: some of them date back to the origin of the melodrama, others are observed in Lieder (Heine was lucky)'.<sup>9</sup> In his approach to the three poems by Montale, Vlad reflects on the problem of the role of musical intonation compared to the intrinsic musicality of the Montalian words: various documents housed at the FRV show the composer's great respect for Montale's point of view. In seeking an answer to the scepticism expressed by the poet ('Several of my works have been played and performed, but I do not know much about them [...]. I wish you better success, but the problem of poetry set to music – or the problem of "poetry for music" – if that already existed at the time of Metastasio – remains unsolved'),<sup>10</sup> Vlad flips the perspective in the comparison between music and poetry: the former *needs* texts of great artistic value (like those of Montale), because the composer can draw inspiration from such a 'base' and integrate the two different types of musicality in a single combination. Moreover Vlad states that Montale's poetry is not perceived as being disfigured by the musical setting (poetry remains 'intact' even if it 'disintegrates' in music).<sup>11</sup>

## THE TECHNIQUE OF PITCH-PHONEME CORRESPONDENCE IN *TRE POESIE*

Vlad seeks a solution to Montale's observations through the definition and use of compositional techniques chosen to ensure a constant adherence between verbal text and musical setting. It is, first of all, a unity of purpose, of semantic and communicative expression deriving from the affinity that Vlad explicitly declares towards the themes and the stylistic power of the Montalian poetry. This deep exchange between verse and music manifests itself in a very concrete way on the acoustic level, by paying constant attention to the intrinsic musicality of the words, to the structure of the verse with its own tonic accents and its own breaths, to the peculiarity of the lexical choices. The use of the quarter-tone stands out among the technical means preferred by the composer, and it is introduced in order to replicate a particular intonation of the voice (as a symbolic imitation of the spoken cadence). Another regular occurrence is his habit of placing clusters that coincide with remarkable places in the text. However, the stylistic feature that guarantees uniformity and structural coherence with the musical setting is the correspondence between pitch and phonemes, which appears throughout the triptych and is based on the definition of the melodic movement from the succession of 'dark' or 'bright' vowels. In the case of *Tre poesie*, the acoustic image that Vlad superimposes over the textual-phonetic one consists of an initial cell of 5 sounds associated with the words 'forse un mattino'. The procedure is described by Vlad himself:

In December 1975 the mental reading of those verses suddenly and spontaneously assumed musical contours. The music of poetry began to induce my own music which was different from all I could have imagined before. This music unfolded from a small 5-note cell. [...] I realised that the 5 different vowels corresponded to the 5 different notes that appear there [in the cell]: the darker one, u, on the lower note, the brightest, i, on the most acute one. Starting from this cell (which includes 3 tempered sounds and 2 untempered tones of the quarter-tone type<sup>12</sup> and which is included 5 times in each octave, with the relative transpositions), the musical interpretation of the entire poem is developed.<sup>13</sup>

The melodic cell – C-sharp, D, C ↑, D ↓, E-flat ↓, D-flat – contains the repetition of a sound which, at the same time, opens and closes it (C-sharp/D-flat) and corresponds to the repetition of the vowel *o*; the pattern is also characterised by the presence of three untempered sounds, raised or lowered by a quarter of a tone, associated with the darker vowel (*u*), to the brightest (*i*) and the middle one (*a*). In the *incipit* of *Forse un mattino*, the correspondence between pitch and vowel quality is scrupulously respected and, in accordance with this principle, from the end to the beginning of the first verse each syllable is intoned in relation to the one preceding it.

EXAMPLE 1. Vowels contained in the *incipit* of *Forse un mattino* by Roman Vlad, and the consequential melodic profile. The arrows positioned between the notes (blue) and between the vowels (green) show the correspondence between the melodic movement and the brightness of the vowels. An upward arrow between two notes indicates that the second note is more acute (and *vice versa*); an upward arrow between two vowels indicates that the second vowel is clearer (and *vice versa*)

The scheme which only reports the vowels contained in the first verse ('Forse un mattino andando in un'aria di vetro') exemplifies the adherence of the melodic profile to the principle of vowel quality: the voice moves from low to high every time the text moves from one vowel to a more open one, and *vice versa*. Even the diphthong contained in the word 'aria' is subject to this simple mechanism: the corresponding sound (which metaphorically supports the following *a* in the text) is represented by an *appoggiatura*. EXAMPLE 1 also demonstrates that this correspondence is only interrupted in two places: the syllable '-dan' in 'andando' and the syllable 've-' of 'vetro'. Both are essential places in the metrical scansion of the text, because it is here that the primary ('vetro') and the secondary ('andando') accents of the first verse fall. The verse is constructed like a classical Alexandrine, divided into two hemistichs with the accent in sixth position. Similar cases affecting anomalies in the correspondence between pitches and phonemes are recorded in a number of significant places in the text: such is the case of the structurally and semantically relevant words 'nulla [nothing]' and 'vuoto [empty space]' in verse 3, and of 'terrore [terror]' (verse 4), or 'arida [arid]' (verse 2) and 'alberi case colli [trees houses hills]' (verse 6).

It is interesting to note how the composer elaborated this technique in the first sketches drawn up on board an Olympic Airways plane, on the back of a menu used as a makeshift sheet of paper (FIGURE 1).<sup>14</sup> This source reports five pentagrams of music, written in treble clef and with no metric indications, which reproduce the *incipit* of *Forse un mattino*: this first version is coherent with the technique of pitch-phoneme correspondence, but it is first set on the sounds D, E-flat, G, A, D and then, with the introduction of the quarter-tones, on the melodic pattern D, D $\uparrow$ , E-flat $\downarrow$ , D, E, D-sharp, and finally on D, D $\uparrow$ , E-flat $\uparrow$ , E-flat, F, E.

FIGURE 1. Reproduction of the preliminary sketch for *Forse un mattino* by Roman Vlad: cover of the Olympic Airways inflight meal menu and verso with the composer's notes. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad



We can notice that the composer counts the syllables in the first pentagram according to the correct metrical scansion of the verse, i.e. including the synalepha between the syllables ‘-se’ of ‘forse’ and the following article ‘un’: both the vowels are sung in E-flat. Despite its provisional nature, this detail is relevant in the context of the correspondence between pitch and vowel quality. Vlad is more or less aware that he has created a sequence of sounds which gradually proceeds towards the high register (D, E-flat, G, A) in parallel with the progressive opening of the vowels (*o, e, a, i*), excluding the *u* which remains implicit in the outcome of the synalepha. Probably the ‘intuizione spontanea [spontaneous intuition]’<sup>15</sup> mentioned by Vlad in his exchange of letters with Montale emerges at this time: the first three words of the poem contain all 5 vowels, and it becomes preferable to emphasise this peculiarity of the text (rather than minimizing it by using the synalepha). Vlad suddenly changes the distribution of the sounds related to the syllables (EXAMPLE 2).

**EXAMPLE 2. Musical setting of the *incipit* of *Forse un mattino* by Roman Vlad in the versions with synalepha (above, transcription from the sketch written on the Olympic Airways menu) and without a synalepha (below, transcription from the Ricordi 1978 edition, transposed in C-sharp)**

For - se/un mat - ti - - no an - dan - - do

For - se un mat - ti - no an - dan - do in un' a - ria di ve - tro

Moreover, the phonetic-melodic cell placed at the opening of the *incipit* of *Forse un mattino* represents the basis of the structure of the whole triptych: *Strana Pietà* and *Suoni* are built on the repetition – permuted, transposed or varied – of melodic segments deriving from the original 5-sound cell. As a result, the correspondence between pitches and phonemes involves the entire composition, establishing an underlying uniformity.

The application of the principle, however, never happens mechanically. Some sections of *Suoni*, for example, are characterised by a strict musical adherence in correspondence to syllables containing diphthongs. In these cases the application of the above-mentioned principle is particularly evident: i.e., on the words ‘più’, ‘tiene’, ‘uggia’, ‘grattuggia’ [*sic*] the melody is split into two sounds corresponding to each vowel of the diphthong and placed at a specific pitch so that the symmetry

is respected by the phonetic quality of the vowel (the movement is descending in 'più' because the text goes from *i* to *u*, which is darker; the opposite happens in 'uggia' because *a* is brighter than *i*, and so on) (EXAMPLE 3).

**EXAMPLE 3. Musical setting of *Suoni* by Roman Vlad, lines 3–4, containing the words 'più', 'tiene' and 'uggia' (transcription from the Ricordi 1978 edition)**

The musical score shows a vocal line in bass clef with a piano accompaniment on a grand staff. The lyrics are: "Non più - il fi - lo che tie - ne, non l'ug - gia". The time signatures are 3/8, 2/4, 3/8, and 2/4. The melody is written on a single staff with a piano accompaniment on a grand staff below it.

The Fondo Roman Vlad also preserves a source consisting of a single horizontal sheet of music paper, written in pencil on the *recto* of the page and then annotated in red and black pen: it is an intermediate step between the notes Vlad took 'on the fly' and the first complete draft. It provides important information on the *incipit* and on the first two lines of *Forse un mattino* and is an unavoidable source for some executive and interpretative indications. For example, the gloss noted on the top edge of the sheet explains the articulation of the vocal line, which perfectly reflects the theoretical principle of pitch-phoneme correspondence: 'Time and rhythm of an (intimate) reading of the poetic text. / Mind articulation, to oneself. / Ideally, the singer should accompany him/herself'.<sup>16</sup> In the right margin Vlad writes: 'Time completely free, related to breathing skill' (FIGURE 2).<sup>17</sup>

The correspondence of pitch-phonemes and the choice of using untempered sounds serve the same purpose. Although these sounds are difficult to intonate during the execution, Vlad sees them as being extremely close to the natural declamation of words, and therefore used with the aim of emulating the cadence of the Italian language.<sup>18</sup>

FIGURE 2. Sketch for *Forse un mattino* by Roman Vlad. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad

## THE TECHNIQUE OF PITCH-PHONEME CORRESPONDENCE: FURTHER APPLICATIONS

Vlad always pursued the path of adapting sounds to the phonemes of the text, and the principle of pitch-phoneme correspondence can be found in other vocal works he composed. We can mention, in this regard, the *Cadenze Michelangiolesche* for voice and orchestra (1966) and *Lettura di Michelangelo* for 24 voices (1964),<sup>19</sup> which occupy a prominent place within the group of compositions on mystical-themed texts (*Cinque Elegie*, written in 1952, and the cantata *Le ciel est vide*, 1954, are part of this repertoire). In both compositions, the poem set to music – *Chiunque nasce a morte arriva* – comes from the *Rime* by Michelangelo Buonarroti, and the musical setting is strongly inspired by the timbric suggestions of the text. It has been noticed that ‘the music proposes, by means of specific phonetic research, to capture the hidden song of words, to capture the music contained in words’.<sup>20</sup> The



sound material of the *Cadenze* is indeed created from a small cell of notes whose relative pitches are in relation to the qualities of the vowels included in the various words (one of the notes is sung on the consonant *m*, mouth closed) (EXAMPLE 4).

**EXAMPLE 4.** *Incipit of Roman Vlad, Cadenze Michelangiolsche (voice). Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad*



In this way, music has a dual function: it not only captures evocative meanings of the text, but stands as an ‘emanation of the very “music” that words contain [una emanazione della stessa “musica” delle parole]’,<sup>21</sup> reflecting the nuances of timbre and the phonetic structure in general.

The most interesting application of the pitch-vowel correspondence can probably be found in *Le stagioni giapponesi. Settanta Haiku per Michiko Hirayama* (1994). As the composer himself says, the numerous journeys to the Far East (Japan, China) had a very strong impact on his experimentation on the sound of words, on phonetic aspects and on glottological information:

In my frequent trips to the East, I had the opportunity to reflect on the fundamental differences between the Japanese and the Chinese language. [...] In the Japanese language [...] the vowels remain unchanged, they do not change meaning according to the intonation and, in a way, it is similar to Italian. As in the Italian language, the vowels are 5, from A to U, and there are also five notes of the basic pentatonic system of Japanese music. Following the example of the ancient Japanese theater, the Nō, I had the idea of composing music on Japanese poetic texts, applying the procedure I had experimented when setting the poems of Montale and Michelangelo to music, that is, establishing a relationship between the pitch of the notes and the vowels of the sung words.<sup>22</sup>

The occasion arises when Vlad receives an invitation from the Japanese Institute of Culture to compose a piece of music to celebrate the birthday of the Japanese singer Michico Hirayama:

I immediately thought of using a Japanese text, a Haiku, a form of Japanese poetry of ancient medieval tradition whose structure consists of 17 syllables (5 – 7 – 5). On this Haiku, concerning the sea in spring, I composed a melody to which I applied the procedure of matching the pitches of the notes with the bright or dark tone of the syllables in the poetic text. [...] On the score, edited by Ricordi, I noted that the compositions had to be sung with the original Japanese text, in order to respect the phonetic structure.<sup>23</sup>

*Cadenze Michelangiolesche* and *Le stagioni giapponesi* represent two chronologically distant phases in the elaboration of the technique of pitch-phoneme correspondence. Compared to these two compositions, *Tre poesie di Montale* embodies a particularly fitting result for the application of this technique, since its less literal and more functional use is such that even the exceptions to the rule are motivated by an expressive purpose. Ultimately, there are many different occasions on which Vlad strives to express not only the semantic sense but also the real sound of words in music. The rules that define these attempts, starting from the pitch-phoneme correspondence, transcend an obvious mimesis of the word and put themselves at the service of a strong communicative will: the constant dialogue with the expressive needs of the text is certainly a relevant part of the composer's stylistic code. The naturalness and immediacy that constitute an intrinsic value of much of Vlad's vocal music owe much to this feature.

## Notes

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- 1 This is the *Sonetto di Mallarmé* for soprano and ensemble, whose last measures were left unfinished due to the death of the composer. It was completed by Lucio Gregoretti and performed for the first time in Rome in November 2014, conducted by Gabriele Bonolis. Since 2013 all Vlad's unpublished documents have been held in the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Roman Vlad (henceforth FRV).
- 2 I.e. a group of songs on poems by Luciano Blaga, written in 1937.
- 3 The words by Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374) coexist, for example, with those of Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926). In choosing texts, one notes a general interest for contemporaries, including Alberto Bevilacqua (1934–2013), Giovanni Fontana (b. 1946) and Valerio Magrelli (b. 1957). The whole poetic genre is taken in its widest meaning: for this reason, the composer's catalogue includes musical settings of nursery rhymes and puns (for example, those of Toti Scialoja), alongside 'classic' poets like Leopardi and Rilke.
- 4 'si tende a rendere massimamente esplicita la "musica" insita nei testi poetici, nei fonemi che li costituiscono, estendendo il parallelismo con i testi anche all'articolazione formale'. Roman Vlad, 'Autoanalisi', in: *Autoanalisi dei compositori italiani contemporanei. Con un saggio introduttivo di Renzo Cresti*, a cura di Alberta Cataldi, Napoli: Pagano Editore, 1992, pp. 43–47: 43. Here the composer gives a list of his compositions, starting from those of the 1960s and excluding the works written in his youth.
- 5 The composer himself supports this thesis when he says that *Tre poesie* 'can well represent my poetics [possono ben rappresentare la mia poetica]'. See Roman Vlad, 'Un ricordo di Eugenio Montale', *Musica e dossier*, 21, September 1988, pp. 69–70: 69. For further information regarding this piece, see Laura Mazzagufo, "*Tre poesie di Montale*" di Roman Vlad: studio genetico-analitico, Bachelor's Thesis in Musicology, University of Pavia at Cremona, 2017, 134 pp.
- 6 The composer met the poet on the occasion of the musical evenings organised by Cesare Brandi during the war. In his autobiography, Vlad talks about the other times they met: 'We often

met when he was the *Corriere della Sera's* music critic and he came to all the Festivals to which I also went; I remember the contemporary music concerts at the Venice Biennale which we attended together, when we talked about the many problems of musical life. In the collection of his writings published by Mondadori some pages are dedicated to our friendship and to my failed attempts to make him understand Schoenberg's music [Ci incontravamo spesso quando era critico musicale del *Corriere della Sera* e, come tale, veniva a tutti i Festival ai quali mi recavo anche io; ricordo i concerti di Musica contemporanea della Biennale di Venezia che ascoltavamo insieme, quando si parlava dei tanti problemi della vita musicale. Nella raccolta dei suoi scritti pubblicata da Mondadori ci sono alcune pagine dedicate alla nostra amicizia e ai miei tentativi, mai riusciti, di fargli comprendere la musica di Schönberg]. Roman Vlad, *Vivere la musica. Un racconto autobiografico*, a cura di Vittorio Bonolis e Silvia Cappellini, Torino: Einaudi, 2011, p. 167. The mentioned collection is Eugenio Montale, *Il secondo mestiere*, a cura di Giorgio Zampa, Milano: Mondadori, 1996, 6 vols.

- 7 'la vessata questione dei rapporti, coniugali ed extra-coniugali, tra il Verbo e la Musica'. Eugenio Montale, 'Le parole e la musica', in: Montale, *Il secondo mestiere*, vol. 5 (*Arte, musica, società*), pp. 112–115: 112.
- 8 Eugenio Montale, 'Parole in musica', in: Montale, *Il secondo mestiere*, vol. 5 (*Arte, musica, società*), pp. 400–401: 400.
- 9 'i musicisti che devono appoggiarsi alla parola si servono quasi sempre di parole brutte. [...] Le eccezioni sono poche: alcune risalgono all'origine del melodramma, altre si osservano nel campo liederistico (Heine ha avuto buona fortuna)'. Eugenio Montale, 'Variazioni', in: Montale, *Il secondo mestiere*, vol. 5 (*Arte, musica, società*), pp. 401–402: 401.
- 10 'Varie cose mie sono state musicate ed eseguite, ma io non ne so molto. [...] Auguro a Lei miglior successo, ma il problema della poesia musicata – o quello della "poesia per musica" – se quella esisteva già al tempo di Metastasio – resta insoluto'. Letter from Eugenio Montale to Roman Vlad, 25 November 1976. The manuscript and the photocopy of Montale's letter to Vlad are kept in the FRV, fasc. *Tre poesie di Montale*. Vlad transcribes the poet's reply in: Vlad, 'Un ricordo di Eugenio Montale', p. 70.
- 11 'I know too well that my music – and perhaps music in general – cannot add anything to your poem, but it can only need it. And it is certainly not by setting your poems to music that one might believe that such a problem is solved. And this for the simple reason that your poetry is absolute poetry. This kind of poetry is not only not designed for music, but it also does not need any music. It has its own interior music! Music, instead, may need it. In order to draw inspiration from it. In order to obtain inspiration and nourishment. A nourishment that, fortunately, does not consume the substance it feeds on. That leaves intact whatever it touches, intact whatever, for its own ends, it disintegrates. Only this awareness gives me the courage to make my music take advantage of your poetry [So troppo bene che la mia musica – e forse la musica in generale – non può aggiungere nulla alla Sua poesia, ma può solo averne bisogno. E non è certo musicando poesie Sue che si potrebbe pensare di risolvere un simile problema. E questo per la semplice ragione che la Sua è poesia assoluta. Una poesia che non solo non è pensata per la musica, ma che non ha bisogno di alcuna musica. Che la sua musica la porta in sé! È invece la musica che può averne bisogno. Per trarne ispirazioni. Per ricavarne stimolo e nutrimento. Un nutrimento che per ventura non consuma minimamente la sostanza di cui si nutre. Che lascia intatto ciò che tocca, integro ciò che, ai propri fini, disgrega. Solo questa consapevolezza mi dà l'ardire di far profittare la mia musica della sua poesia]. Unpublished letter from Roman Vlad to Eugenio Montale, undated. FRV, fasc. *Tre poesie di Montale*.

- 12 The graphic signs for quarter-tones are small arrows placed on the note head, pointing upwards or downwards depending on whether the quarter-tone is added to or subtracted from the pitch of the tempered sound. Both in the drafts following the first sketch and in the Ricordi 1978 edition, the relationship between tempered and untempered sounds is reversed (2 temperate sounds and 3 untempered sounds).
- 13 ‘Nel dicembre del 1975 la lettura mentale di quei versi assunse improvvisamente e spontaneamente contorni musicali. La musica della poesia cominciò a indurre una mia musica diversa da tutta quella che avevo potuto immaginare prima. Questa musica si dipanava da una piccola cellula di 5 note. [...] Mi accorsi che nelle 5 diverse note che vi compaiono cadevano le 5 diverse vocali: la più scura, u, sulla nota più bassa, la più chiara, i, su quella più acuta. A partire da questa cellula (che comprende 3 suoni temperati e 2 non temperati dell’ordine dei quarti di tono e che, con le relative trasposizioni, è compresa 5 volte in ogni ottava) si sviluppa la lettura musicale dell’intera poesia’. From a typescript in a four-page bundle, corrected with a black pen, kept in the FRV, fasc. *Tre poesie di Montale* (incipit: ‘Siena, settembre 1942’), then merged in the draft for the quoted article ‘Un ricordo di Eugenio Montale’. The same text, with minor modifications but with different deletions, is also found in a one-page document, a pencil manuscript on the recto, also kept in the FRV, fasc. *Tre poesie di Montale*.
- 14 The first trace of the music of *Forse un mattino* – which can be defined as the first spontaneous manifestation of the incipit of the composition – was written on the menu of the in-flight meal offered aboard the plane taking Vlad to Athens on 14 December 1975. It is a pen sketch that was the result of an extemporaneous idea. As Vlad himself says, the sudden inspiration came from reading a newspaper article about Montale winning the Nobel Prize. See Vlad, ‘Un ricordo di Eugenio Montale’, pp. 69–70.
- 15 Letter from Roman Vlad to Eugenio Montale, 12 October 1976, published in: Angela Carone, ‘Musica non facit saltus’. *Tre poesie di Montale* musicate da Roman Vlad’, *Paragone*, LXV/114–115–116, August–December 2014, pp. 20–32: 27.
- 16 ‘Tempo e ritmo d’una lettura (intima) del testo poetico. / Scansione mentale, tra sé. / L’ideale sarebbe se il cantante s’accompagnasse da sé’. FRV, fasc. *Tre poesie di Montale*.
- 17 ‘Tempo del tutto libero, commisurato alla capacità di fiato’. FRV, fasc. *Tre poesie di Montale*. In the Ricordi edition these annotations become: ‘Time and rhythm of an intimately discursive reading of the poetic text. / Follow the voice like a shadow. / Without any vibration; mouth barely open, lips not moving; completely engrossed, suspended. / Time completely free (related to the singer’s breathing skills) [Tempo e ritmo di una lettura intimamente discorsiva del testo poetico. / Seguire la voce come un’ombra. / Senza vibrazione alcuna; la bocca appena aperta, senza muovere le labbra; del tutto assorto, sospeso. / Tempo del tutto libero (commisurato alla capacità di fiato di chi canta)]’.
- 18 The use of quarter-tones is so important that Vlad finds a counterpart even in the piano part and indicates them graphically with two notes at a distance of a semitone, enclosed in a circle.
- 19 *Lettura di Michelangelo* was commissioned in 1964 for the Cork International Choral Festival and performed there for the first time in May 1966 by the Rome Polyphonic Choir of the Italian Radio and Television directed by Nino Antonellini. *Cadenze michelangiottesche* was written in 1967, on the same text of *Lettura*; despite the different instrumentation, the musical setting follows similar principles.
- 20 ‘la musica si propone, mediante specifiche ricerche fonetiche, di cogliere il canto nascosto delle parole, la musica che esse contengono’. Armando Gentilucci, *Guida all’ascolto della musica contemporanea* [1969], Milano: Feltrinelli, 1990, p. 464. The project of acoustic unity

between sounds, vowels and consonants, typical of *Cadenze* and of the composition *Lettura di Michelangelo* (1964) from which *Cadenze* derives, is applied to a completely different poetic genre in *Ballando con la Vespa di Toti* (2010): the poem is less engaged than its predecessors and, perhaps by virtue of its ironic and lighthearted character, the result of this compositional technique is even more convincing.

- 21 Typescript page, text written by Vlad. FRV, fasc. *Cadenze Michelangiolesche*.
- 22 'Nei numerosi viaggi in Oriente ho avuto la possibilità di valutare le fondamentali differenze fra la lingua giapponese e quella cinese. [...] Nella lingua giapponese [...] le vocali restano invariate, non mutano di significato secondo l'intonazione, in un certo senso è simile all'italiano. Come nella lingua italiana, le vocali sono 5, dalla A alla U, come sono cinque le note dei modi pentatonici fondamentali della musica giapponese. Sull'esempio dell'antico Teatro giapponese, il Nō, mi era venuta l'idea di comporre musiche su testi poetici giapponesi, applicando quel procedimento che avevo sperimentato musicando le poesie di Montale e Michelangelo, cioè stabilendo un rapporto fra l'altezza delle note e le vocali comprese all'interno delle parole che venivano cantate'. Vlad, *Vivere la musica*, p. 164.
- 23 'Pensai subito di avvalermi di un testo giapponese, un Haiku, una forma di poesia giapponese di antica tradizione medievale che ha una struttura composta da 17 sillabe (5 – 7 – 5). Su questo Haiku che parlava del mare in primavera, composi una musica in cui applicai il procedimento di far corrispondere l'altezza delle note con il tono chiaro o scuro delle sillabe del testo poetico. [...] Sulla partitura, edita da Ricordi, annotai che le composizioni dovevano essere cantate con il testo originale giapponese per rispettare la struttura fonetica'. Vlad, *Vivere la musica*, p. 165.