

# Searching for Something *other* than Sound: Domenico Guaccero and Michiko Hirayama's *Esercizi per voce sola* (1965; 1971)

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The study of twentieth century music – and not only that of the twentieth century – has revealed in an increasingly evident manner over the years, the importance of integrating knowledge of the history of compositional forms and techniques with an understanding of aspects relating to their performative practices, and of turning to performers to investigate their technical-instrumental expertise both through and beyond the graphic sign.<sup>1</sup> Understanding and passing on performative practices that originated with the author, or were perhaps chosen in relation to an author's thought, seems to be the only possible approach today if we are to offer thorough, more detailed studies into certain compositional processes and their products.<sup>2</sup>

The case of *Esercizi per voce sola* (1965), as well as the other *Esercizi* written by Domenico Guaccero in the same year,<sup>3</sup> represents an example of writing in dialogue with specific performative practices that can be explored from two different but connected perspectives, that of the composer and that of the performer. Written 'su e per esperimento di [on and as an experiment with] MICIKO [*sic*] HIRAYAMA'<sup>4</sup> in April 1965, and subsequently revised in 1971, the piece was the result of a fateful coincidence that has been described by the singer in *Mes années de pèlerinage*.<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of the 1960s I met Domenico Guaccero, who offered me the possibility of giving the first performances of some pieces of contemporary music, including one of his own works. During the period in which I was working with him on his composition for solo voice I was inspired to use vocal improvisation in combination with physical movement. [...] Thanks to Guaccero I made these discoveries, which were crucial to my attitude towards the voice-as-instrument to the point where I felt truly free of the 'nightmare' of the voice.<sup>6</sup>

*Esercizi* bears witness to a shared research, born from spontaneously converging interests around the concepts of 'gesture', 'sound' and 'action' (certainly not unique in the musical research of those years),<sup>7</sup> and from the implementation of experiments into new questions concerning writing and performing practice.<sup>8</sup> Both in search of something *extra* and *other than* sound, the two artists experiment together, and not by chance, through the form of the exercise,<sup>9</sup> with practices aimed at liberation: for Guaccero, liberation from the sign and from a musical language pigeonholed in certain traditions, historical and contemporary; for Hirayama, liberation from the vocal instrument and from specific techniques relating to different repertoires and musical genres. For both, it is a question of liberation through action, the subversive and partly meditative one of living the physical and the sound body in the materiality and plasticity of stasis and movement.

Building on a number of studies already conducted into the composer and his research around the voice,<sup>10</sup> this contribution seeks to offer a detailed investigation into the materials of *Esercizi per voce sola*, which bear witness to the history of the piece, to Guaccero's compositional practice and to Michiko Hirayama's artistic research. From this perspective, we shall investigate the reasons for and the outcomes of the two versions of the work, which differ appreciably in terms of graphic layout and the minutiae of details in the notation of the musical content.

The sources at our disposal, many of which are unpublished, include: an anastatic copy of the score of the 1965 version of the piece, held in the Fondo Domenico Guaccero of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia; henceforth FDG); a copy of the 1965 version of the score published by Semar, which is to be found in the Fondo Michiko Hirayama of the Fondazione Isabella Scelsi (Roma; FMH); the unpublished manuscript score of the 1971 version of the piece, conserved only at the FDG; a recording of Hirayama's performance, dated 30 November 1982, conserved at the FDG and at the Archives of the Associazione Nuova Consonanza (Roma; ANC);<sup>11</sup> and finally, a recording of another performance by Hirayama given in Rome, in 1985, at the Palazzo Taverna, also conserved at the FDG. Also of importance are the numerous unpublished notes with regard to vocality written by the singer, dated between 1962 and 2000 and conserved at the FMH, some concert programmes (ANS, FDG and FMH), and the printed copies of the score of *Glossa*, a piece for solo voice written by Guaccero in 1970, which include some

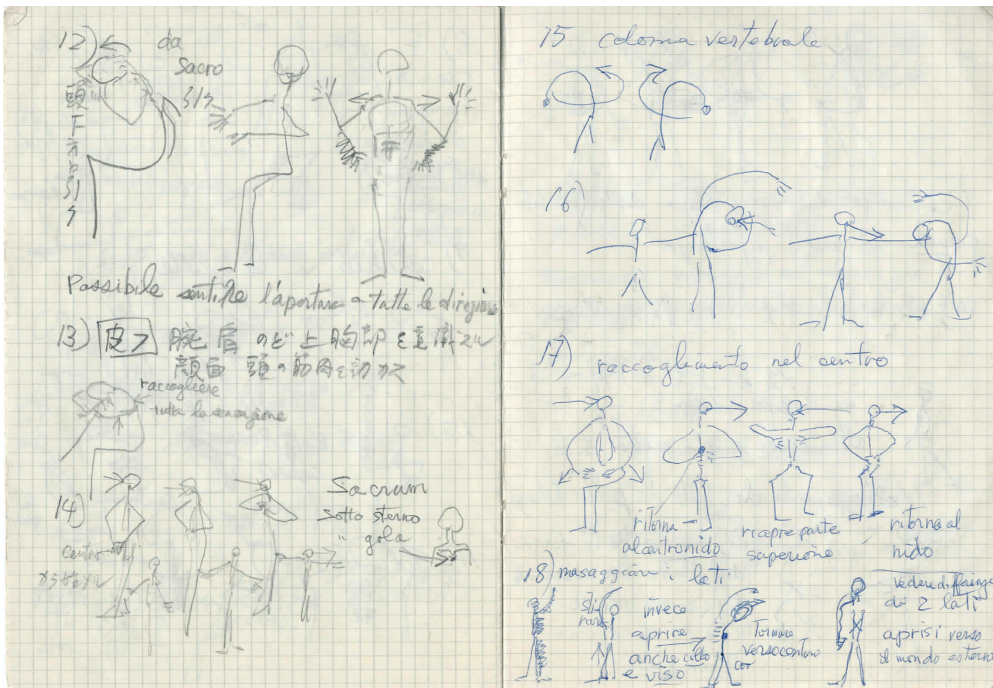
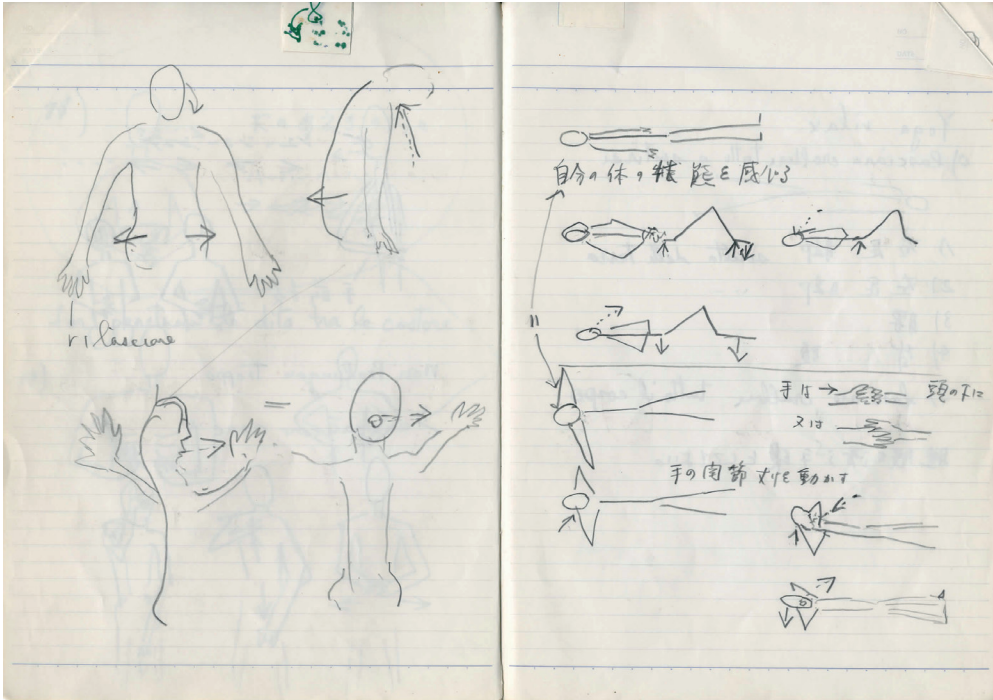
handwritten notes by Hirayama and other performers (FMH).

It is important to begin by focusing on the singer's unpublished notes,<sup>12</sup> which attest to her meticulous study of the vocal apparatus and the whole body. These consist of a series of loose sheets, sometimes bound into small files, notebooks and notepads, photocopies of scientific articles with reproductions of the vocal apparatus, and the book by Rosa La Rosa Uccello published by La Editrice Universitaria in 1962.<sup>13</sup>

The dating of the entire file, as marked in the inventory of the Fondo Michiko Hirayama curated by the Fondazione Isabella Scelsi,<sup>14</sup> bears the indication 1962–2000: the beginning of this vast time span is deduced from the year of publication of Uccello's text, while the end of the period was reconstructed thanks to some notes made by the singer herself.<sup>15</sup> The notes contained in the folder include exercise sequences, notes relating to some seminars on yoga practices, and reflections on various movements represented by means of drawings and/or sentences written out in full, in Japanese, Italian or English. The most frequent reflections – among those read and understood exclusively in Italian and English – concern listening to the 'vibrazione del corpo [vibration of the body]' and the search for awareness in the perception of the latter and of its 'contorni [contours]' with respect to space: see, for example, the indications 'sentire movimento interno [to feel internal movement]', 'sentire contatto [to feel contact]' and 'sentire lo spazio [to feel space]', in relation to which the actions of 'bringing' and 'receiving' are suggested, articulated in a sort of dialectic of movement that recalls Guaccero's internal-external. Notes on breathing and on cultivating the 'resistenza [resistance]' and strength of certain parts of the body as necessary conditions for practising 'l'impulso che provoca il movimento [the impulse that provokes movement]' also recur among the papers. The copiousness of the notes, the precision of the writing and the order of the 'mise en page' bear witness to a research conducted – from at least the 1960s, if not earlier – in a very thorough, inquiring and conscious way, with rigorous and intuitive approach, and willing to embrace and follow the signals and reactions of her own body: in fact, terms such as 'curiosare [to question]', 'sentire [to feel]', 'esplorare [to explore]' and 'cogliere [to grasp]' occur frequently (FIGURES 1 AND 2A, B, C).

Still on the subject of Hirayama's physical practices and vocal technique, it is interesting to draw attention to a dialogue between the singer and Ille Strazza recorded during the 1982 'Voce strumento sperimentale' Seminar<sup>16</sup> during which the two performers discussed breathing, holding the breath and vibrato techniques.<sup>17</sup> Though this exchange, which dates from more than a decade after the first version of *Esercizi* was written, cannot be understood as a reliable historical source for an investigation into the compositional process of the piece,

FIGURES 1 AND 2A. Autograph notes on vocality by Michiko Hirayama. Fondazione Isabella Scelsi (Roma), Fondo Michiko Hirayama, series 8, fasc. 11.





FIGURES 2B AND 2C. Autograph notes on vocalicity by Michiko Hirayama. Fondazione Isabella Scelsi (Roma), Fondo Michiko Hirayama, series 8, fasc. 11.


19)  centro prova ca apertura dall'altro lato  
pausa è molto importante

20) 後部 中央 前部 → 中央  
 ← 上部 ← 下部 ← 中央  
 印 (印) 印 (印) 印 (印)  
 attraverso sempre centro  
 collegamento di tutta la parte del corpo

21) ricavando la forza dal centro ~~usando~~ direzioni varie tutte le direzioni  
 [Danza]

21)  coscienza rimane per + centro  
 Quasi se movimento nel esercizio la coscienza di quello che sta facendo è fondamentale

22) 後部 前部 con resistenza  
 左右 斜 左右前 後上下  
 equilibrio tra ciò che riceve e forza di resistenza

23)  i e a u  
inspirazione al centro uscire a varie direzioni con varie vocali

it is nevertheless true that the description of these documents can add important elements to our understanding of Hirayama's thinking and performance practices in relation to Guaccero's ideas. At one point, in fact, Strazza says: 'The music you sing is a real acrobatic feat, not only of the voice but also of physical strength. You have found this technique precisely by doing special gymnastics and you have very well-defined body positions'.<sup>18</sup> The focus of the dialogue then shifts to the search for the kind of physical movement necessary to achieve a natural, relaxed vocal technique, which must be practised consciously in order to avoid rigidity of the vocal apparatus and to prevent any damaging strain on the voice. It is in this vein that a discussion with Giovanna Marini's vocal group begins, during which Hirayama also relates how easy and natural it is for men to sing soprano, citing her experiences with Egisto Macchi and Guaccero. With respect to her experiences with Guaccero, the singer says, in a somewhat halting Italian: 'in this way the master composers first try inside themselves and see, and if there is the possibility they write or even teach orally like a certain Domenico Guaccero who made me do all these acrobatics by doing them himself'.<sup>19</sup> This story points to a significant element in any discussion of *Esercizi*: at the moment of confrontation between composer and performer, oral teaching – a type of verbal teaching that also passes through the body and the sharing of its movement – is an important tool, just as important as writing, for transmitting and describing specific performance practices.

This same relationship between writing, compositional thought and performative practice is also described by Guaccero in 'L'alea, da suono a segno grafico':<sup>20</sup> in his essay, the author defines the act of writing as a chain of operations held together by solid logical or organic connections which, acting or serving 'as channels and not as diaphragms',<sup>21</sup> have the task of relating the act of writing in a clear and effective manner to the author's thought and to the possibility of expression of the latter thanks to the actions of an interpreter.<sup>22</sup>

Continuing our study of the sources, we turn now to a description of the scores of the two versions of *Esercizi* (1965; 1971). These do not differ substantially in their musical content, but are clearly different not only in their notation but also in the meticulousness of their descriptions of various sounds and actions, some of which, in the second version of the piece, are completely new additions with respect to the first.

The 1965 score (FIGURES 3A AND 3B) appears as follows: the title page – including the title of the work, the composer's name, the dedication to Hirayama and a brief introduction – is followed by two sheets containing some essential notes regarding the musical gestures and actions. The duration of the piece is given in the lower outer margin of the second sheet by the indication '7'30''.

FIGURE 3A. Domenico Guaccero, *Esercizi per voce sola* (1965), anastatic copy, p. 1 (hereafter referred to as *Semar* 1965). Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Domenico Guaccero.





FIGURE 3B. Domenico Guaccero, *Esercizi per voce sola* (1965), anastatic copy (Semar 1965), pp. 2–3. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Domenico Guaccero.

The image shows two pages of musical notation for 'Esercizi per voce sola' by Domenico Guaccero. The left page (pp. 2-3) contains exercises with lyrics like 'se riesce', 'esercizio', 'for - se', and 'chissà!'. The right page (pp. 4-5) contains exercises with lyrics like 'aspettare', 'spe ri men ta re', and 'que - sto?'. The notation includes musical staves with notes, rests, and dynamic markings, along with various diagrams and instructions.

se riesce  
esercizio  
for - se  
chissà!  
que - sto?

aspettare spe ri men ta re

AZIONE: prende bicchiere d'acqua, versa un sorso in cavo orale, prova a intonare, riprova, ancora acqua e riprova, canta  $\text{so} \text{so} \text{so}$ ; suoni medio/acuti

possibilmente fuori vista

(soffiato/cantato)  
Il filo a piombo dell'età schizofrenica

The 1971 revision (FIGURE 4) differs considerably. The single sheet, oriented horizontally, has six sets of two lines each indicating 'azione [action]' and 'suono [sound]'. The musical material is then written in correspondence with an upper line indicating the time in minutes. The total duration of the piece is 8'37" minutes.

The actions are written out in a very precise and detailed manner: in addition to the drawings of the movement of the body which were already present in the 1965 version, the 1971 revision includes fully written-out sentences that elaborate on the description of the movement (see for example 3'31" – 4'23" in FDG 1971); from about 5' onwards, however, new actions appear, which guide the performer through a sequence of movements such as 'andare in ginocchio lentamente [go slowly on your knees]', 'andare a incrociare le gambe per terra





Besides the written descriptions of the actions already mentioned above, the significant differences between the two versions of the work concern only a handful of other places in the text. The descending glissando marked at minute 3' in the revised version (FDG 1971), which from  $E_4$  reaches the lowest spoken sound possible, was marked in the first version of the work as a descending movement from  $E_4$  to  $B_2$ . This is the only variant that modifies the original text in order to indicate the musical material with less precision: whereas the 1965 version probably took Hirayama's wide vocal range into account – so much so, in fact, that the entire glissando is notated in the bass clef – the new version remains in the treble clef and does not define the pitch of the target note, thus allowing the performer to explore her own vocal range while respecting her own register.

A further difference between the two versions of *Esercizi* concerns the musical gesture at minute 5'15" in the revised score (FDG 1971): this gesture is written in brackets and consists of a repetition of the musical material indicated at minute 5'10" of the same version. This new annotation appears in place of the more generic annotation 'etc.' (Semar 1965) in order to clarify the formal function of the indication, i.e. a precise repetition of the same gesture and not, for instance, a development of the fragment.

Another group of variants concerns the way words and phrases are written out. In the 1971 score, vowels are added in brackets to many sounds in order to suggest their pronunciation. The 1971 score also presents a difference in the writing of the textual fragments, that along with the addition of more precise indications as to the quality of the sound, consists of text which, while running from left to right, instead of following a straight line (Semar 1965) traces lines whose trajectory seems to represent and suggest the movements of a vocal inflection (FDG 1971).

Though the relationship between Guaccero's compositional idea and Hirayama's distinctive performance practice was already recognisable in the 1965 version, as in the 1971 revision – see also the addition of the sequence of actions on the floor in the later version (5'19" – 6'52" in FDG 1971) and the affinity of these movements with the meditative practices noted in the singer's notebooks – this relationship becomes even clearer and more evident as a result of an in-depth study of the recordings from the 1980s, which bear witness to two performances of the piece by the singer.<sup>23</sup>

An analytical listening of the two recordings reveals both aspects of the performance that remain unchanged and elements interpreted by the singer with greater freedom and flexibility.

The duration of each performance is approximately 12' minutes. Although this timing does not adhere to the indications of either text, it demonstrates a temporal constant in Hirayama's performance, testifying to the attainment of a

high degree of performative awareness on the part of a performer who has full control over the management of time and form.

Several examples of differences between the performances can be found, testifying to the singer's precise but flexible manner: these mainly concern the choice of the vowels used to pronounce the sounds, the number of repetitions of the phrase 'forse riesce [maybe it will work]', and the timbral rendering of many musical gestures, first and foremost that of the 'frullato [flutter-tonguing]'.

Some significant examples of these differences will be discussed in relation to the two versions of the piece in order to highlight points of contact or divergence between them.

The first example concerns the musical gestures indicated at minute 4'28" of the 1971 version, which are not so distant from those that appear in the Semar edition (FIGURES 5A AND 5B).

In the 1982 performance (6'30" – 6'54" of the recording: AUDIO 1) Hirayama utters two long sounds – the second is of a longer duration than the first, but in both cases the intonation of the two notes is unstable because it is subject to various frequency oscillations, wider or less wide, which means that the sound is continually rising or falling – and a 'frullato [flutter-tonguing]' with an initially guttural sound quality that soon changes into a labial trill.

In the 1985 recording (5'48" – 6'14": AUDIO 2), on the other hand, the three longer or shorter sounds consist of articulations by means of glottal stops following one after another: the first is the pronunciation of a 'u' that goes towards an 'a', the second is an 'i' and the third is the pronunciation of an 'i' that tends towards a 'u'.

FIGURE 5A. Domenico Guaccero, *Esercizi per voce sola* (FDG 1971), detail. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Domenico Guaccero.

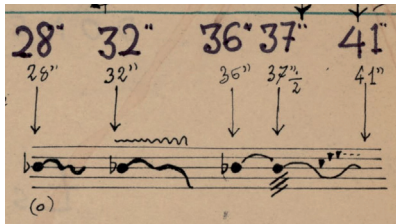
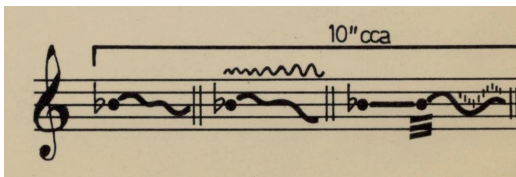


FIGURE 5B. Domenico Guaccero, *Esercizi per voce sola* (Semar 1965), detail. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Domenico Guaccero.





Another significant example in which the differences between the two performances – and also with respect to the written texts – are most evident concerns the sequence from minute 7'22" to 8'04" of the 1971 revision (FIGURES 6A AND 6B), which was similarly indicated in the earlier Semar version of 1965 (FIGURE 7). In all three episodes Guaccero writes three 'frullati dentali ('r...)' [flutter-tonguing ('r...)]' and asks the performer to perform the first 'frullato [flutter-tonguing]' with a 'suono normale (impostato) (set) [operatic sound]', the second with a 'suono ingolato [throaty tone]' and the third by producing variations of timbre between 'ingolato [throaty]' and 'nasale [nasal]' sounds.

In the recording of the 1982 performance (9'47" – 10'23": AUDIO 3) Hirayama utters the three occurrences of the 'frullati [flutter-tonguing]' sounds in a similar way: at minutes 9'47", 10'00" and 10'15" the homogeneity of the musical gestures realised by the singer through the rhotacism of the liquid dental 'r', continuously varying the timbre of the sound from 'ingolato [throaty]' to 'nasale [nasal]' as requested by Guaccero, is evident. The gesture at minute 9'53", on the other hand, concerns the realisation of the 'suoni soffiati [air sounds]': in the 1982 recording the singer performs the four sounds descending from the 'timbro soffiato [air timbre]' by pronouncing the vowels 'i e a u'. This rendition coincides with what is marked in the 1971 revision (7'30" in FDG 1971) and differs from the indication in Semar 1965, where the vowels to be pronounced are implicit, but where no fewer than five descending notes to be performed with a 'timbro soffiato [air timbre]' are written on the staff.

In the 1985 recording (9'28" – 10'14": AUDIO 4) Hirayama performs the three episodes of the 'frullati [flutter-tonguing]' rather differently (7'22" – 8'04" FDG 1971): the first sound (9'28" of the recording) consists of articulations through close glottal stops; however, at minutes 9'46" and 10'03" of the recording, in the other two episodes, the singer instead performs a 'frullato [flutter-tonguing]' with a guttural sound quality, which leaves less room for the composer's request to vary the timbre from 'ingolato [throaty]' to 'nasale [nasal]'. The 'suoni soffiati [air sounds]' at minute 9'39" are also executed differently: in this 1985 performance, Hirayama pronounces only three sounds by articulating the vowels 'e o a'.

Since no video recordings of any performance are preserved, only a few suppositions can be made with respect to the execution of the physical actions. The presence of long moments of silence in the audio recordings from the 1980s seem to attest to certain actions unfolding. These were evidently necessary for the performance of the gestures, and various noises produced mainly by the movements of the body on the floor. Furthermore, the differences in the volume and quality of the sounds at certain moments of the recording suggest that the source of the sound has moved, in other words, this suggests movement on the

FIGURES 6A AND 6B. Domenico Guaccero, *Esercizi per voce sola* (FDG 1971), details. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Domenico Guaccero.

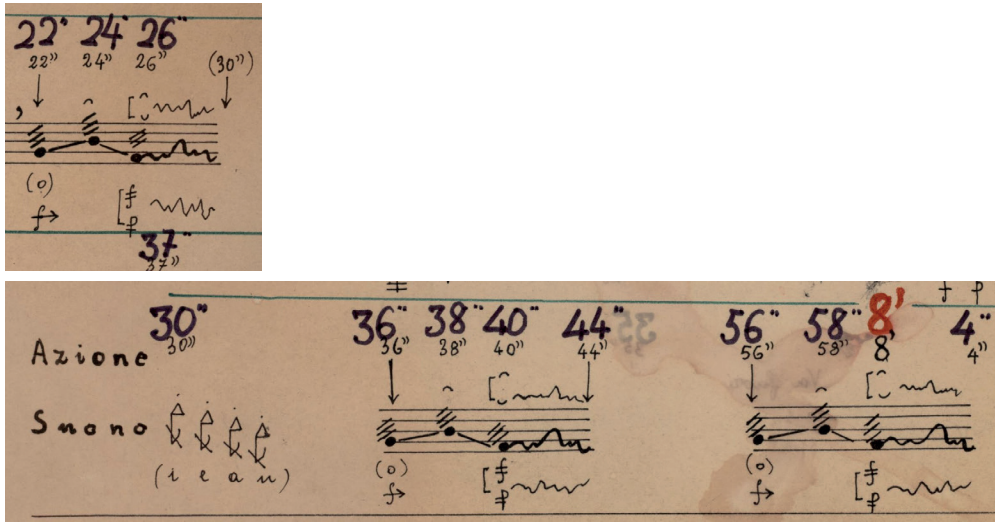
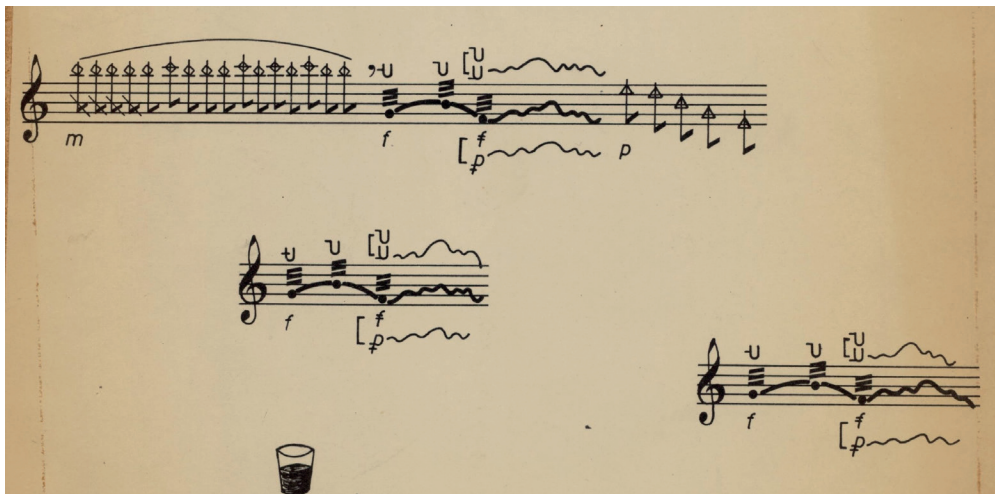


FIGURE 7. Domenico Guaccero, *Esercizi per voce sola* (Semar 1965), detail. Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia), Fondo Domenico Guaccero.



part of Hirayama. The 1982 recording, however, clearly bears witness to the action of ‘Va fuori scena (o si gira di spalle) [Go off stage (or turn your back)]’: at minute 11’02” of the recording, in fact, Hirayama struggles to pronounce the last phrase, ‘il filo a piombo dell’età schizofrenica [the plumb line of the schizophrenic age]’, so much so that she needs the help of Guaccero, who suggests the words in a whisper so that she can deliver them and conclude the piece (AUDIO 5). This difficulty most

likely stems from the fact that the singer pronounced this phrase when her back was turned and she was unable to read the score of a text that she evidently did not know by heart.

The above discussion of these examples not only makes clear the rather flexible character of Hirayama's performances and the close relationship between her performative practice and Guaccero's writing, but also demonstrates the more or less significant differences between these performances and the 1965 and 1971 texts. The fact that the singer's performances (especially that of the 1982 recording) would seem to be closer, on the whole, to the 1971 text might suggest Guaccero, with his revision of the score, wanted to formalise a performance practice that had achieved his desired result in the 1970s. Moreover, it would also seem to rule out the possibility that the 1971 revision was prompted by Hirayama's performative needs with the aim of providing the singer with a new score.

Several factors seem to support the latter hypothesis, and these mainly concern the places where the scores were kept and a comparison with Hirayama's annotations on another work by Guaccero for solo voice, *Glossa* (1970), the writing of which is closely related to that of *Esercizi per voce*.<sup>24</sup> As already noted, the Fondo Michiko Hirayama – the perusal of which reveals the singer's remarkable care in conserving her scores, and in some cases also those of other performers with whom she collaborated (see, for example, the musicians of Nuove Forme Sonore) – does not preserve the 1971 score.

Among the reasons for this 'absence' we can immediately exclude the lack of any performances of the piece after its revision: the concert programmes preserved in the Fondo Domenico Guaccero and in the Fondo Michiko Hirayama, in fact, testify to multiple performances of the piece in the 1970s. After the first performance of the work on 9 April 1965, at the Libreria Feltrinelli in Via del Babuino, Rome, on the occasion of the Concerti del Marcatre,<sup>25</sup> the following performances took place: 5 March 1972, at Beat 72 during the Rassegna di Musica Moderna e Contemporanea organised by Nuove Forme Sonore; 10 June 1972, at the Teatro Centrale in Rome during a concert season organised by Nuova Consonanza; and 6 November 1977, at the Teatro Alberico in Rome during the Rassegna di Musica Moderna e Contemporanea in a concert entitled 'Domenico Guaccero. Uomo di musica e di teatro'.<sup>26</sup> According to the archival records, Hirayama gave only one joint performance of *Esercizi* and *Glossa*; this took place on 4 May 1971, in Bari, for the festival 'Oltre lo sperimentale e l'improvvisazione',<sup>27</sup> where *Esercizi* was performed together with a version of *Glossa* for soprano and instruments (1970).

With regard to this later version of *Glossa* – which also bears witness to the widespread practice of re-functionalising and re-arranging pieces for reasons related to new and different performances – it is interesting to note that, in



addition to the version of the piece for solo voice with the singer's annotations, the Fondazione Isabella Scelsi conserves four other copies of the same score,<sup>28</sup> on which the names of certain instruments (voice, flute, percussion, cello and trombone) are marked in red pencil in correspondence with different sections of the text. Given the particular composition of the ensemble and the type of markings on the cello part, which would appear to be in the hand of the cellist Frances-Marie Uitti, it can be assumed that the group involved in that concert was Nuove Forme Sonore (FIGURE 8).

FIGURE 8. Domenico Guaccero, *Glossa* for solo voice (1970), copy with notes by Frances-Marie Uitti (?), p. 1. Fondazione Isabella Scelsi (Roma), Fondo Michiko Hirayama, series 3, fasc. 48.

The image shows a handwritten musical score on aged paper, numbered '1' in the top right corner. The score is for the piece 'Glossa' by Domenico Guaccero. It features several staves of music with various annotations in red and blue ink. The instruments mentioned in the annotations include Flute (FL), Voice (Vox), Trombone (TRB), and Voice Cello (VC). The score includes time signatures such as 4/4 and 3/4, and various musical notations like notes, rests, and dynamic markings. There are also some handwritten notes in red and blue ink, including 'RELI.' and 'VC PREP.', and some diagrams or sketches. The annotations are placed above and below the staves, indicating specific sections or instruments. The paper shows signs of use, with some smudges and a blue scribble in the lower left section.

Returning to the case study of *Esercizi* the absence of the 1971 score in the Fondo Michiko Hirayama does not provide sufficient evidence that the singer did not use that text for her performances, since she could have mislaid her copy.

One factor that points in this direction is the fact that in her score of *Glossa* for solo voice (1970)<sup>29</sup> Hirayama made some notes to clarify the meaning of the signs indicating the qualities of the sounds; these are found both in correspondence with the individual musical gestures and, in a more orderly manner, in an empty section of page 2 (FIGURES 9A AND 9B).

FIGURE 9A. Domenico Guaccero, *Glossa* (1970), copy with notes by Michiko Hirayama, p. 1. Fondazione Isabella Scelsi (Roma), Fondo Michiko Hirayama, series 3, fasc. 48.

o = nasale    u = nasale    ( ) = gola stretta    > = rumore di gola

**1**

**flexibile**

Voce

15" 16"  $\frac{14}{2}$  24" 25" 42" 43" 50"

55" 38" 13"  $\frac{1}{2}$  3" 10"  $\frac{4}{3}$  11" 12" 14" 18" 32"

39" 44" 48" 50" 54"  $\frac{1}{3}$  55" 58" 21" 4" 7" 9"

40" 16"  $\frac{14}{2}$  17" 23" 26" 32" 34" 36" 37" 39"

40" 44" 46" (54")

54" 55" 35" 40" 45" 48" 24" 28" 33" 40"

42" 44" 47" 49" 51" 54" 57" 59" 41" 3" 8"

triangolo  
bongos  
bichieri  
cori

coltello a sapa sull'orlo

asta di triangolo

(bongos sempre f, triangolo e bichieri f)

FIGURE 9B. Domenico Guaccero, *Glossa* (1970), copy with notes by Michiko Hirayama, p. 2. Fondazione Isabella Scelsi (Roma), Fondo Michiko Hirayama, series 3, fasc. 48.

Although not unfamiliar with the style of Guaccero's graphics, Hirayama nevertheless felt the practical need to make the meaning of the signs explicit as an aid to reading during the study phase and for performance. The absence of similar annotations in *Esercizi* indicates that the singer did not feel the same need to supplement her copy of the 1965 piece with further notes, just as she probably did not feel the need to read from a score containing the wealth of additional instructions and clarifications to be found in the 1971 revision.



As Guaccero himself writes in his preface to the piece, having worked with and for Michiko Hirayama, so that the singer's experience had already been solidly built up during the creation of the work, it seemed superfluous to add more detailed and specific notations regarding the sound qualities to the 1965 version. In short, the process of co-creating the work was already sufficient to ensure complete consistency between a specific performative practice and the composer's system of graphics.

The score published by Semar, however, would not have been sufficient to ensure satisfactory new performances by interpreters other than Hirayama. Aspects of the author's intentions and thoughts – elements of equal importance to the written text – which, before 1971, did not require any further degree of graphical formalisation were embedded in the artist's performance practice. Therefore, the 1971 version is most likely a functional revision for performances by new interpreters, almost a 'transcription' shaped by the specific practice of the Japanese singer.

Once again, we find some evidence to support this hypothesis in the score of *Glossa* (1970): the score includes an 'Intermezzo' and relevant instructions necessary for the interpreter to connect the performances of *Esercizi* and *Glossa*. The fact that this section is written in two languages, Italian and English, would appear to indicate Guaccero's need to prepare another, probably not Italian, interpreter for the performance of these pieces. Mastropietro suggests that this revision may have been undertaken for Joan Logue, the protagonist of a performance of *Glossa* on 6 December 1983 in the context of a Nuova Consonanza concert season,<sup>30</sup> who also performed other pieces by Guaccero.<sup>31</sup> In the concert programmes conserved in the Fondo Domenico Guaccero we also find the name of another soprano, Doris Andrew, who performed *Esercizi per voce*, *Glossa*, *Elenchi*, *Variazioni 2* and *Rot* on 23 February 1975 at the 'Antica e nuova musica festival' in Bari.<sup>32</sup> Though it is true that these concert programmes date from after 1971, they do suggest some plausible reasons and concrete occasions for which Guaccero may well have decided to prepare a revised version of the piece. It is likely that this revision was intended more generically for other performers, perhaps even for someone besides Logue or Andrew; but in any case it is clear that the composer had planned new performances of *Esercizi* by singers other than Hirayama in the more or less immediate future.

While the practical reason behind the preparation of this revision, in order to pass the piece in a comprehensive manner on to new performers, is therefore evident, it is also important to understand this rewriting process in relation to Guaccero's research into the voice, and with respect to his search for a system of graphics suited to the representation of the gestural components of sound. Conducted with

a critical and well-informed awareness of the debate of his time around such issues, the composer's reflections on themes related to the graphical depiction of music constitute a fixed point in his practical and theoretical research.<sup>33</sup> The practical results of these reflections are clearly visible in Guaccero's compositional research activity. A survey of the materials relating to other works by the composer dating from the years around the time he wrote the different versions of *Esercizi per voce* (1965; 1971) reveals lines of continuity with the compositional processes and notation systems adopted in *Scene del potere* (1964–1968). The score of this piece 'represents also in semiographic research the extent of his ongoing research into the voice, which hinges on the *Esercizi per voce* written for Michiko Hirayama',<sup>34</sup> *Rappresentazione et esercizio* (1968) and *Rot* (1970), a piece on which Guaccero once again collaborated with Hirayama. Mastropietro provides a very thorough analysis of the materials, compositional process and performance contexts of these pieces, shedding light on the main reasons behind Guaccero's reflections in his search for *other* sounds for the voice and for the most suitable graphical tools to represent and describe their qualities.<sup>35</sup> As in *Esercizi*, the search for such sounds is conducted with an acute eye to the internal-external dialectic and always occurs in relation to the study of specific actions, including extra-musical actions, in order to bring these elements together in the pursuit of an interdisciplinarity that cannot be easily attained, except through shared work with dynamic musicians and performers of enquiring minds.

For Guaccero, the act of writing and rewriting the graphical representations of the actions in *Esercizi per voce sola* seems to be, ultimately, the same quest in which he invites Hirayama to participate, a quest made up of 'trials of strength, of tension, of concentration of possibilities'.<sup>36</sup>

Investigating the compositional process and performative practices of *Esercizi* through a study of the materials that puts the figures and practices of Guaccero and Hirayama into dialogue from the outset is only the first step in a developing discussion on the work that will analyse it using the same approach but in greater detail. These questions should subsequently be taken up by today's performers in order to consider the possible ways to re-propose – by re-constructing and/or re-adapting the piece to their own body and voice – performances of these pages together, at the same time reflecting on the profound sense of re-performing music so closely related to the performance experience of specific interpreters. Only then will our immersion in *Esercizi* mean that we too will be able to experiment, to study, to test and to strive for that something *other* that lies beyond sound.

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## Notes

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- 1 We are here dealing with an ongoing field of research, though one in which there is already a wealth of important contributions such as, for example: Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; Angela Ida De Benedictis and Nicola Scaldaferrì, 'Le nuove testualità musicali', in: *La filologia musicale. Istituzioni, storia, strumenti critici*, Lucca: LIM, 2009, II, pp. 71–116. See also the volumes in the series 'Studies in Musical Performance as Creative Practice' published recently by Oxford University Press: John Rink, Helena Gaunt and Aaron Williamson, *Musicians in the Making: Pathways to Creative Performance*, New York: OUP, 2017; Eric F. Clarke and Mark Doffman, *Distributed Creativity. Collaboration and Improvisation in Contemporary Music*, New York: OUP, 2017; Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and Helen M. Prior, *Music and Shape*, New York: OUP, 2018; Tina K. Ramnarine, *Global Perspectives on Orchestras: Collective Creativity and Social Agency*, New York: OUP, 2018; Nicholas Cook, *Music as Creative Practice*, New York: OUP, 2018.
  - 2 Recent years have seen a noticeable increase in studies focusing on the history of twentieth-century interpreters and on the analysis of their performance practices. See, for example, *Cathy Berberian: Pioneer of Contemporary Vocality*, ed. by Pamela Karantonis, Francesca Placanica and Pieter Verstraete, New York: Routledge, 2020; Gabrielle Kaufman, *Gaspar Cassadó. Cellist, Composer and Transcriber*, London: Routledge, 2017; You Nakai, *Reminded by the Instruments: David Tudor's Music*, New York: OUP, 2021; Veniero Rizzardi, "Hear what I Feel": Joan La Barbara, the 1970s and the 'extended voice', in: *The Female Voice in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Serena Facci and Michela Garda, New York: Routledge, 2021, pp. 156–171; Francesca Scigliuzzo, *Il pensiero divergente di Giancarlo Schiaffini alla ricerca di soluzioni espressive tra improvvisazione, composizione ed esecuzione*, Master's Thesis in Musicology, University of Pavia, 2020, 240 pp.
  - 3 We refer here to *Esercizi per pianoforte* (1965), *Esercizi per clarinetto* (1965) and *Esercizi per mimo* (1965), dedicated respectively to John Eaton, to Bill Smith, and to Sylvano Bussotti and Romano Amidei.
  - 4 Domenico Guaccero, *Esercizi per voce* (1965), Semar, 1965, SE 600001, p. 1.
  - 5 Michiko Hirayama, 'Mes années de pèlerinage', in: *Voce come soffio, voce come gesto. Omaggio a Michiko Hirayama. Atti delle due giornate internazionali di studi (Roma, 9–10 giugno 2003)*, a cura di Daniela Tortora, Roma: Aracne, 2008, pp. 221–227.
  - 6 'All'inizio degli anni Sessanta incontrai Domenico Guaccero, il quale mi diede la possibilità di eseguire per la prima volta brani di musica contemporanea, ivi inclusa una sua opera. Nel periodo in cui collaboravo con lui per la sua composizione per voce sola, fui stimolata ad impiegare l'improvvisazione vocale abbinata al movimento fisico. [...] Grazie a Guaccero feci queste scoperte determinanti per il mio atteggiamento nei confronti dello strumento-voce fino a sentirmi veramente libera dall'"incubo" voce'. Hirayama, 'Mes années de pèlerinage', p. 223.
  - 7 Many sources bear witness to the interest in such concepts: in the programmes of the Festival

- di Nuova Consonanza, which are conserved at the Archive of the same Association, there are more than a few reviews and concert seasons dedicated to research into the sound-gesture-action relationship on the part of composers including György Ligeti, Giuseppe Giorgio Englert, Sylvano Bussotti, Dieter Schnebel, Earle Brown, John Cage, Mario Bertoncini, Franco Evangelisti, Mauricio Kagel and many others. The presentation to the ear of music defined by Daniele Lombardi as ‘musica da vedere [music to be seen]’ was frequently accompanied by moments of theoretical reflection by the composers themselves or by musicologists such as Mario Bortolotto, who on 30 May 1963, for example, gave a lecture entitled ‘Music, gesture and musical action’.
- 8 See also Domenico Guaccero, ‘Sulla tradizione del teatro musicale’, in: *Di Domenico Guaccero: prassi e teoria*, Roma: Nuova Consonanza, 1984, pp. 180–192; Alessandro Mastropietro, ‘Anni Sessanta: rappresentazione e superamento della crisi del linguaggio in tre lavori “gestuali” di Domenico Guaccero’, *Musical/Realtà*, 105, November 2014, pp. 145–170.
  - 9 As Mastropietro emphasises in his study of Guaccero’s *Esercizi*, the composer uses this form as an empirical praxis that allows him to experiment spontaneously and together with the performer, thus in a direct and concrete manner, on the sound material. See Alessandro Mastropietro, ‘Domenico Guaccero. Non solo *Scene del potere*’, in: Alessandro Mastropietro, *Nuovo Teatro Musicale fra Roma e Palermo, 1961–1974*, Lucca: LIM, 2020, pp. 321–374: 369. Guaccero’s choice to use the exercise is not an isolated case: Barba writes that in the world of theatre, from Konstantin Sergeevič Stanislavsky onwards, ‘the phenomenon of “exercise-derived works” should not be discounted’. See Eugenio Barba, *La canoa di carta*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993, p. 164. Many companies made use of this creative expedient for their shows; see, for example, the experiences of the Living Theatre and of the Open Theatre of Joseph Chalking and Jerzy Grotowski, and of Barba’s Odin Teatret. Between Guaccero’s research and that of theatre artists there is, according to Mastropietro, ‘an epochal, fruitful communion of intentions’. See Mastropietro, ‘Domenico Guaccero. Non solo *Scene del potere*’, p. 369.
  - 10 See Mastropietro, ‘Domenico Guaccero. Non solo *Scene del potere*’, pp. 368–374; Giuliano Salis, ‘Gli «Esercizi» di Domenico Guaccero’, *Studi musicali*, XXIX/2, 2000, pp. 499–523.
  - 11 This performance took place on the occasion of the seminar ‘Voce strumento sperimentale’, organised by Domenico Guaccero and Michiko Hirayama within the framework of the activities of Nuova Consonanza, which took place on 30 November 1982 at the Auditorium Rai del Foro Italico in Rome. Participants actively involved in the event through dialogue and music performance included Ille Strazza, Lucilla Galeazzi, Patrizia Nasini, Maria Tommaso, Piero Brega, Alvin Curran and the Gruppo vocale of Giovanna Marini, who was not present at the event herself: (<https://nuovaconsonanza.archiui.com/occorrenze/26-19-festival-di-nuova-consonanza-la-vocalita-contemporanea-1982>). The complete recording of the Seminar is conserved on two CDs in the Fondo Domenico Guaccero at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venezia). The same recording of *Esercizi per voce* is also conserved at the Associazione Nuova Consonanza (Roma) together with some photographs of the Seminar.
  - 12 See FMH, B37 – S8 – F11.
  - 13 Rosa La Rosa Uccello, *Appunti di fisiologia ed igiene dell’apparecchio della fonazione*, Messina: Editrice Universitaria, 1962.
  - 14 See <http://www.scelsi.it/dati/pag/4.1.6/doc/911.pdf> [20 June 2024].
  - 15 In one of the notebooks the date ‘09/05/1984’ is followed a few pages later by the indication ‘10/06’, presumably of the same year; another pad of notes in A5 format contains the date ‘16/4/1988’; on two loose sheets of paper we find the annotations ‘1999’ and ‘2000’; finally the articles from the academic journals, of which photocopies are conserved, are publications from 1987, 1988 and 1990.
  - 16 See note 11.



- 17 From the recording of the Seminar ‘Voce strumento sperimentale’, CD 1, track 7 (FDG).
- 18 ‘Le musiche che canti tu sono delle vere acrobazie non solo vocali ma anche di forza fisica. Tu hai trovato questa tecnica appunto facendo della ginnastica speciale e hai delle posizioni del corpo molto ben definite’. From the recording of the Seminar ‘Voce strumento sperimentale’, CD 1, track 7 (FDG): 8’50” – 9’10”.
- 19 ‘così i maestri compositori prima provano dentro di sé e vedono e se c’è la possibilità scrivono o addirittura [qualcuno] fa insegnamento orale come un certo Domenico Guaccero che mi ha fatto fare tutte queste acrobazie facendo lui acrobazie’. From the recording of the Seminar ‘Voce strumento sperimentale’, CD 2, track 3 (FDG): 8’16” – 8’47”.
- 20 Domenico Guaccero, ‘L’alea, da suono a segno grafico’, in: *Di Domenico Guaccero: prassi e teoria*, pp. 71–95: 71.
- 21 ‘da canali e non da diaframmi’. Guaccero, ‘L’alea, da suono a segno grafico’, p. 74.
- 22 Guaccero, ‘L’alea, da suono a segno grafico’, p. 89.
- 23 The first is a recording of Hirayama’s performance on 30 November 1982 at the Seminario sulla vocalità organised by the Associazione Nuova Consonanza (FDG, ANC); the second recording is of the 1985 performance that took place in Rome at the Palazzo Taverna (FDG).
- 24 The piece for solo voice originated in 1970 as a veritable ‘gloss’ on *Esercizi* as it envisaged the possibility of a consecutive performance of the two pieces, which could be linked thanks to a short ‘Intermezzo’ written on the score of *Glossa*.
- 25 Mastropietro, ‘Domenico Guaccero. Non solo *Scene del potere*’, p. 369, footnote 118.
- 26 See the section of the Fondo Hirayama dedicated to Nuove Forme Sonore (FMH, B31 – S5) and, for the concert entitled ‘Domenico Guaccero. Uomo di musica e di teatro’, the relevant concert programme included in the concert programme file for 1977 in FDG.
- 27 See FMH, B27 – S4 and the thematic catalogue of Guaccero’s works: [http://www.guaccero.lim.di.unimi.it/scheda\\_opere.php?o\\_id=640](http://www.guaccero.lim.di.unimi.it/scheda_opere.php?o_id=640) [3 July 2024].
- 28 It should be noted that one of these four copies is conserved in a folder bearing the title ‘Mille e non più mille’.
- 29 See FMH, B12 – S3 – F48.
- 30 See the concert programme conserved in FDG in the folder for 1983.
- 31 See Mastropietro, ‘Domenico Guaccero. Non solo *Scene del potere*’, p. 369, footnote 117 and the page for *Glossa* in [http://www.guaccero.lim.di.unimi.it/scheda\\_opere.php?o\\_id=640](http://www.guaccero.lim.di.unimi.it/scheda_opere.php?o_id=640) [20 June 2024]. Joan Logue’s voice also appears in other performances of *Mille e non più mille* (see, for example, the concert of 14 December 1970, when the singer performed alongside Michiko Hirayama and Piero Cavalli on the occasions of the contemporary music days organised by the Gruppo Rinnovamento Musicale) as well as in performances of *Rot* (see the concert programme in FDG).
- 32 See the concert programme conserved in FDG in the folder for 1975.
- 33 In the essays ‘L’alea, da suono a segno grafico’ and ‘Contributo alla de/composizione’ (in: *Di Domenico Guaccero: prassi e teoria*, pp. 111–146) the author proposes some works by composers including John Cage, Mauricio Kagel, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Henri Pousseur and Cornelius Cardew as examples of graphism, in other words, of traces in which the separation between image and sound is evident.
- 34 Mastropietro, ‘Domenico Guaccero. Non solo *Scene del potere*’, p. 362.
- 35 Mastropietro, ‘Domenico Guaccero. Non solo *Scene del potere*’, pp. 321–410.
- 36 ‘prove di forza, di tensione, di concentrazione di possibilità’. Guaccero, *Esercizi per voce* (1965), p. 1.