

Gian Francesco Malipiero and Greek Tragedy: Theoretical Reflections and Compositional Instances

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The return to antiquity became something of a ‘cult’ among some twentieth-century Italian composers, particularly those belonging to the so-called ‘Generation of 1880’.¹ For these composers, the theoretical reflections and performance practices through which they sought to recover neglected musical repertoires constituted, at a programmatic level, an active engagement with tradition rather than a mere antiquarian interest. Early music was seen as a means of renewing and redefining the identity of Italian music, a ‘way out and a path towards progress’.² The aim was to move beyond nineteenth-century opera, a genre that was not only no longer perceived as representative of the nation but was also accused of having led Italian musical art into decline.

In this context, the term ‘ancient’ encompassed a wide range of repertoires, all situated in the past from the perspective of the composers of the Generation of 1880, yet separated from one another by considerable chronological distances. Taking Gian Francesco Malipiero’s theoretical and compositional work as an example, one must consider both his studies of Gregorian chant and of ancient Italian music, particularly that of Claudio Monteverdi. Eighteenth-century music was also regarded as ancient: in short, from Gregorian chant to the instrumental music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the entire musical tradition before the nineteenth century fell within the concept of ‘ancient’.³

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The revival of antiquity also embraced what was conventionally understood as the classical world, namely Greece and Rome. The Roman world, in particular, acquired particular significance during fascism, when classical culture, especially the Latin one, was appropriated by the ruling ideology and turned into a key instrument of its propaganda. One may recall, for example, the extensive musical production on Roman subjects, which also includes two of Malipiero's operas, *Giulio Cesare* (1934–1935) and *Antonio e Cleopatra* (1936–1937). To emphasise the rhetorical character that the Latin world had taken on during the Fascist regime, it suffices to note that both works present a Roman subject, but are derived from Shakespeare. What mattered was that subjects linked to the history of ancient Rome could evoke and exalt the nation's greatness. It is also worth noting that Malipiero replaced the original ending of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* with a triumphal chorus that quotes the words of Horace's *Carmen saeculare*. The rhetorical intent behind this choice is evident given that in the 1930s the identification of the victorious Octavian with Mussolini was readily made.⁴

In the same years, alongside a revival of the Latin tradition, a 'Hellenising strand' emerged, seeking to renew interest in the Greek world. The first symbolic manifestation of this Hellenic revival can be identified in Riccardo Zandonai's *Il ritorno di Odisseo* (1901), a cantata for baritone, chorus, and orchestra based on a text by Giovanni Pascoli.⁵ Greek themes became particularly prominent in opera: throughout the twentieth century, tragic characters appeared on stage, from Cassandra to Medea, from Phaedra to Iphigenia, to name but a few. Alongside the rediscovery of earlier Italian music, the classical Greek and Roman worlds also played an important role in twentieth-century musical culture: this influence can be seen in the choice of operatic subjects, but also in a revival of Greek theatre in the early years of the century. The first experiments in this direction were undertaken by Gabriele D'Annunzio,⁶ while Ettore Romagnoli, classical philologist and man of the theatre, developed his early ideas within the same cultural climate.⁷ From 1911 to 1913, he staged ancient dramas at the Theatre of Fiesole; from 1914, he was the artistic director of classical plays at the Greek Theatre of Syracuse, where *Agamemnon* was staged that year. From then on, the Syracuse theatre season was held every year (1914; 1921–1939; 1948 to the present day) with the only interruptions due to the two World Wars.⁸ From its inception, the Syracuse project was part of the broader project of open-air theatre, which had been widespread in Europe since the end of the nineteenth century, and immediately dialogued with the major expressions of the early avant-garde. Mario Tommaso Gargallo and Ettore Romagnoli aimed to look to the Greek model to redeem the contemporary stage, starting with a performance that united spoken word, music and dance in complete harmony, according to what Laura Piazza calls 'the paradigm of synaesthetic art'.⁹ Creating a new type of performance based on ancient drama also implied a reflection on the music to be written for it. Romagnoli's re-

flections on the music to be composed for ancient tragedies were naturally linked to his philological studies, which were enriched by the scholar's musical and musicological interests.¹⁰ In particular, Romagnoli was one of the first scholars in Italy to devote his research to ancient Greek music, and this line of research constituted a starting point for the composition of the music he dealt with. However, Romagnoli's reflections on Greek music – and on its impact on compositional practice – were not an isolated phenomenon: the writing of music for classical performances also offered other musicians involved in this field the opportunity to engage with contemporary artistic and academic research on ancient *mousikē*.¹¹ This was also true of Ildebrando Pizzetti, who, besides composing music for the Greek Theatre of Syracuse, had been engaging with the ancient Greek world since his collaboration with D'Annunzio. This collaboration led the musician to reflect on the composition of music for classical performances and, more specifically, on the musical practices of the ancient Greeks. It is essential to mention Pizzetti's study *Verso le sorgenti. La musica dei greci* (1907), and his subsequent work, *La musica dei greci: studio storico-critico* (1914). Additionally, a significant 1914 article titled *La musica nella rappresentazione attuale delle tragedie greche* was published in the journal *Musicisti Contemporanei*, in which Pizzetti specifically explored the representation of Greek tragedies and the music intended for them. This study combines reflections on the composition of music for tragic drama with broader considerations of ancient Greek musical theory. These ideas would later be developed in *La musica e il dramma* (1926), in particular when Pizzetti describes the impossibility of reconstructing ancient Greek music and, therefore, the need to devise new musical solutions in order to endow ancient tragedy with musical accompaniment.¹² However, beyond Pizzetti's conclusions, especially regarding their practical implications, all the theoretical reflections that accompanied his compositional practice – including those concerning the music of the ancient Greeks – are relevant.

The composition of music for classical performances, considered from both theoretical and practical perspectives, constitutes a particularly fruitful area of research, particularly with regard to the music composed for the Greek Theatre of Syracuse, which, as shown in TABLE 1, provides a useful case study. In 1914, in fact, the music was composed by Romagnoli himself, who then worked in synergy with Giuseppe Mulè from 1921 to 1927; other musicians were then involved from the 1930s onwards, such as Ildebrando Pizzetti, Riccardo Zandonai and Gian Francesco Malipiero. The Venetian composer was then again called upon to compose the music, in 1948, when the season reopened after the Second World War.¹³ The collaboration between Romagnoli and Mulè has been examined elsewhere,¹⁴ and in recent years, several studies have emerged on the figure of Ildebrando Pizzetti, both about his experience with D'Annunzio and his work at INDA from 1930 to 1936.¹⁵ Moreover, Pizzetti, in his 1938 essay on stage music, mentions the music he composed for the Greek Theatre in Syracuse from 1930

1914	<i>Agamemnon</i>	E. Romagnoli (τ/μ)		
1921	<i>Libation Bearers</i>	E. Romagnoli (τ) G. Mulè (μ)		
1922	<i>The Bacchae</i>	E. Romagnoli (τ) G. Mulè (μ)	<i>Oedipus Rex</i>	E. Romagnoli (τ/μ)
1924	<i>Seven Against Thebes</i>	E. Romagnoli (τ) G. Mulè (μ)	<i>Antigone</i>	E. Romagnoli (τ) G. Mulè (μ)
1927	<i>Medea</i> <i>Cyclops</i> <i>The Trackers</i>	E. Romagnoli (τ) G. Mulè (μ)	<i>The Clouds</i>	E. Romagnoli (τ) G. Mulè (μ)
1930	<i>Iphigenia in Aulis</i>	G. Garavani (τ) G. Mulè (μ)	<i>Agamemnon</i>	A. Marchioni Alibrandi (τ) I. Pizzetti (μ)
1933	<i>Iphigenia in Tauris</i>	G. A. Cesareo (τ) G. Mulè (μ)	<i>Women of Trachis</i>	E. Bignone (τ) I. Pizzetti (μ)
1936	<i>Hippolytus</i>	G. A. Cesareo (τ) G. Mulè (μ)	<i>Oedipus at Colonus</i>	E. Bignone (τ) I. Pizzetti (μ)
1939	<i>Ajax</i>	E. Bignone (τ) R. Zandonai (μ)	<i>Hecuba</i>	M. Faggella (τ) G. F. Malipiero (μ)
1948	<i>Agamemnon</i> <i>Libation Bearers</i> <i>Eumenides</i>	M. Valgimigli (τ) G. F. Malipiero (μ)		

TABLE 1. Translators (τ) and composers (μ) involved in the classical performances of the Greek Theatre in Syracuse, 1914–1948.

onwards. However, he points out that it is not entirely correct to define the music composed for classical plays as ‘incidental’, since the music is an integral part of ancient Greek drama.¹⁶

Although the music composed for Greek theatre had a specific function, it is equally true that its composition should be understood as part of an integrated theatrical event. In a study by Emilio Sala on the stage music composed by Malipiero for Syracuse, the emphasis is placed precisely on the fact that the music was incidental, and the premise at the beginning of the work, which presents interesting examples and analyses of the music, focuses on this. Sala dwells on the fact that in the context of the history of incidental music, ‘finally in the Pizzettian (and Malipierian) era, the search (or utopia) for a new musical theatre, freed from the nineteenth-century opera tradition, created the conditions for a new demand for incidental music, to be played during dramatic performances’.¹⁷ The various composers certainly approached this issue differently, considering the music more or less incidental – Malipiero, for example, does not even mention it in the catalogue

of his works – but the very nature of the ancient drama and, therefore, the need to restore one of its constituent aspects to it, albeit in a modern key, determined the reflections and consequent compositional practices for this type of music. In the same way, it seems perhaps reductive to frame stage music within the ‘Hellenising strand’, as compositions linked to the ancient Greek world:¹⁸ the perspective from which we wish to analyse this type of composition is instead part of a line of research aimed at investigating the theories and compositional practices relating to music for Greek theatre in twentieth-century Italy. The intention is, therefore, to try to focus attention on how individual composers moved in this sphere, whether there was a theoretical reflection on how to restore the musical aspect to ancient drama, whether there was an interest in the study of ancient Greek music: what it meant, in short, for them to work for this kind of performance. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the general cultural context and the specific theatrical context to shed more light on the different approaches to modern writing that went hand in hand with the revival of ancient drama. Malipiero’s case as a composer at the INDA is fascinating, particularly regarding the music he wrote for *Hecuba* (1939); this work, in fact, led him to compose an opera on the same subject.

The present study therefore aims to investigate Malipiero’s compositional process from the music for *Hecuba* written for the Greek Theatre of Syracuse to ‘his’ *Ecuba* (1940), focusing on his compositional choices in both musical and textual terms. We will endeavor to examine the relationship with the translations¹⁹ by INDA translators, in particular Manara Valgimigli, and, in addition, to understand whether any reflections and studies on ancient Greek music accompanied the compositional process. The discussion draws primarily on archival documents – scores, manuscript librettos, exchanges of correspondence, interviews, and reviews of performances – preserved in the Gian Francesco Malipiero Collection of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (hereafter Malipiero Collection). These primary sources may provide useful insights for situating Malipiero’s stage music within the context of classical performance in twentieth-century Italy and, more broadly, for exploring the composer’s relationship with the classical tradition, particularly that of ancient Greece.²⁰

MALIPIERO’S MUSIC FOR SYRACUSE

A letter dated 11 December 1937 from Biagio Pace, then president of INDA, marked the composer’s first involvement with the Syracuse theatre season. Pace informed Malipiero that the Institute had begun planning the 1939 season, with Euripides’ *Hecuba* as its intended production, and that he was being considered to write the music for the choruses and dances in Manlio Faggella’s translation of the play.²¹

Between this first invitation letter and the official one sent to Malipiero on 22 February 1938, Malipiero and the Committee exchanged further correspondence to define the musical component of the tragedy, for which he was to use an adaptation prepared by Faggella specifically for the Syracuse production.²² A letter from Vincenzo Bonajuto, the Committee's secretary, dated 18 February 1938, in reply to some questions from Malipiero, touches on some interesting issues, particularly concerning choruses. Regarding the chorus of the first *stasimon*, Bonajuto writes:

I think that one and a half minutes is too short. On the other hand, I fully approve of your idea of avoiding the repetition of words, so we could decide to set the entire first *stasimon* to music without considering the cuts. In this case, however, to avoid repetitions, it will be necessary to think of the closing chorus of the tragedy for which we had chosen, as you remember, the antistrophe of the first movement [...] In any case, give me a few days to think of the final chorus of the tragedy, and you can also set the entire first movement to music, which also seems to me lyrically beautiful.²³

As can be seen from the piano-and-voice reduction preserved in the Malipiero Collection, the first *stasimon* was not set to music in its entirety, but only Strophe I and Antistrophe II. The Antistrophe I of the first strophe was reserved for the finale of the tragedy. Continuing to examine the composition of the choruses, Bonajuto dwells on the second chorus – the second *stasimon* of the tragedy – writing that

[...] everything will be recited over a musical accompaniment. You ask whether the musical rhythm may be indicated in this connection. Please do so, since, as I have seen, the effect is excellent. In practice, the staging will require actresses with at least a basic musical training.²⁴

The list of pieces to be set to music sent by INDA to Malipiero (FIG. 1)²⁵ includes two sung choruses (piece numbers 5 and 9) and two *melologhi*, respectively piece number 6 (the second *stasimon*) and piece number 8 (the third *stasimon*). The introduction of the *melologo* (or 'spoken chorus') represented an innovation within the framework of the music composed for classical performances in Syracuse. In presenting the 1939 season, this novelty is, in fact, highlighted:

The following classical performances in Syracuse will give us the novelty of the choruses of *Hecuba* in the form of the 'melodrama' (spoken chorus) according to the instructions given to the musician by the *Istituto del Dramma Antico*. Malipiero has created a melodic line on which the chorus will recite, singing in unison, happily adapted to the particular human attitudes of the three episodes, and articulates the perfect words with great precision.²⁶

It is important to note that the idea of implementing a 'spoken chorus' was already conceived by INDA for the 1930 performances. Correspondence preserved in the Archives of the Fondazione INDA (AFI) reveals that Ernst Ferand, who was the director of the Dance School in Hellerau, suggested this solution to Gargallo, who was still serving as President of the Institute, as early as 1929.²⁷

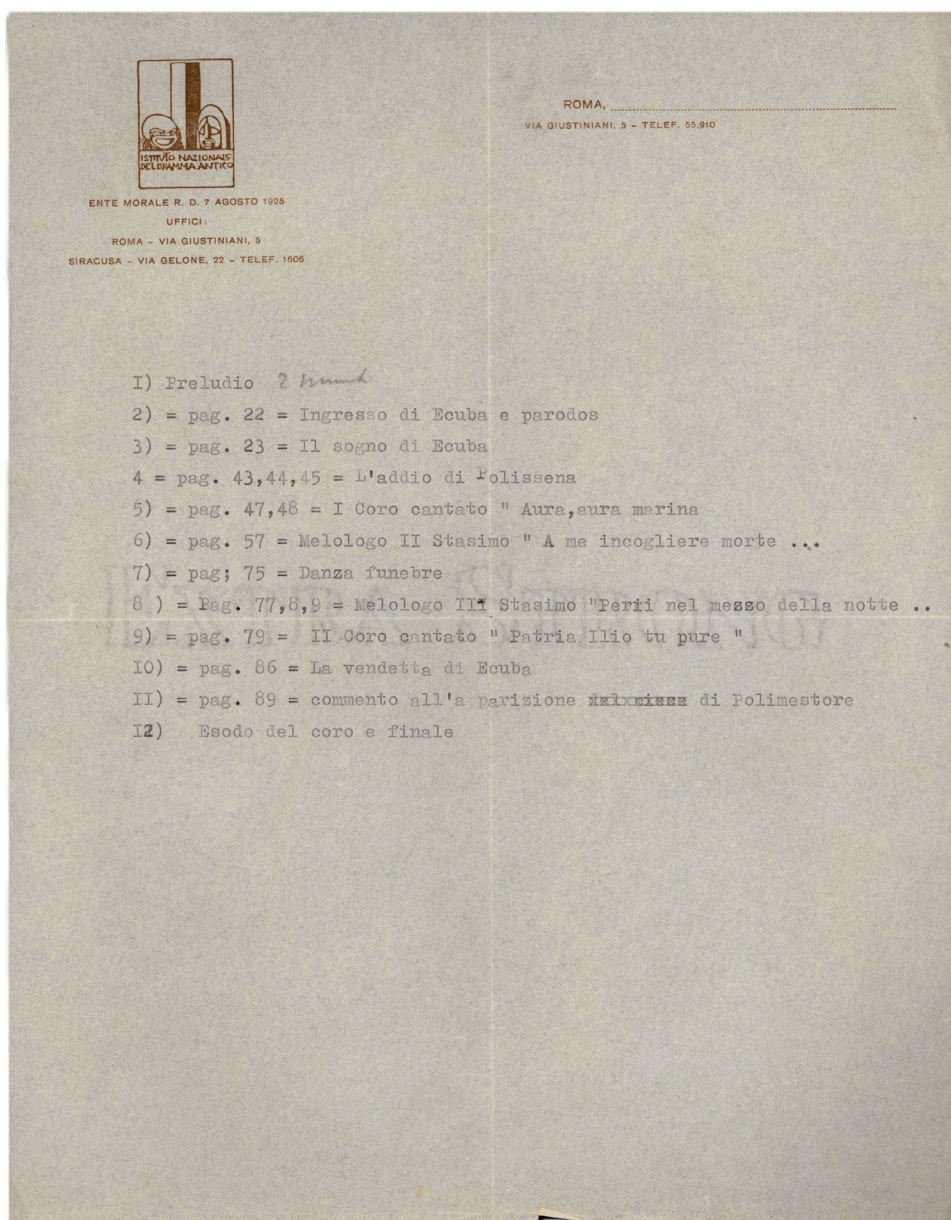


FIGURE 1. List of musical cues with indication of the *melologi*.
Venice, Fondazione Giorgio Cini (FGC), Malipiero Collection.

The idea was therefore to realise this type of ‘spoken chorus’, already widespread in Germany, for the *Agamemnon* of 1930, but nothing came of it. The realisation of this project only took place in 1939, when Malipiero composed recited choruses set to music, as requested by the Institute. Within these settings for Syracuse, the *declamato* is not confined to the choruses but also characterises the solo writing. Its presence in the solo parts of Hecuba and Polyxena in pieces II, III and IV should therefore not be understood as an extension, but as evidence of a stylistic feature already established in his compositional language before his involvement with INDA. It may be assumed that this stylistic signature was particularly influenced by Malipiero’s research into the music of Claudio Monteverdi, and especially by his work on the transcription and edition of Monteverdi’s works between 1926 and 1942. Malipiero himself described this experience as ‘wonderful’, ‘a very fruitful stimulus’.²⁸ It is therefore more plausible to suggest that, in 1939, during the realisation of the ‘spoken choruses’ for *Hecuba*, several factors converged: the compositional instances of INDA, which since 1929 had sought to bring this innovation to the stage at Ferand’s suggestion, and Malipiero’s well-established *declamato*.

On 4 March 1939, Bonajuto wrote to Malipiero informing him that he had collected press material on *Hecuba* and requesting further detailed notes that could be used either for a journalistic interview or for an article. He further suggested that the article might outline the compositional criteria that had guided Malipiero’s work. No trace of this article survives; however, on 12 March Malipiero replied with a letter that would later serve as the basis for Mario Corsi’s interview, ‘Al Teatro Greco di Siracusa: Tragedie antiche e musiche moderne’. In this letter, in addition to setting out some of the compositional principles underlying his music for Syracuse, Malipiero also noted that the work had inspired him to compose another piece on the same subject.

The case of *Hecuba* is a very special one: Euripides’ tragedy affected me so deeply that I am now reworking the translation in my own way in order to conceive a musical drama *as I like it*. This is the effect produced, as I told you, by Euripides’ tragedy in its more recent phase; but if I have to reconsider what I felt while writing the music for the theatre of Syracuse, I can only say one thing: the Greek tragedy continually passed before my eyes as if it were being performed in the theatre of Syracuse many centuries ago, and I thought of a *declamato* over the symphony that is in keeping with the drama. The mystery of musical creation lies precisely in the possibility of accompanying the drama without sacrificing music, and that says it all: the rhythmic declamation of words penetrates the music, and it is music that completes the word, accompanying it with all the means available to the composer. It is not for me to say what these means are, namely invention, harmonic expression, rhythmic force, and so on.²⁹

In this letter, Malipiero distinguishes between two compositional phases. The first, a more ‘recent’ one, is marked by his intention to conceive a musical drama,

a project to which he had already begun to devote himself through the translation of the text even before the staging of *Hecuba* in Syracuse. The second phase, by contrast, is associated with the actual composition of the music for Syracuse. Malipiero emphasises that he conceived a ‘*declamato* over the symphony that is in keeping with the drama’, which suggests that the *declamato* should not be interpreted as a feature subsequently extended to the other pieces following the *melologhi*, but rather as an integral component of his stylistic language. Within this framework, the transition from the Syracuse *Hecuba* to the later creation of Malipiero’s *Ecuba* calls for closer examination.

FROM *HECUBA* TO *ECUBA*

Malipiero’s opera *Ecuba*, completed in Venice in 1940 and premiered at the Teatro Reale dell’Opera in Rome in 1941, belongs, together with *Giulio Cesare*, *Antonio e Cleopatra* and *La vita è sogno*, to what the composer himself defined as a ‘lyrical parenthesis’. In the catalogue of his operas, Malipiero notes that ‘the *Favola del figlio cambiato* had broken the spell of “my theatre”, but not that of the theatre’,³⁰ a remark that helps clarify his position with respect to operatic composition in these years. Contemporary press reviews also emphasise that the 1940 *Ecuba* represents one of the composer’s attempts to move beyond nineteenth-century opera and to open new perspectives for the theatre. The Syracusan experience thus appears as a decisive opportunity for Malipiero: although the staging of tragic plays at the Greek theatre in Syracuse had originated twenty-five years before the premiere of *Hecuba*, what changed was his own perception of it during the composition of the stage music. What evolved, in other words, was the potential he attributed to ancient drama as a vehicle for a new form of theatre. It has already been shown that Malipiero reused, with some modifications, the music composed for Syracuse in his opera; it is therefore worth examining more closely the extent to which the Syracusan experience informed his compositional choices, both in musical and libretto terms.

In December 1940, shortly before the premiere of his opera, Malipiero was interviewed about the genesis of *Ecuba* and the influence of his experience at the Syracuse classical performances:

- I know that *Ecuba* originated from some music you did for a Sicilian festival. Would you like to tell me more about the genesis of this latest work of yours?
- When the Institute of Ancient Drama asked me to put some parts of Euripides’ *Hecuba* into music, I had to study the original text carefully. After having written the dances and the chorus ‘Le Prigioniere’ for Syracuse, I became so fascinated by the subject that I made my own free translation of the Greek drama and created a completely new work.
- Was the libretto written by you, as usual?

- Of course.
- Did the ‘Dance’ of the prisoners make its way into the opera?
- Yes, but enlarged and with changes in the orchestration. For Syracuse, the orchestra lacked cellos and violas, instruments that I replaced with the saxophone. Here, however, the orchestra is complete. The meaning of the passage has been expanded, so to speak. Whereas it previously expressed only the grief of Ulysses’ captive slaves, here the music has a more specific function: that of expressing, through a sacred dance, the sacrifice of Polyxena, the youngest daughter of Hecuba and the late Priam. I should also add that the opening bars of the dance gave rise to a short prelude to the opera itself.³¹

This interview offers valuable insights into the relationship between the incidental music for Syracuse and the conception of *Ecuba*. Malipiero recalls that, after composing the dances and the chorus ‘Le Prigioniere’ for Syracuse, his growing fascination with Euripides’ tragedy led him to undertake a free translation of the play and eventually to conceive a new musical drama. As the following examples suggest, the opera does not merely incorporate material from the incidental music; instead, it reworks musical and dramaturgical ideas that had already been explored in the Syracuse *Hecuba*. A particularly significant example is the ‘Danza funebre’ (piece no. 7 of the Syracuse stage music), which Malipiero reworked into the ‘Danza funebre’ in *Ecuba*. It is worth noting that the use of dance as a dramaturgical element had already been introduced in the Syracusan performances of the *Bacchae* in 1922 and had subsequently become an established feature of the Greek tragic performances staged there. Given Malipiero’s particular sensitivity to this aspect of theatrical expression, it is unsurprising that dance provided an early point of continuity between the incidental music for Syracuse and the conception of *Ecuba*.³²

Beyond the expansion of the instrumentation, Malipiero emphasises that what has changed is the meaning of the passage, which, in the opera, expresses the sacrifice of Polyxena. In the Syracuse *Hecuba*, the funeral dance appears after the second *stasimon*, when the Chorus expresses its condolences following the announcement of the death of Hecuba’s daughter. In Malipiero’s opera, by contrast, the dance is relocated to the end of the first act, immediately after the first Chorus of the Prisoners (the first *stasimon*, no. 5 in the Syracuse score). In the first act, in fact, Malipiero inserts the first episode, in which Ulysses announces to Hecuba his decision to sacrifice Polyxena to Achilles; a sacrifice that Polyxena, having lost her father Priam and now reduced to slavery, willingly accepts despite her mother’s grief. In addition to pointing out how the funeral dance took on a different meaning for him than it had in the 1939 version, Malipiero offers further information, indicating that ‘the first bars of the dance gave rise to a short prelude to the opera itself’. At first glance, Malipiero’s statement might suggest that the ‘Danza funebre’ gave rise to the Prelude of the 1940 *Ecuba*. The surviving sources, however, do not allow the precise chronology of composition to be reconstructed. What

can be established from the musical sources is that the Prelude already forms part of the Syracuse *Hecuba* and reappears, substantially unchanged, in the opera, as is evident from the opening bars (FIG. 2A-B).

Analysing the opening of the 'Danza funebre' composed for Syracuse reveals several characteristic compositional procedures, including a persistent rhythmic profile, pervasive chromatic inflections, and displaced metric accents (FIG. 3). These same procedures recur in the Prelude, where they are reworked within a different formal and dramaturgical context. The musical evidence is consistent with Malipiero's recollection that the opening of the funeral dance 'gave rise' to the Prelude. It is therefore plausible to recognise in the Prelude a re-elaboration of the compositional procedures already articulated in the opening of the 'Danza funebre'.

It is worth recalling that the composition of the incidental music for Syracuse developed through a continuous exchange between Malipiero and the Committee of the INDA. One may recall Bonajuto's letter, already analysed, dated 18 Febru-

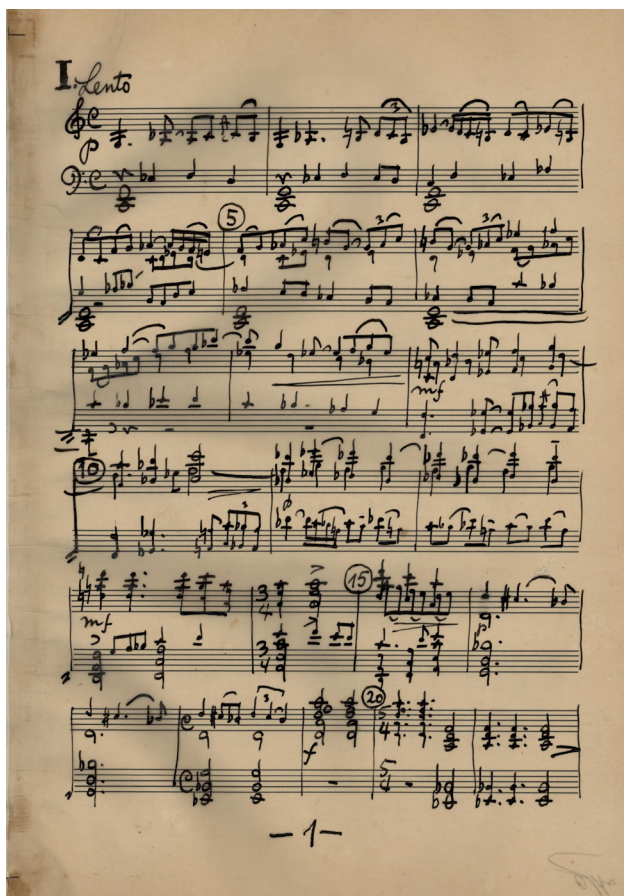


FIGURE 2A. G.F. Malipiero, Prelude for the 1939 incidental music, autograph manuscript. FGC, Malipiero Collection.

Atto primo

Lento

Ottavino $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

2 flauti $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

2 Oboi $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

Corno Inglese $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

2 Clarinetti $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$
in $\text{B}\flat$

Clarinetto Basson $\text{B}\flat\text{C}$

2 fagotti $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

4 Corni
in $\text{F}\sharp$ $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

3 Trombe
in $\text{B}\flat$ $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

3 Tromboni $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

Bassotubi $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

Timpani $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

Celaste $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$
Trioli
Gran Cassa $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

Arpa $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

Violini I $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$ *molto espressivo*

Violini II $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

Viola $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

Violoncelli $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$

Contrabbassi $\text{F}\sharp\text{C}$ *Dirini*

fframmento Malipiero. Ecuba. - 1 -

FIGURE 2B. G.F. Malipiero, *Ecuba*, first page of the score, © 1940 Suvini Zerboni, Milano, S865Z. FGC, Malipiero Collection.

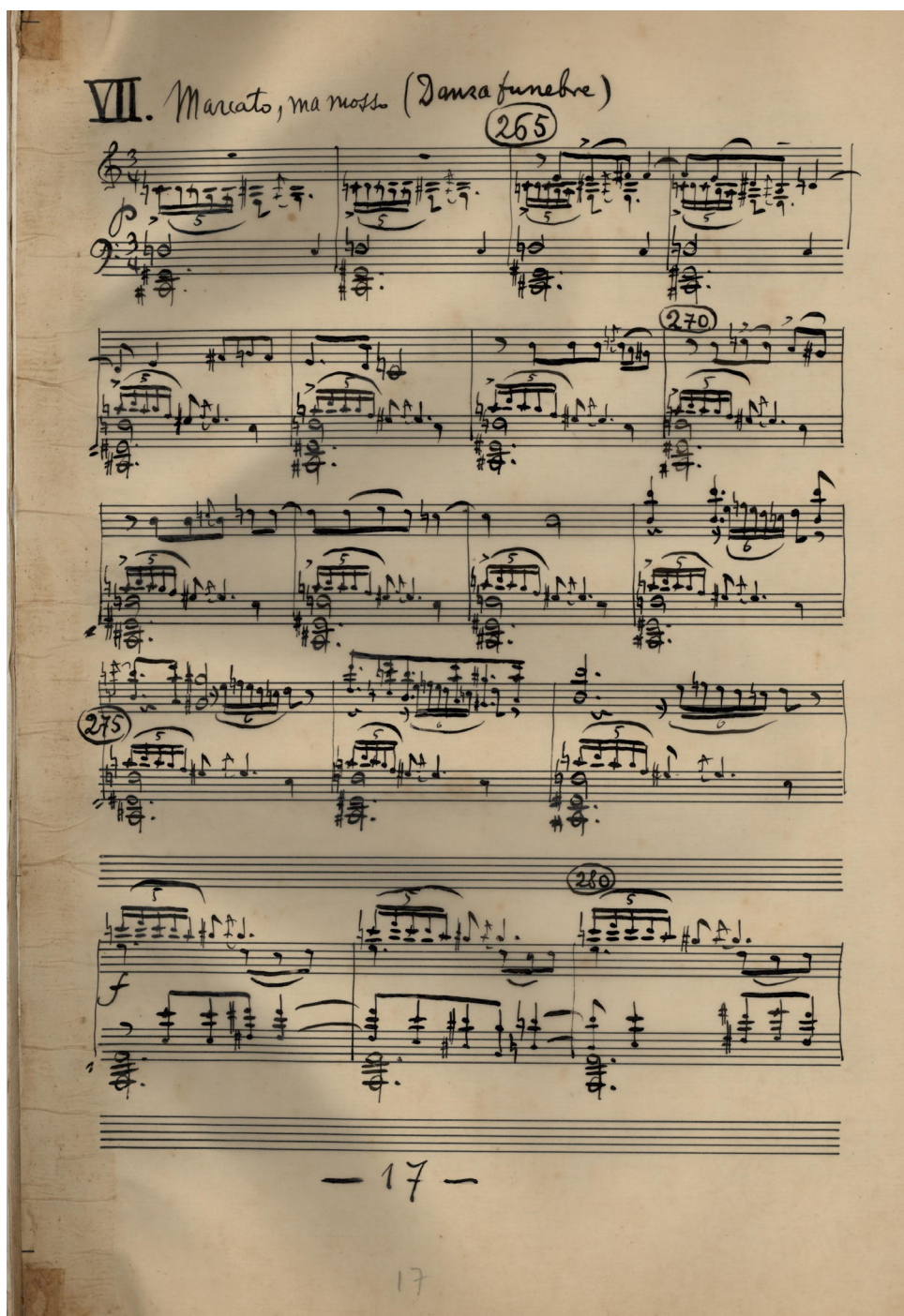


FIGURE 3. G.F. Malipiero, 'Danza funebre', incidental music for the 1939 Syracuse *Hecuba*, autograph manuscript. FGC, Malipiero Collection.

ary 1938, in which he refers to Hecuba's entrance (a number following the Prelude) and emphasises that 'it will perhaps be necessary first to have the orchestra alone perform the music, which being so strongly rhythmic is perfectly suited to the tired gait of the old queen'.³³

The composition of the incidental music for the Syracuse *Hecuba*, developed in continuous dialogue with the Committee and shaped by the dramaturgical requirements of the ancient performance, provided the framework within which Malipiero developed musical and dramaturgical solutions that he subsequently re-worked in *Ecuba*. A further example of this process can be found in the treatment of the choruses, whose analysis shows how material originally composed for the Syracuse production was reconsidered and transformed in the opera.

At first glance, this continuity might seem surprising. In a letter to his friend, the philologist Manara Valgimigli (whose relationship with Malipiero will be discussed in the next section), Malipiero remarked that he had not sent him *Hecuba* (1939) because he intended to eliminate the choral sections. Yet the 1940 *Ecuba* still includes a 'Chorus of Prisoners' (for sopranos, contraltos, and dancers), making it possible to trace significant continuities with the dramaturgical choices adopted for the Syracuse production. As noted above, the 1939 *Hecuba* did not set the entire first strophic pair to music as originally planned, but only Strophe I and Antistrophe II. Malipiero adopted the same solution in *Ecuba*: at the end of Act I, immediately before the 'Danza funebre', he introduces the opera's first chorus, consisting precisely of Strophe I and Antistrophe II, reformulated in prose. The comparison below between Euripides' *Hecuba* (in Faggella's translation) and Malipiero's libretto illustrates this correspondence:

Euripides, *Hecuba*, I *stasimon*

STROPHE I

Aura, aura marina,
che le navi che corrono sull'onde
accompagni per l'ampia
spuma del mare, dove me, infelice,
sospingerai? Compra, servente al tetto
di chi verrò? [...]

ANTISTROPHE II

Ahi pei miei figli, ah pei miei padri e il suolo
che sprofonda, nel fumo
involto e preso dalla lancia argiva!
Io già in terra straniera ormai mi dico
serva; schiava d'Europa,
or l'Asia io lascio: e mi si danno, in cambio
delle nozze con l'Orco, eterni ceppi!

Malipiero's *Ecuba*, Act I

Aura, aura del mare che sull'onde sospingi,
fra la spuma, le navi che mi portano lontano.
Dove, dove condur vorrai questa infelice?
Sera di chi sarò? Di chi sarò? Figli sventurati,
padri sventurati, la mia patria, fra gli incendi
e nel fumo avvolta, è abbattuta dalla lancia
d'Argo, ed io in terra straniera ormai sono
schiava: lungi dall'Asia andrò raminga, ed i
duri ceppi son il solo dono per le nozze mie
con l'Ade. Ahimè! Ahimè!

Malipiero produced what he himself described as a ‘translation in his own way’, choosing above all to render the text in prose. Beyond the broader implications of his stylistic choices in shaping the libretto, it is important to note that he retained the same textual selection adopted for the Syracuse production, setting only portions of Strophe I and Antistrophe II to music. In other words, *Ecuba* draws on precisely those sections of Euripides’ text that had already been selected for the Syracuse *Hecuba*.

Accordingly, Act I – which, like the Syracuse staging of the tragedy, begins with Hecuba’s entrance and therefore omits the appearance of Polydorus’ ghost – includes a Chorus corresponding to the first stasimon of the Syracuse production, followed by the funeral dance. In Act II, the opera’s choruses correspond to the second and third Syracusan *stasima*, while Act III, with the appearance of the final Chorus, introduces a further and significant dramaturgical reconfiguration.

The final Chorus is not a translation of the original Euripidean Chorus; we have seen how the Syracusan finale consists of a reprise of the first *stasimon* of the Euripidean drama and how Malipiero’s *Ecuba* concludes in the same way. For the final Chorus of Syracuse, part of the antistrophe is reprised, with the repetition of ‘aura, aura marina...’ with which the Euripidean *stasimon* opens. Malipiero, greatly reducing the text, seems to synthesise the content of Strophe I and Antistrophe I, also repeating (slightly modified) the incipit. The comparison clearly shows that Malipiero retains the dramaturgical solution first adopted for the Syracuse production by returning to the first stasimon in the opera’s finale:

Euripides, <i>Hecuba</i> , Final Chorus	Malipiero’s <i>Ecuba</i> , Act III
STROPHE I Aura, aura marina, che le navi che corrono sull’onde accompagni per l’ampia spuma del mare, dove me, infelice sospingerai?	Aura, aura del mare, ah dove mai questa nave tu sospingerai? Aura, aura del mare, dove mi porti, ahi, sventurata! Ahi sventurata!
ANTISTROPHE I O ad un’isola, spinta me, sventurata, dal marino abete, me spedirai, dove alle case attenda una squallida vita.	

In light of these few, though hopefully representative, examples, John C. G. Waterhouse’s assertion that Malipiero ‘did not need to resort to such drastic surgical operations to transform it [Euripides’ drama] into a concise libretto in three acts’ appears convincing.³⁴ It should nevertheless be stressed that the Greek origi-

inal underwent profound dramaturgical reconfiguration, and that these changes did not simply precede the opera but emerged through the compositional process itself, taking shape alongside the incidental music written for the Syracuse *Hecuba*.

We can answer some of the questions we asked in the introduction – specifically, whether Malipiero intended the music written for Syracuse to be stage music – in the affirmative; firstly, because he did not write the libretto himself (although he did discuss writing the music with the Committee). The evidence suggests that the Syracuse *Hecuba* should not be regarded merely as a source of musical material later incorporated into *Ecuba*. Rather, it constituted the creative context in which Malipiero elaborated musical and dramaturgical solutions that were subsequently reworked in the opera. What is particularly significant and remains *unique* among the composers working for INDA from 1921 to 1939 – as well as after the season resumed in 1948 – is Malipiero's experience of Syracuse, namely his perception of the potential of the drama on which he was working for the creation of a new kind of theatre. Rather than framing the music written for *Hecuba* in 1939 within the history of stage music, therefore, one can analyse Malipiero's work within the framework of the composers who collaborated on the staging of ancient dramas and follow his arc as a composer up to the writing of his very personal drama, 'as he liked it'.

TRANSLATIONS AND TRANSLATORS

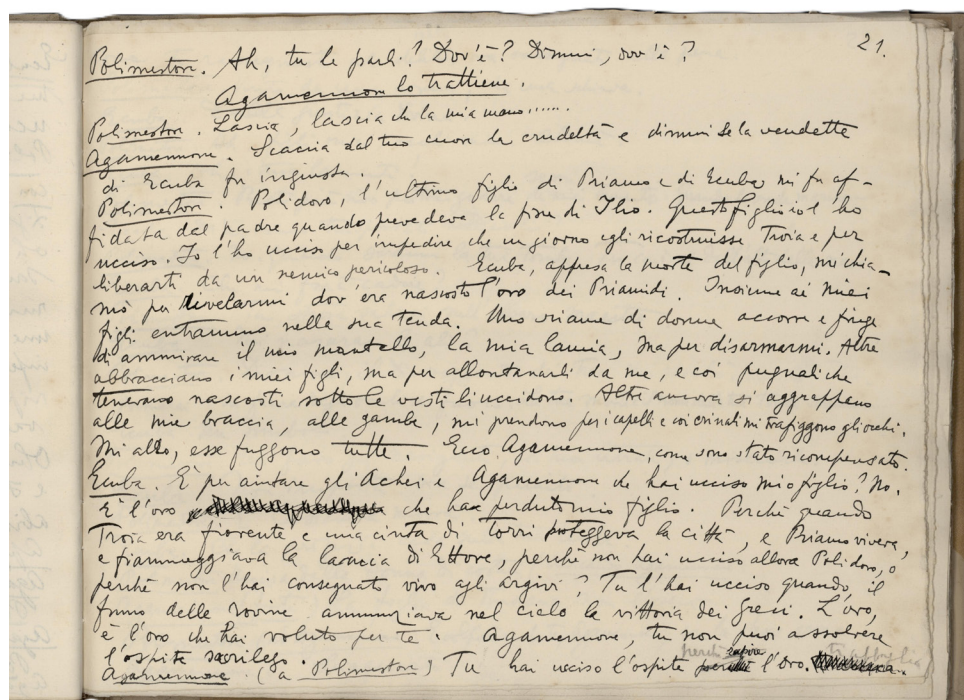
In 1941, Bonajuto attended the first performance of *Ecuba* and expressed his deep admiration, as emerges from an article published in the INDA Bulletin on Malipiero's opera. In the concluding section, he turns to the translation used by the composer for the libretto, stating that one of Malipiero's unquestionable merits was his direct translation of Euripides' text, with only minimal adaptations. Bonajuto underlines how, unlike Strauss, who used Hofmannsthal's libretto for *Elektra*, Malipiero approached the 'great world of Greek tragedy' directly.³⁵ While Malipiero certainly had to engage with Euripides' tragedy and make it his own, it does not appear that he translated the Greek original directly, as he himself stated in an interview with Giorgio Petrocchi. Malipiero in fact declared that he did not know Greek, or rather that he had lost whatever knowledge of Homeric Greek he once possessed. He also stated that he prepared his libretto on the basis of German and French translations, deliberately avoiding Italian versions out of concern for possible plagiarism.³⁶

Malipiero therefore relied on foreign translations, although the specific sources are not indicated. Among the volumes from his library held at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, only one translation of Euripides' *Hecuba* is preserved, dating from 1725 and by Abbot Mario Guarnacci, which, however, cannot be considered rel-

evant as it is in Italian. There are cases in which Malipiero explicitly states the version he used rather than the original text. The symphonic poem *Vergilii Aeneis* is one such example. In relation to the composition of its text, Malipiero wrote in his annotated catalogue that he had ‘preferred the *Aeneid* in Annibal Caro’s translation because the Virgilian meter filled me with awe’.³⁷ Clearly, Malipiero – like any librettist – was under no obligation to declare the sources on which he relied in writing his texts. This question is of particular interest, since, as Gianfranco Folena noted, an analysis of the translations he used could shed further light on the originality of certain stylistic features, especially in his prose. In the case of the libretto of *Antonio e Cleopatra*, for instance, Folena highlights how Malipiero’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s play is significant ‘in relation to the translated original, to earlier translations and to later ones’.³⁸

In the manuscript of *Ecuba*, the text appears in its final form, with only a few passages later modified by the composer. For instance, on page 21, in the line Agamemnon addresses to Polymestor (FIG. 4), one can see how the words chosen for the final version (‘you have killed your host because gold dazzles you’ [‘tu hai ucciso l’ospite perché l’oro ti abbaglia’]) have been reworked several times; one earlier variant reads ‘you have killed your host to kidnap the gold’ (‘tu hai ucciso l’ospite per rapire l’oro’). However, since it is impossible to establish the sources of

FIGURE 4. G.F. Malipiero, *Ecuba*, autograph libretto, 1940. FGC, Malipiero Collection.



Malipiero's text in *Ecuba*, the present discussion must be confined to an analysis of his prose style rather than of the translation.³⁹

A more promising line of inquiry concerns Malipiero's relationship with the translator Manara Valgimigli. Malipiero and Valgimigli collaborated on the *Oresteia* for Syracuse in 1948. Following the reopening of the Syracuse season after World War II, Malipiero was invited to compose music for the Aeschylus trilogy, with Valgimigli responsible for the translation. The documents preserved in the Malipiero Collection detail their collaborative process and have already been studied.⁴⁰ Here, I want to emphasise how these two friends and colleagues agreed on the literary and musical interpretation of the Greek trilogy.

Indeed, Valgimigli chose to translate the *Oresteia* into prose, and it was the first time a prose translation instead of one in verse was staged in Syracuse. The 'sobriety' of Valgimigli's text went on to be reflected in Malipiero's writing of the music, music that was not meant to overpower the text. In the 1947 interview published in the *Corriere della Sera* with the title 'Tradire il meno possibile gli antichi tragici greci' Valgimigli, in fact, emphasised that he wanted to avoid 'weaving song over the word of the choruses'. The exchanges between the philologist and Malipiero, who were working together on the scheme proposed by Bonajuto regarding the inclusion of the music in the trilogy, highlighted how the music should accompany the most salient moments of the drama without merging with the acting. In fact, not a single word of Valgimigli's translation is set to music by the composer. In a letter from Bonajuto to Malipiero, dated 22 December 1947 and written shortly after the above article, Bonajuto writes that 'Valgimigli said that you agree, indeed content, in not having to set words to music'.⁴¹ Bonajuto, therefore, adds that he did not consider the choral parts to be set to music even though 'singing is so clearly required by the text that I believe it will be missed when it is set to music'.⁴² Malipiero's music, therefore, accompanies the salient moments of the tragedy without setting the words to music: a choice that would be regretted by Bonajuto even after the first performance, but which tells us much about Malipiero's compositional process in following Valgimigli's translation. We will not dwell here on the analysis of the music composed by Malipiero;⁴³ instead, we will consider one of the composer's writings on the subject, an essay published in *Camene* – the journal of Gesualdo Manzella Frontini and Mario Scarlata – which opens up interesting reflections. In the Malipiero Collection, in addition to two typewritten copies and a handwritten one (FIG. 5) entitled *La musica dell' 'Orestiadé'*, two letters mention the writing: one dated 5 February 1948, signed by one of the editors of the journal *Camene*, Mario Scarlata, stated that the intention is to prepare an extraordinary issue to be distributed a few days before the beginning of the performances, consisting of articles written by all the contributors.

Malipiero was therefore asked to write a text on the music composed for the Trilogy. The other letter, dated 23 March 1948, confirms that the two directors

La musica dell' Orestide

Sulla musica greca molto è stato detto, ma in realtà non si sa nulla di preciso che accenti alla poesia e alle altre arti. La musica non esisteva: ~~dall'ombra che l'avvolgeva~~. Erano vagiti che le grandi voci dei tragedisti soffocavano fatalmente.

Sarebbe dunque follia volersi restringere entro i limiti di una ipotetica archeologia: il pianto o della corammina nella tragedia di Eschilo. Anche la musica era vagiti.

Terzetto a una tragedia di Shakespeare o a una commedia di Molière. Nella traduzione italiana il suono delle parole in sé non ha nessun rapporto col greco, però corrisponde a quello di Eschilo non può suggerire una musica che si adatta alle a. Shakespeare o a Molière.

Sopra della tragedia, materia poetica, lirica, ritmica, danza, e tutti questi elementi sono una veste sonora che incarna i versi senza cadere nei piedi acronismi, non può corrispondere a quella che fra e che mai più potrà essere.

FIGURE 5. G.F. Malipiero, *La musica dell'Orestide*, autograph manuscript. FGC, Malipiero Collection.

had received Malipiero's contribution, which they described as 'slender, but very noble'. The text is reproduced below:

Much has been said about Greek music, but in reality, nothing is known about it because, alongside poetry and the other arts, music did not exist: they were vagueness that the great voices of the tragedians fatally stifled.

It would, therefore, be madness to want to re-string within the limits of a hypothetical archaeology: the plucking of a harp, the timid modulation of a flute or bagpipe would add nothing to the tragedy of Aeschylus.

In the Italian translation, the sound of the word itself has no relation to the Greek, but Aeschylus cannot suggest music that would fit Shakespeare or Molière.

Aeschylus imagines him to be above matter (poetry, rhythm, dance) and rejects a sonorous guise that cannot correspond to what he was and can never be again.

The music of the *Orestiad* as performed today in Syracuse is, therefore, music of our time that translates into sound the impressions conveyed to the musician by Aeschylus' tragedy through Manara Valgimigli's translation.⁴⁴

Malipiero's position regarding the study of ancient Greek music and the desire to recover it for the staging of an ancient drama seems clear: he was against such a possibility. His lack of interest in the subject is further demonstrated by the fact that he never responded to Bonajuto's request to write an article on the study of ancient Greek music for publication in the journal *Dioniso*. Especially in the 1930s, numerous contributions on Greek music were published in IND'A's journal, including, above all, those by Carlo del Grande – a Greek scholar who, among his other interests, studied the rhythmic and musical forms of Greek poetry, and also gave lectures on the subject at the Institute. Already on the occasion of the composition of the music for *Hecuba*, in a letter dated 2 June 1938 signed by Bonajuto, one reads after the signature a request for Malipiero to prepare 'an article for *Dioniso* on studies of Greek music', which, however, was never granted. On the other hand, even Nino Pirrotta, in retracing the history of the repertoires that were the subject of Malipiero's reflections and compositional practices, underlines how 'a negative choice was Greek music, because, he wrote, "it is still unimaginable"'.⁴⁵ However, as the musicologist goes on to specify, 'some of his observations on Greek music, however, show how much he had reflected above all on the problems of his participation in tragedy'.⁴⁶ In the volume *Il filo d'Arrianna*, in particular in the chapter 'Della camerata fiorentina', Malipiero states that 'perhaps the Greeks would have liked to "sing", but they could not, because the word had to dominate as the absolute expression of poetry and only to make it more ladylike than verse did they control and establish the voice's inflections, calling them "music" par excellence'.⁴⁷ Again, in the volume *L'armonioso labirinto*, Malipiero writes that 'there was no Greek music but, as Zacconi says, the music of the Greeks was limited to singing rhymes and poems, that is, it was declamation with voice inflexions with defined sounds and therefore musically perceptible, but they were not really music as we understand it today'.⁴⁸ To return to Pirrotta's assertion that Malipiero had at least given some thought to the problems of the role of Greek music in tragedy, this is also evident from an essay by the composer published in the journal *Scenario*, entitled 'Poesia e Musica', in which Malipiero states that 'it is impossible to speak of the relationship between musician and librettist without mentioning, albeit in passing, Greek tragedy'. Moreover, Malipiero underlines that 'great importance has been attached to the music of the Greeks by exaggerating its value' and that there is 'no doubt that the few musical fragments that have come down to us no longer relate to Greek musicality and transcribed into modern notation have lost all character and meaning'.⁴⁹

Malipiero continues his analysis by emphasising how the early musics of Caccini and Peri were imitations of what was supposed to be the sung tragedy of the Greeks and how it was Marco da Gagliano, among those who collaborated with Rinuccini, who was the first musician who, with *Daphne* (1497), freed opera from the fetters of the infatuated Greco-Romans. It seems, therefore, that Malipiero's reflections on Greek music did not concern the writing of the music for the two Syracusan tragedies he worked on; on the contrary, just as the article in *Camene* shows, he would have found it counterproductive to make any reflections on the subject. However, the Venetian composer was not exempt from reflection on the subject in a broader sense, as some documents from the Malipiero Collection, especially the correspondence with Valgimigli, demonstrate.

MALIPIERO AND ANCIENT GREEK MUSIC

Malipiero's negative views on studies of ancient Greek music are also clearly expressed in an undated note in which he writes: 'Unfortunately, it is on a chimera and with thoroughly destructive concepts that musicologists have built an enormous edifice for the study of ancient music, in which the starting point for any aesthetic and historical discussion is lacking: the art of music is still young; that of antiquity has vanished – indeed, it never existed'.⁵⁰ In particular, Malipiero states that he has before him the Hymn to Apollo, a chorus from Euripides' *Orestes*, and an ode by Pindar, in an edition by a 'German Doctor of Philosophy', commenting as follows: 'A fine preface, documents, etc. To the sung part, the professor has added "the accompaniment", thereby also fixing the harmonies and turning, for example, Pindar's ode into a kind of Schubertian Lied. What value can such a reduced and deformed music possibly have?'.⁵¹

The edition referred to by Malipiero has not yet been identified. Nevertheless, his criticism of the study of ancient Greek music is significant, particularly with regard to the rhythmic and musical interpretations that some scholars had proposed for the surviving musical fragments. Although there thus appears to be little room for interest on the part of the Venetian composer in this field, a letter from Valgimigli dated 26 December 1936 (FIG. 6) shows the composer's desire to engage his friend precisely with a fragment of Greek music:

As for the hymn to Apollo, in your edition the text begins with μόλετε, which occurs not at the beginning of the hymn but in the middle of the third verse, and it means, precisely: 'come (μόλετε) to sing with songs the golden-haired brother Phoebus', etc.

[...]

However, for accurate information, one would need to consult Weil-Reinach's studies in the *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* of 1893 and 1894. I can also bring these to you, if you wish. The Delphic inscription in the Athenian Treasury at Delphi dates from the 2nd century BC.

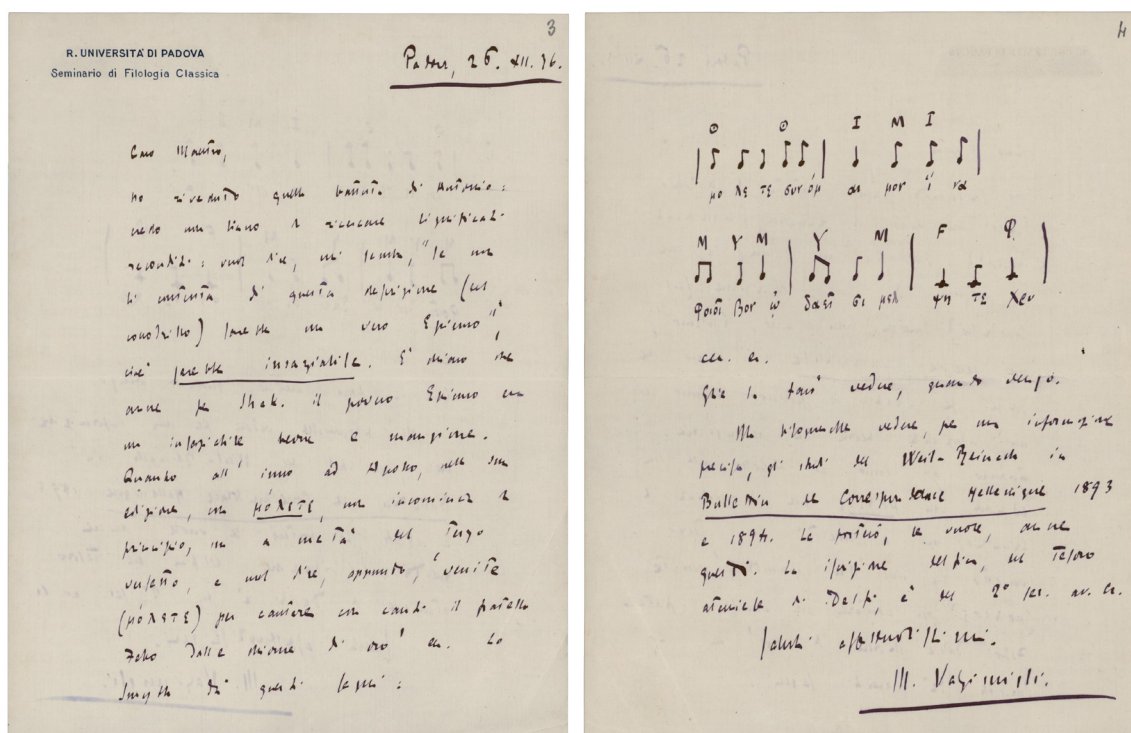


FIGURE 6. Letter from M. Valgimigli to G.F. Malipiero, 26 December 1936. FGC, Malipiero Collection.

With regard to the *Hymn to Apollo*, Valgimigli refers to the edition used by Malipiero, providing a quotation from his own translation. It is difficult to establish whether this letter is directly related to the remarks contained in the note discussed above, and even more difficult to determine whether Valgimigli's version corresponds to the one mentioned by the composer. In relation to the passage on which Malipiero had evidently requested his opinion, Valgimigli cites the musical interpretation proposed by Herbert Weir Smyth in *Greek Melic Poets*,⁵² as well as the studies of Henri Weil and Théodore Reinach published in the *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* (1893–1894). From the summer of 1893 to the winter of 1894, Otto Crusius, Henri Weil and Théodore Reinach transcribed Delphic inscriptions dating back to the 2nd century BC that had been found during French excavations at Delphi conducted under the direction of Théophile Homolle. The excavations brought to light almost the entire assemblage of blocks that constituted the Athenian Treasury at Delphi, of which more than a dozen bore inscriptions with fragments of two paeans (DAGM 20–21)⁵³ to Apollo with notations of Greek music. Scholars published a series of journal articles and abstracts, including contributions to the *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*. The *Hymn to Apollo*, in particular, was published by Théodore Reinach in his capacity as editor

of the *Revue des études grecques*, to such an extent that he commissioned the composer Gabriel Fauré to write a modern accompaniment for the hymn, which was publicly performed first in France, then in England and the United States in 1894 and 1895.⁵⁴ Valgimigli also provides further information concerning the *Hymn to Apollo*, indicating that, despite Malipiero's critical stance towards studies of Greek music, he nonetheless sought to explore the subject more deeply and to consult a scholar he considered an authoritative figure in the field.

The following year, on 6 April, Malipiero wrote to Valgimigli to thank him for sending him the *Phaedo* and 'bridging my other "ignorance"': 'I am increasingly bewildered by the importance the Greeks gave to music and the little importance of their music, even considering that quantity certainly outweighed quality. It is a study that would interest me'.⁵⁵ In this passage, Malipiero expresses his surprise at the prominence that music held in Greek culture, despite what he perceived as the limited value of its musical practice, and states his interest in pursuing the subject further. The correspondence with Valgimigli concerning works on Greek culture in a broader sense appears to have continued. It may therefore be inferred that Malipiero, perhaps thanks to his relationship with Valgimigli, was reading extensively on the Greeks; his reading of the *Phaedo*, in particular, does not seem to have left him indifferent.

On 21 April 1945, Valgimigli wrote a letter to Malipiero in which, after informing him that he had received news of a Virgilian symphonic poem which he would like to hear,⁵⁶ he urged him 'not [to] give up the thought of a symphonic poem on the death of Socrates: first and last chapters of the *Phaedo*'.⁵⁷ Malipiero later drew on Plato's *Phaedo* in his *Ottavo dialogo. La morte di Socrate*, for baritone voice and small orchestra, composed in 1957. In his analysis of the work, John C. G. Waterhouse describes the piece as 'a rather awkward and prosaic patchwork of excerpts from Plato's *Phaedo*'.⁵⁸ However, beyond Waterhouse's negative assessment, what I wish to emphasise is that, rather than presenting a 'clumsy mixture', Malipiero appears to follow Valgimigli's indications quite closely, drawing precisely on the opening and closing sections of the *Phaedo*, namely sections I–IV, VIII, LXIII and LXV–LXVI, as suggested in the scholar's letter. The table below offers a synoptic overview of the *Phaedo* sections and the corresponding bars of the *Ottavo Dialogo* in which they are employed:

<i>Phaedo</i>	<i>Ottavo Dialogo. La morte di Socrate</i>
I	35–64 (Echecrates)
II	80–114 (Echecrates)
III	116–143 (Echecrates; from 128 Socrates)
IV	145–159 (Socrates)
VIII	169–177 (Socrates)

LXIII	181–185 (Socrates)
LXV	199 (Phaedo) 200–204 (Officer of the Eleven) 205–206 (Socrates)
LXVI	207–212 (Officer of the Eleven) 215–231 (Phaedo) 235 (Phaedo) 236–238 (Socrates) 241–243 (Phaedo)

As in the later *Preludio e morte di Macbeth* (1958), a single baritone voice takes over lines originally distributed among different characters.⁵⁹ However, the Platonic text does not include lines 207–212, which Malipiero attributes to the Officer of the Eleven. In the Greek original, it is not the Officer of the Eleven who gives Socrates the poison and instructs him on what to do after drinking it, but rather a servant charged with bringing it to the philosopher. It is difficult to say whether Malipiero had misunderstood the Greek or had decided to omit a dramaturgical figure; however, since the entire text is conducted by a single voice for all the characters, one leans more towards the first hypothesis.⁶⁰

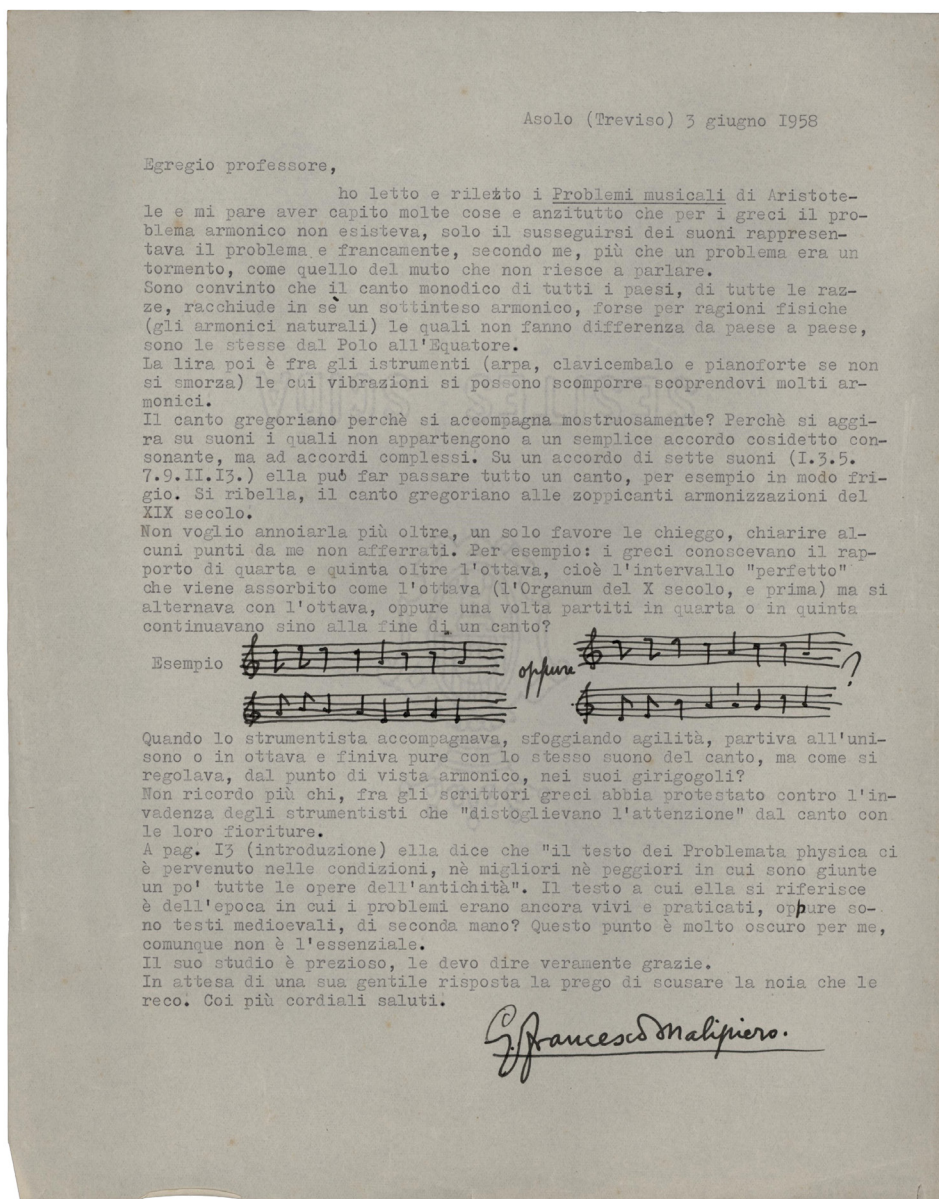
The identification of the passages derived from the *Phaedo* and set to music shows that Malipiero deliberately selected the opening and closing sections of the Platonic dialogue. The work is thus not a symphonic poem, as indicated in Valgimigli's letter; nonetheless, it is difficult not to detect traces of his exchanges with his philologist friend.

While it is true that Malipiero, unlike many musicians of his time, does not appear to have engaged extensively with the music of the ancient Greeks, he was nevertheless not unfamiliar with it. This is evidenced by his reading of the published fragments of Greek music and by his correspondence with Valgimigli on the subject, in particular on the *Hymn to Apollo*, as well as by his declared interest in exploring more deeply the significance of music in ancient Greek culture. While the relationship with Valgimigli was certainly a privileged channel for stimulating such reflections, it was not the only one. In a letter dated 3 June 1958, addressed to Gerardo Marengi,⁶¹ Malipiero writes that he had 'read and re-read Aristotle's *Musical Problems*', which Marengi, then professor of Greek language and literature at the University of Salerno, had edited the previous year.⁶² As shown in the letter (FIG. 7), he dwells on the 'harmonic problem' in ancient Greek thought and addresses the professor with a series of questions on issues that remained unclear to him.

At the age of seventy-six, the eclectic Venetian composer referred to Aristotle's *Musical Problems*, edited by Marengi, as 'a valuable study'. Although we do not

know how – or whether – the exchange between the two developed,⁶³ ancient Greek music, even if not a direct source of inspiration for Malipiero's compositional choices, was not entirely foreign to his theoretical reflections.

FIGURE 7. Letter from G.F. Malipiero to G. Marengi, 3 June 1958. FGC, Malipiero Collection.



Notes

- 1 On the ‘cult of the ancient’ see, among others, Fiamma Nicolodi, ‘I “ritorni” e il mito dell’antico’, *Chigiana*, 37, 1980, pp. 15–34, and Susanna Pasticci, ‘Ottorino Respighi e Ildebrando Pizzetti’, in: *Il contributo italiano alla storia del pensiero. Musica*. Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2018, pp. 531–540: 535–536.
- 2 See Vincenzo Borghetti, ‘Il modernismo inattuale di Ildebrando Pizzetti’, in: *Ildebrando Pizzetti. Sulle tracce del modernismo italiano*, a cura di Susanna Pasticci, Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2019, pp. 3–28: 10.
- 3 See Anna Scalfaro, *I ‘Lirici Greci’ di Quasimodo. Un ventennio di ricezione musicale*, Roma: Aracne 2011, pp. 31–32.
- 4 See John C. G. Waterhouse, *La musica di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, Torino: Nuova Eri, 1990, p. 127.
- 5 See Scalfaro, *I ‘Lirici Greci’ di Quasimodo*, p. 32.
- 6 See, among others, Valentina Valentini, *La tragedia moderna e mediterranea. Sul teatro di Gabriele D’Annunzio*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 1992, and Valentina Valentini, *Il poema visibile. Le prime messe in scena delle tragedie di Gabriele D’Annunzio*, Roma: Bulzoni, 1993.
- 7 On Ettore Romagnoli, see Sara Troiani, *Dal testo alla scena, e ritorno. Ettore Romagnoli e il teatro greco*, Trento: Università degli Studi–Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia, 2022.
- 8 In 1925, Royal Decree No. 1767 transformed the Syracuse initiative into a national institution through the establishment of the Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico (INDA) [National Institute of Ancient Drama].
- 9 Laura Piazza, ‘Il paradigma dell’arte sinestetica: la rinascita della messa in scena tragica al Teatro greco di Siracusa’, *Sinestesieonline*, 25, 2019, pp. 12–19.
- 10 For a discussion of Romagnoli’s views on the composition of music for performances of classical drama, see Giovanna Casali, ‘Ettore Romagnoli e le musiche per le rappresentazioni classiche’, in: *Ettore Romagnoli e la rinascita del teatro greco nei primi decenni del Novecento*, a cura di Sara Troiani, Rovereto: Scripta Edizioni, 2025, pp. 139–165.
- 11 Eleonora Rocconi, *Music: antiquity and its legacy*, London: Bloomsbury, 2024, pp. 6–7.
- 12 Ildebrando Pizzetti, *Musica e dramma*, Roma: Edizioni della Bussola, 1945.
- 13 For a broader discussion of the music composed for INDA between 1921 and 1939 in its cultural and historical context, see my article: Giovanna Casali, ‘Ancient tragedy, yet modern music: musical compositions in the classical performances (1921–39)’, *Classical Receptions Journal*, 16, 1, 2024, pp. 73–90.
- 14 Giovanna Casali, ‘Rievocare la musica greca antica: Ettore Romagnoli e la collaborazione con Giuseppe Mulè per il Teatro Greco di Siracusa’, *Greek and Roman Musical Studies*, 10, 1, 2022, pp. 217–252.
- 15 See, in particular, the contributions published in the section ‘Echoes from Classical World’ in: *Ildebrando Pizzetti. Sulle tracce del modernismo italiano. Chigiana. Rivista di studi musicologici*, a cura di Susanna Pasticci, 3, 1, 2019: Simone Beta, ‘La musica dei Greci, la Grecia in musica: Pizzetti e il mondo classico’, pp. 61–70; Marilena Crucitti, ‘Penombra arcana sulla collina serena: Pizzetti e le musiche per il teatro greco di Siracusa’, pp. 71–88; Michele Napolitano, ‘Ildebrando Pizzetti e la tragedia greca’, pp. 89–105.
- 16 Pizzetti, *Musica e dramma*, p. 183.
- 17 Emilio Sala, ‘Malipiero al teatro Greco di Siracusa. Le musiche di scena per l’“Ecuba” di Euripide (1939) e l’“Orestea” di Eschilo (1948)’, in: *Malipiero Moderna: 1973–1993*, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2000, pp. 103–134: 105.
- 18 Anna Scalfaro, for example, includes the incidental music composed for Syracuse by Pizzetti and Malipiero in the chapter entitled ‘Rimandi greci nel primo Novecento musicale italiano’. See Scalfaro, *I ‘Lirici Greci’ di Quasimodo*, pp. 33–35.
- 19 On the other hand, the importance of translations within the revival of the classical tradition was not confined to dramatic contexts, but also extended to lyric compositions. On this subject, see Anna Scalfaro’s study on Quasimodo’s translations of Greek lyric poetry as

- used by twentieth-century composers: Anna Scalfaro, *I Lirici Greci di Quasimodo*.
- 20 This contribution presents the results of a research project conducted between September and November 2023 on the materials held in the Malipiero Collection of the Institute of Music of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice (FGC), carried out thanks to a Centro “Vittore Branca” residential scholarship. I would like to thank, in particular, Professor Gianmario Borio (Director of the Institute of Music), for the opportunity afforded to me, and Francisco Rocca (Curator of Musical Archives), for his guidance and valuable advice throughout my research period.
- 21 On Faggella’s translation, see Paolo Zoboli, ‘Sulle versioni dei tragici greci in Italia (1900–1960): tra teoria e pratica’, *Aevum*, Settembre–Dicembre, 75, 3, 2001, pp. 813–878: 847.
- 22 In the list of pieces included in the voice and piano reduction, page references to the translation of *Hecuba* are given for each item. A note states that ‘the translation pages [by] Faggella refer to the edition Società Anonima Editrice Dante Alighieri, Milan, 1935’. However, there is no complete correspondence between the score and Faggella’s 1935 translation. It is therefore possible that Malipiero initially worked from the 1935 edition and later developed his own adaptation.
- 23 ‘Penso che la durata di un minuto e mezzo sia troppo poco e siccome d’altra parte approvo pienamente la sua idea di evitare la ripetizione di parole si potrebbe venire nella determinazione di musicare tutto il primo stasimo non tenendo più conto dei tagli. In questo caso però, onde evitare ripetizioni, bisognerà pensare al coro di chiusura della tragedia per il quale avevamo scelto, come Lei si ricorda, l’antistrofe del primo stasimo [...] Comunque mi dia qualche giorno di tempo per pensare al coro finale della tragedia e Lei musicisti pure tutto il primo stasimo che mi pare anche liricamente bello’. FGC, Malipiero Collection, Correspondence with Vincenzo Bonajuto.
- 24 ‘[...] sarà tutto recitato su un commento musicale. Lei in proposito mi pone la domanda se potrà indicare il ritmo musicale. Lo indichi pure poiché, come ho visto, l’effetto che se ne ricava è ottimo. Si tratterà poi, nella realizzazione, di trovare delle attrici che abbiano anche una sommaria preparazione musicale’. FGC, Malipiero Collection, Correspondence with Vincenzo Bonajuto.
- 25 The undated document, preserved in the Malipiero Collection, shows that Malipiero reduced the original twelve numbers to ten by merging nos. 8–9 and 10–11. See the reproduction of the list in Sala, ‘Malipiero al teatro greco di Siracusa’, p. 109, ex. 1b.
- 26 ‘Le prossime recite classiche siracusane ci daranno la novità dei cori dell’*Ecuba* sotto la forma del melologo (coro parlato) secondo le indicazioni date al musicista dall’Istituto del Dramma Antico. Il Malipiero ha creato una linea melodica sulla quale il coro reciterà cantando all’unisono, e che è felicemente adattata ai particolari atteggiamenti umani dei tre episodi e scandisce egregiamente le perfette parole’. AFI, Documents 1939.
- 27 AFI, Documents 1933, letter from Ferand to Bonajuto, Laxenburg, 16 March 1933. The full text of the letter is published in Giulia Bordignon, ‘Musicista poeta danzatore e visionario. Forma e funzione del Coro negli spettacoli classici al teatro greco di Siracusa 1914–1948’, *I quaderni di Dioniso*, n.s. 3, 2012, pp. 195–324: 115–116.
- 28 *L’opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero: saggi di scrittori italiani e stranieri*, [a cura di Gino Scarpa], Treviso: Edizioni di Treviso, 1952, p. 275.
- 29 ‘Il caso di *Ecuba* è specialissimo: la tragedia di Euripide mi ha tanto preso che ora sto facendo la traduzione a modo mio per concepire un dramma musicale *come mi piace*. Questo l’effetto prodotto, come Le dicevo, dalla tragedia di Euripide nella sua fase recente, ma se devo ripensare a quello che ho sentito scrivendo la musica pel teatro di Siracusa non potrei dirLe che una cosa soltanto: è passata continuamente davanti ai miei occhi la tragedia greca come se si rappresentasse al teatro di Siracusa tanti secoli fa ed ho pensato ad una declamazione sulla sinfonia che asseconda il dramma. Il mistero della creazione musicale sta appunto nella possibilità di assecondare il dramma senza sacrificare la musica e con questo è detto tutto: la declamazione ritmica delle parole s’incunea nella musica ed è la musica che completa la parola assecondandola con tutti i mezzi di cui il musicista dispone. Non sta in

- me di dire quali sono questi mezzi, cioè invenzione, espressione armonica, forza ritmica, ecc. ecc.’. FGC, Malipiero Collection, Correspondence with Vincenzo Bonajuto.
- 30 *L’opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, p. 201.
- 31 ‘– So che l’*Ecuba* è nata da alcune musiche che faceste per le celebrazioni siciliane. Vorreste illuminarmi un po’ più sulla nascita di questa vostra ultima fatica? – Quando l’Istituto del Dramma antico mi pregò di musicare alcune parti dell’*Ecuba* di Euripide mi toccò studiare attentamente il testo originale. Avevo già scritto le danze e il coro “Le prigioniere” per Siracusa: ma innamoratomi del soggetto ho fatto del dramma greco una libera traduzione dell’originale dando poi vita ad un’opera completamente nuova. – Il libretto è stato scritto da voi come sempre? – Naturalmente. – La “Danza” delle prigioniere è passata all’opera? – Sì, ma ingrandita e mutata nello strumentale. Per Siracusa, in orchestra, mancavano i violoncelli e le viole, strumenti che sostituii con il saxofono. Qui, invece, l’orchestra è completa. Anche il significato della pagina è per così dire aumentato. Se prima esprimeva il solo dolore delle prigioniere schiave di Ulisse, qui la musica ha un compito più particolare: quello di esprimere attraverso una danza sacra il sacrificio di Polissene, ultima figlia di Ecuba e del defunto Priamo. Vi dirò inoltre, che le prime battute della danza hanno dato vita ad un non vasto preludio dell’opera stessa’. FGC, Malipiero Collection, press reviews.
- 32 This interest in the integration of dance and drama can already be observed in the symphonic drama *Pantea* (1919), written for a single dancer, baritone voice, chorus and orchestra. See *L’opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, pp. 207–208. Furthermore, in an interview with Ilaria Danieli, Rosalia Chladek, choreographer for the INDA between 1933 and 1952, recalls that Malipiero’s music was more conducive to dance than Pizzetti’s and highlights the composer’s collaborative attitude, noting that his rhythmically straightforward and expressively direct writing readily accommodated choreographic movement. See Ilaria Danieli, ‘Coreografie primonovecentesche a Siracusa. Un modello istituzionale’, *Rassegna Veneta di Studi Musicali*, V–VI, 1989/90, pp. 273–299: 288, n. 37.
- 33 ‘[...] sarà forse necessario far prima eseguire dalla sola orchestra la musica, che essendo così fortemente ritmata si adatta perfettamente all’incedere affaticato della vecchia regina’. FGC, Malipiero Collection, Correspondence with Vincenzo Bonajuto.
- 34 Waterhouse, *La musica di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, p. 134.
- 35 Vincenzo Bonajuto, ‘L’*“Ecuba”* di Malipiero’, *Dioniso – Bollettino dell’Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico*, vol. VIII, n. 5, 1941, p. 5.
- 36 Giorgio Petrocchi, *Letteratura e musica*, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1991, pp. 105–107.
- 37 ‘Ho preferito l’*Eneide* nella traduzione di Annibal Caro, perché il metro virgiliano mi metteva in soggezione’. *L’opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, p. 216.
- 38 ‘[...] in rapporto con l’originale tradotto, con le traduzioni precedenti e anche con quelle seguenti’. Gianfranco Folena, ‘La voce e la scrittura di Malipiero’, in: *Omaggio a Malipiero*, a cura di Mario Messinis, Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1977, pp. 99–114: 105–106.
- 39 Folena, for example, highlights the tonal and stylistic differences between the choruses and the recitative. See Folena, ‘La voce e la scrittura di Malipiero’, p. 108.
- 40 See Sala, ‘Malipiero al teatro Greco di Siracusa’.
- 41 A letter from Valgimigli to Bonajuto, held in the AFI Documents (1948) and dated 8 December 1947, reports Malipiero’s wish not to set the text to music, in agreement with the philologist.
- 42 FGC, Malipiero Collection, Correspondence with Vincenzo Bonajuto.
- 43 For the music analysis, see Sala, ‘Malipiero al teatro Greco di Siracusa’. With regard to the choruses in particular, see Giulia Bordignon, ‘Musicista poeta danzatore e visionario’.
- 44 Cut-out page preserved in the Malipiero Collection, press clippings series, “Scritti di G.F.M. vol. I”, fol. [42].
- 45 Nino Pirrotta, ‘Malipiero e il filo d’Arianna’, in: *Malipiero. Scrittura e tecnica*, a cura di Maria Teresa Muraro, Firenze: Olschki, pp. 5–19: 11.

- 46 Pirrotta, 'Malipiero e il filo d'Arianna', p. 11.
- 47 Gian Francesco Malipiero, *Il filo d'Arianna. Saggi e fantasie*, Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1966.
- 48 Gian Francesco Malipiero, *L'armonioso labirinto: da Zarlino a Padre Martini (1558–1774)*, Milano: Rosa e Ballo, 1946.
- 49 Gian Francesco Malipiero, 'Poesia e Musica', *Scenario*, 7, 1935, pp. 347–350: 347.
- 50 'È purtroppo su una chimera e con concetti squisitamente distruttori che i musicologi hanno costruito un enorme edificio per lo studio della musica antica, dove manca il punto di partenza per qualsiasi discussione estetica e storica: l'arte musicale è ancora giovane, quella dell'antichità è sparita, anzi non è mai esistita'. *L'opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, p. 335.
- 51 'Grande prefazione, documenti, ecc. Alla parte cantata il signor professore ha aggiunto "l'accompagnamento", perciò ha fissato pure le armonie e ha fatto, per esempio, dell'ode di Pindaro una specie di Lied schubertiano. Che cosa può valere una musica così ridotta e deformata?'. *L'opera di Gian Francesco Malipiero*, p. 336.
- 52 Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Melic Poets*, London: Macmillan, 1963, p. 529.
- 53 Egert Pöhlmann and Martin L. West, *Documents of Ancient Greek Music: The Extant Melodies and Fragments (DAGM)*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001.
- 54 On the revival of ancient Greek music in France in the late nineteenth century following the discovery of the two Delphic paeans, see Jon Solomon, 'The Reception of Ancient Greek Music in the Late Nineteenth Century', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 17, 4, 2010, pp. 497–525; and Samuel N. Dorf, *Performing Antiquity. Ancient Greek Music and Dance from Paris to Delphi, 1890–1930*, New York–Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019.
- 55 Ravenna, Biblioteca Classense, Manara Valgimigli Collection. The Collection preserves the correspondence between Gian Francesco Malipiero (and his wife Anna) and Manara Valgimigli, comprising a total of twenty-five letters dating from 1936 to 1960. I thank Silvia Masi, Director of the Biblioteca Classense, and the staff of the Manuscripts and Rare Books Department for granting me access to Valgimigli Collection.
- 56 This is clearly the aforementioned *Vergilii Aeneis* (first broadcast by RAI in 1946; first concert performance in 1958). A set of incidental music for Aeschylus' tragedy *Seven Against Thebes*, commissioned by Radio Genève, has also been preserved: see Giovanni Morelli, 'Sette contro Tebe a Ginevra: quindici frammenti di una Musica di scena radiofonica che si ricompongono in una piccola suite sinfonica liberata dalla radio ma non ricircolata', in: *La carica dei quodlibet: carte diverse e alcune musiche inedite del maestro Malipiero*, a cura di Giovanni Morelli, Firenze: Olschki, 2005, pp. 57–89.
- 57 FGC, Malipiero Collection, Correspondence with Manara Valgimigli.
- 58 John C. G. Waterhouse, *Gian Francesco Malipiero. The Life, Times and Music of a Wayward Genius*, Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999, p. 295.
- 59 In the Greek original, Socrates' words are reported by Phaedo within a secondary dramatic framing; in Malipiero's work, the character acquires a voice.
- 60 Gianfranco Folena points out that in the translation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Malipiero misunderstood the text and consequently mistranslated it. See Folena, 'La voce e la scrittura di Malipiero', p. 106.
- 61 Gerardo Marengi (1917–2002) was Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Messina. He later taught Greek Literature at the University of Salerno, where he was affiliated with the Faculty of Education. In 1970, he moved to the newly founded Faculty of Letters, of which he was the first Dean, a position he held until the end of his career. I would like to thank Gherardo Maria Marengi, his grandson, for providing helpful information.
- 62 For a recent edition of the text, see [Aristotle], *Questioni di armonia. Problemi, Libro XIX*, a cura di Massimo Raffa, Milano: Bompiani, 2024.
- 63 Gherardo Maria Marengi has informed me that, among the materials belonging to his grandfather, he has no correspondence with Malipiero in his possession.