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MULTIPART MUSIC AS A CONCEPTUAL TOOL

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«MULTIPART MUSIC» ЯК КАНЦЭПТУАЛЬНАЕ ПАНЯЦЦЕ

In the article, the character of the multipart music is described. The author pays attention that multipart music conceptually differs from musical polyphony and this term can be used in musicology.

У артыкуле аўтар апісвае адметнасці «шматпартыйнай (шматчасткавай) музыкі». Даследчык звяртае ўвагу, што гэтая музыка адрозніваецца ад паліфанічнай, таму новы канцэпт варта выкарыстоўваць у музыкалагічных даследаваннях.

The term multipart music began to be used within our literature recently [1]. Literally, it designates a generic co-presence of manifold components «inside a music» without qualifying exactly what kind of co-presence is in play. Nevertheless, «multipart music» is used more and more often, replacing the historically connoted term «polyphony» which immediately refers to the domain of so-called Western art music. Importantly, «multipart music» has the advantage of containing the term «part» which can be considered in the theatrical sense of «role», thus shifting the focus towards the essence of the musical action, namely the performative behaviours from which the sound intertwining springs. These actions can be interpreted as coordination of different sound gestures, i.e. bodily actions which begin and end and which have characteristic features and configurations that can be represented in terms of rhythmic-temporal dimensions and pitch chains. In such a perspective this paper focuses on what individuals do when they sing/play together in organized ways. Using different examples, the paper offers a contribution to the theoretical discourses of the ICTM «International Council for Traditional Music» Study Group on Multipart Music.



Figure 1 – I. Macchiarella



Figure 2 – The University of Cagliari

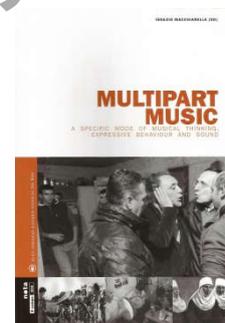


Figure 3 – Multipart music edition [1]

What is the point of the term «multipart music»? As is usual in musicology «and in the humanities in general terminologies» are often ambiguous or far too generic and little effective: «multipart music» is no exception! The term «multipart music» began to be used within our recent literature mostly in order to generally replace the term «polyphony», or in a vague attempt to extend the field of polyphony «see Ardian Ahmedaja's article in this volume». Literally, multipart music designates nothing more than a generic co-presence of manifold components inside a music, without qualifying exactly what kind of copresence is in play, what the term «part» means, what the relationships among the parts are, and so forth. Thus, the locution «multipart music» is simply the attestation of a compound music, made up of different elements resounding together – which is a sort of tautology since, in a sense, all music is always made up of various elements. In this regard, «multipart music» works pretty much like the term «polyphony» which, in an equally generic way, denotes nothing more than a co-presence among more sounds «poly-sounds», without specifying how this musical co-presence occurs.

In actual fact, such a kind of terminological vagueness seems inevitable: the phenomenon that we are interested in studying – this organized resounding of manifold sound components «let us just call it this for the moment» - manifests such a disparate variety of musical experiences that no definition could be more effective, and no expression could adequately represent this substantial diversity of musical processes - at least according to today's knowledge and current research perspectives. Indeed, to insist on searching for a more effective and more comprehensive denomination would imply a kind of paradox, precisely because of the substantial, both formal and conceptual, variety of the articulation of the phenomenon in and among different cultures: it would be like trying to find a word with a potential universal meaning in order to deal with something of which one admits a substantial and irreducible cultural variability. In fact, as a conscious collectively shared human experience, making music together in a coordinated manner requires different forms of conceptualization that, as appropriate, may refer to rationalities even very different from ours.

Therefore, the choice to resort to multipart music is not due to its literal meaning. Rather, it springs from the fact that it is a relatively recent term that does not carry as much baggage as «polyphony». Furthermore, it has the advantage of containing the term 'part' which - beyond the common sense in the context of Western musical grammar - can be considered in the theatrical sense of the «role» «I shall deal with this later», thus shifting the focus towards the essence of the musical action, the core of my contribution.

In short, multipart music is more likely to be used to indicate a particular approach to the study of coordinated organized making music, something which the Study Group on Multipart Music of the International Council for Traditional Music «ICTM» has been trying to develop ever since it came into being in 2009. The following pages aspire to pursue this discourse just a little further, going beyond previous contributions. Our starting point is the definition currently adopted by our Study Group:

Multipart music is a specific mode of music making and expressive behaviour based on the intentionally distinct and coordinated participation in the performing act by sharing knowledge and shaping values.

Compromising connotations. Without doubt, multipart music has the advantage of being devoid of the baggage of connotations accompanying the term «polyphony». Of Greek origin, «polyphony» «polys-phone» is one of the key terms of so-called Western art music. Although it has assumed various meanings over time, and is also used outside of the specific music context with a metaphorical «function for example, a «polyphony of intent» indicates accordance between persons», the term is immediately connected with the idea of the overlapping musical lines which are written down in a score. Indeed, in many ways, the term «polyphony» as in a kind of metonymy, is considered representative of the formal and conceptual complexity of Western music, and even a statement «of its alleged» superiority over the other musical expressions of the world. For a long time in fact, musicological literature has corroborated the belief that the phenomenon of polyphony was a unique invention of the Western written tradition, a belief still commonly repeated in the media «and on the Internet». From the first half of the Twentieth century onwards, the awareness of a much broader and differentiated spread of a coherently organized overlapping of different sounds in the various cultures of the world slowly began to mature; the route has been a long and circuitous one, marked by various discoveries and stages that were well outlined and discussed by Maurizio Agamennone.

Specifically, «polyphony» seems to mainly refer to the idea of sound combinations which are explicable and understandable only in terms «mathematical» relations between pitches: a representation that influences the conceptualization of the extreme, and in many respects indefinable variety of processes through which people in the world make music together in a coordinated manner.

In fact, the representation suggested by the term «polyphony» is resolutely oriented to the evaluation of sound outcomes. It is affected by Western Academia's way of thinking and understanding music - a representation that is deep-rooted and also variously experimented by a wide «ethno» musicological literature in the study of a wide variety of musical expressions around the world. Pivoted on the romantic concept of absolute music, this perspective tends to consider sounds as detached from their context, with no particular «or, indeed, any» attention being paid to the modalities put into place for its performance. In this sense, using the term «polyphony» implies the use of reference factors as paradigms - for example, distance interval, synchronization among the voices, accuracy of intonation, etc., - and such factors are not always relevant or important in the conceptualization and implementation of a coordinated overlapping of multiple sounds.

This pre-eminence granted to the resulting sound inferred from the use of the term «polyphony» tends to reinforce a concept of music as repertoires of pieces, or 'works of art' in the meaning of Western Academic music, that is to say, the idea that a music piece is presumed to have an existence apart from any performance act and that it is always attributable to someone. This includes processes of imagination of bounded entities, metaphorically explained by words like forms, texts or works which are often taken for granted by people in different times and places. In other words, the consideration of only «or mainly the» sound outcome of a performance «i.e. what is being played/sung and written/recorded, etc.» corresponds to a well-established way of thinking about music in the Western world «roughly starting from the second half of the Nineteenth century onwards»: through the use of «polyphony» this conceptualization somehow came to be projected onto the interpretation of other music cultures and practices for which it is not appropriate. This is all the more so because, due to the substantial transitional feature of sound, music cannot be an object: rather than a product, music is always a process, an «intrinsically meaningful cultural practice» which is socially contextualized. Thus, beyond our common habit, granted by contemporary technologies of recording and sound reproduction «which I do not take into account here», it is not possible to separate sound from the act of its production - which, by the way, is an act where the uniqueness of those who play/sing «those who, literally, give body to the music» is manifested. This is even more true in the case of collectively coordinated expressions, in which the sound production is due to the mutual interaction of real men and women.

The perspective of multipart music. Free of any cultural baggage of historical sedimentation, «multipart music» is therefore more practical for allowing us to focus from a different perspective on certain characteristics of making music together, compared to the ordinary one based on the immateriality of sound. Where part has the meaning of role, «multipart music» may just highlight the «too often neglected» materiality of the meeting which is necessary for any collective and coordinated music making to take place. It follows that the core of the scrutiny becomes the performance behaviour from which the interweaving sounds, perceptible by listening, arise.

These are the real organized group actions of the men and women which are led into the limelight. These actions can be interpreted as the coordination of different sound gestures, i.e. bodily actions which begin and end and have characteristic features and configurations that can be represented in terms of rhythmic-temporal dimensions and pitch chains.

The definition of sound gesture wishes to go beyond the common idea adopted in studies on polyphony of part as a melodic line. It is intended to include any type of sound activity which is consciously and intentionally produced during the act of making music together in a coordinated way, and which is recognized as such by the performers. Any sonorous production can be a sound gesture, so that the variety of the expressions to which the term applies is imponderable and unlimited. Through the combination and interaction of sound gestures, multipart music manifests its nature of shared behaviour that acts on the lives of real women and men, namely soundful bodies «see below».

It goes without saying that this perspective is pivoted on the concept of music as a performance, which is like a lived experience to be understood and interpreted in a given space and time. Thus, it is a viewpoint that does not concern music as a stream of sounds emitted from some electronic device «nor the idea of a pure analysis of music representation written down in a paper document».

Nowadays, music can also be a sequence of immaterial sounds that are disconnected from the *hic et nunc* of the performance that we listen to through speakers: this is the common experience of music. But, for our ancestors «and still for many people in the world today», music was necessarily the real interaction between men and women - and nothing else! There are two substantially different human experiences «both from the perspective of the producer and the listener» which are both defined with the same term: 'music'. Although, I do not want to dwell on this point, I should however like to stress how the analysis of human sound production processes is unavoidable for the approach to the multipart music phenomenon.

To study this phenomenon means to focus on what individuals do when they sing/play together in organized ways. In fact, every performance is

interpretable as the result of shared know-hows regulating interactions between individuals «real men and women in their uniqueness», which give rise to different music outcomes every time. Adopting and developing these assumptions, I believe that the locution 'multipart music' could identify a conceptual tool built on a coherent analysis of the musical behaviours from which the sound intertwining springs up. Consequently, the first word of our locution, «multi-part», should be understood as «or should suggest

the idea of» multi-action music, multi-role music, multi-coordinated behaviours, and so forth «rather than multi «poly»-sounds». This implies that «multipart music» is not to be used to denote features that are found in the overlapping combination of sounds and perceptible by listening: that is to say, the study of multipart music cannot do without a direct observation of real performance, and it cannot be realized simply through listening to recorded materials.

The multipart music phenomenon is not, however, a straightforward matter of the mixing of music behaviours to be an end in themselves. We are well aware that, as Gilbert Rouget stated, «Music is always more than music», and of course, if we consider its collective/ inter-acting features, the approach to the phenomenon must mean to encounter and to face the intermingling between actions and thoughts on music, which are 'other' than those we are accustomed to, in virtue of our own conceptual framework.

In this perspective, the term 'multipart music' is not an alternative to «polyphony» or, even less, its synonym. Dealing with multipart music means, therefore, developing a different perspective on making music together in a coordinated way, whose results may «or should» intertwine with the common methodologies of studying and analysing sound outcomes. It is a different interpretative perspective wherein, whilst safeguarding the interest in the content «i.e. what is being performed», privileged attention is devoted to what happens and what it means when collective music actions happen, i.e. to both the performative behaviours and shared conceptualizations from which the concrete intertwining of sounds derives.

I underline that multipart music must not relate to some musical typologies - and in particular it does not concern what is usually called traditional music, or orally transmitted music, or, in a word, those music practices conventionally collocated out of the range of the so-called Western art music. The aim is to think about any kind of collective and coordinated music behaviours. Of course, the features of the sound outcomes, the variety of the reference of the performance «e.g. written scores, orally transmitted music traces, sound recording, and so on», the diversity of the contextual situations, of the performance's space, time, purposes, etc. are all features that must be taken into account, since they offer indispensable interpretative elements. For what is important here, it is a question of integrating these elements with the pivotal focus on collective and coordinated music behaviour.

Special collective actions. On this basis, the phenomenon of multipart music immediately appears as being extremely broad. In fact, in many ways it defies delimitation, if only because of its continuous transformation «since it is, after all, making music tout court», in a constant change of the processes of interaction/ combination put in act by women and men during their collectively organized making music. For this reason, no discussion may achieve a complete inventory purpose. Furthermore, let it be clear right from the start that dealing with multipart music does not mean aiming to identify a list of repertoires, or genres, or pieces, or generic music practices to which the definition may be applied. On the contrary, it means identifying and classifying typologies of coded behaviours to which - in principle - the multiplicity of the intentional and coordinated interweaving of different sound gestures during a performance relates. Beyond an acoustic analysis, what is crucial is the clear identification of the expressive behaviours that belong to the multipart music field, and vice-versa, cases in which these behaviours are not a part.

In general, making music means carrying out actions whose goal is to achieve expected sound results, which are imagined and idealized before the performance, recognized as such during it, and commented on and discussed by both performers and listeners in the aftermath. Each performance is therefore interpreted as a different manifestation each time of conducts put into action on the basis of shared rules, known by the performers «and recognized by the listeners, at least by those who share the space and time of a performance».

These rules build the scenario within which individuals and groups accomplish their choices based on what they know, what they would like to do and what they try to realize: that is to say, they put their own experience in place. At the same time, the inevitable uncertainty implicit in any performance questions any acquired knowledge in the encounter with the constantly changing situations and conditions of music-making, which requires new forms of experimentation each time, e.g. a constant building experience «in the meaning of the Latin root of the word *experiri*».

These dynamics between the experiences coming from acquired knowledge and the experience in the making are implicit in any music making, and, in general, in any performance. Multipart musics stand out for the collective character of these dynamics, that is to say, they are always negotiated music manifestations among more individuals.

To take part in a multipart music means to be part of a group, accepting its rules and being accepted as a member. It is a way of being together: it implies having to agree to be in close proximity with others, and, at the same time, it sets individual participation in a collective meeting. Every multipart music expression is based, in fact, on collectively negotiated music conducts: what one can do and what one effectively does during a performance are the result of mechanisms of musical exclusivity/inclusivity that are based on one's individual availability to collaborate with others, to admit the closeness of others, to share a certain time and a certain space, and so on.

Negotiation is a key word. Within the multipart music phenomenon, collective negotiation is ineluctable: it is a necessary condition of the actions that the music-makers take before, during, and after the performance. It means that the single sound gesture can not resonate without listening to another one and, above all, that this interacting between sound gestures is not based exclusively on criteria of previously planned sound correspondences, but is actually born in the hicetnunc of the real performance, within scenarios of mutual cooperation, reciprocity, competition, conflict, and so on «see below».

This availability implies the acceptance of constraints on one's own musical production and therefore on one's own behaviour. Apart from some particular situations «see later on», anyone practising any type of multipart music recognizes the existence of the limitations of his/her own actions; he/she knows «and experiences during performance acts» that one cannot do what one wants, but has to negotiate every sound gesture both with someone else, and in reference to collectively shared experiences. In other words, it is a special way of articulating the knowledge of others and relating to them.

Thus, the fundamental character of the negotiation of musical behaviour typifies multipart music. Through it, collective music makings become special collective actions that deserve a peculiar consideration and distinct processes of interpretation. It is a feature that has a strong and particular iconic value, since it can be considered as representative of aspects of shared cognitive models inherent to the social life of men and women, which are experienced and lived in each performance. This interpretative horizon is the centre of my proposal regarding the multipart music concept.

Soundful bodies in action. In a sense, any musical expression might be defined as multipart, since music, by definition, is a social fact, the result of «a special kind of social action», which somehow includes a form of collective participation. Within a large majority of making music contexts, the «real or presumed» co-presence of more persons means, in any case, the occurrence of forms of social communication/interaction, even though these may differ according to the specific situations. It is rare that one makes music

really alone, without someone who is listening. Often, one does it with a social purpose, that is, to rehearse something in preparation for a public performance, or to record a track for a disc intended for an imagined audience during a performance in a studio.

Anyone can «live the music», both as an active participant in a performative act or as a receiver of music made by others. Here lie the two basic roles of music: the performer, engaged in the production of organized sounds, and the listener who receives and interprets these sounds. These two roles are not always clearly distinguished or distinguishable: they both necessarily influence each other by interacting with one another in different ways depending on the circumstances. In this wide sense, dealing with the interaction between the parts «e.g. roles» of performer and listener means to deal, in general, with music as a social experience. This issue goes far beyond the phenomenon that I intend to consider here: a phenomenon that, in essence, concerns the generative processes of sound production, and therefore the general role of the performer. Thus I shall focus on the side of the performer, without minimizing the influence exerted by the listener, but deferring any systematic study of the issue to a future work.

Far from being an anodyne and faithful reproducer of sounds «something that is actually impossible due to the ephemeral nature of sound», participant in the performance act is what he/she does, in other words, he/she coincides with the vocal and/or instrumental sound he/she produces. As such, every participant in a performance is a soundful body who manifests his/her singular musicality more or less evidently and consciously, according to the shared music mechanism, to the circumstances and the purposes of the performance, on the basis of his/her music skills, background, taste, preferences, and so forth. Willingly or unwillingly, consciously or not, everyone puts something of him/herself into his/her sound production; conversely, every performance can be interpreted as an encounter and interaction between individual musicalities. Within the extent of the rules and the resources of the performative device, any music maker shows a specific sonic signature, a musical personality, an inventiveness of his/her own, and so on.

The actual music making is therefore an act that includes more or less wide margins of music freedom, rooted in the patterns of accepted and shared behaviours, in the situation in which the performance occurs, in the memory of previous musical experiences, in the ability of knowing how to react to develop a real performance, and so on. In the case of multipart music, this unavoidable component of freedom does not contradict «because it can not» the necessary acceptance of the constraints on one's own music behaviour. Rather, this limited freedom enlarges the level of negotiation, allowing its development towards unpredictable and unlimited horizons that are able to reveal much both about the individuality of those who are making music and also about the specific music scenarios. Thus, it is a question of freedom which is conditioned twice, both by the rules of the performance pattern and by the necessary collective negotiating between the real performers. In this way, every multipart music performance ends up offering, in principle, new elements concerning the interaction of specific individual identities, the representation and the questioning of interpersonal relationships, the mechanisms of mutual musical communication, and so on.

Challenges and collaboration between individuals. The basic condition for multipart music is the co-presence, at least, of two people who intentionally take part in a sound emission. This condition simply does not happen by itself and, at least customarily, is not random. In fact, it needs specific requirements and procedures of interactions and coordination between individuals and groups. In such a perspective, the definition of multipart music, ipso facto, does not lead to the musical expressions made by one individual, that is to say, those consisting of only one sound gesture. As is evident, these expressions lack the element characterizing the phenomenon at issue here, namely the negotiation of music between two or more people. During a performance by one individual, the music maker is alone with him/ herself. Although he/she can interact with his/her audience or may have discussed his/her musical choices before and/or after the performance, he/ she is the sole protagonist and responsible for the real sound outcome, which manifests itself like a monologue with no inter-action and which is perhaps exclusive if not self-centered.

This kind of exclusion, therefore, concerns any solo performance beyond the sonic result obtained: namely, both in the case of true monodies «in which the sound emission is constituted by a single line of singing or by one monophonic instrument with no accompaniment» and in the case in which a performer plays a polyphonic instrument, or again when a performer sings accompanying him/herself with any kind of instrument «both polyphonic or monadic». As one can well imagine, there are numerous examples which go from a minister singing a liturgical chant to a pianist playing a sonata, from a woman singing a lullaby to a folk singer who accompanies his singing on the guitar, and so on: in these cases we have a unique music maker who is responsible for the sounds, who «almost» exclusively has the privilege of his/her choices in the here and now of the performance.

Let me point out again that this matter concerns the occasion of the performance and not what is being performed and/or the type of musical instruments being played. Therefore, the same liturgical song might be sung by many voices that is, by several people», and in this case it should enter the sphere of observation of multipart music, whilst a piano sonata can be transcribed for a duo, trio or more instruments, and so on. From a different point of view, pianists «and other polyphonic instrument players» often play in differently composed music groups, interacting both with human voices and other instruments, within performance situations which fully belong to the multipart music phenomenon.

To sing/play alone refers to a subjective dimension of music expression «and possibly of so-called talen» which can be interpreted differently depending on the situation: the pleasure of being by yourself, the difficulty «or unwillingness» to collaborate with others, the exaltation of absolute musical identities within social scenarios in which the values of individuality are fundamental, since they are emphasized in the perspective of multiple juxtaposed selves, and so on. In any case, they are extraneous perspectives to the processes of socialization, interaction, and collective co-participation of multipart music, so I shall not take in account of them here. However, within certain scenarios of social life «or at least, within specific performance situations», making music alone produces peculiar practices that show forms of inter-individual collaboration, characterized by coordinate alternating between several performers: strictly speaking, these practices can be understood in the concept of multipart music.

For instance there are the orally transmitted practices based on typologies of music-poetical duels between two or more individuals, such as the so-called Ottava rima «Eighth rhyme». Spread throughout Tuscany and Central Italy, the Ottava rima consists of regulated matches during which two or three poets, with no accompaniment, take turns performing octaves of hendecasyllables that deal with topics chosen on the spur of the moment by the listeners or other poets. Without going into the details of this performance practice «see Agamennone 2009», every duel is a clearly ritualized event whose timing is organized by the form of poetical meter: every performer sings an octave when it is his/her turn and has «more or less» the same time both to demonstrate his/her capabilities as far as poetic quality is concerned and to compete with the other participants. On the basis of the shared rules, the Ottava rima ends up being a collective-coordinated music-making, albeit alternately, through which some individuals negotiate their status within the tradition, which we can call the micro-music world of the Ottava, made up of all the poets and their audience and, more in general, by all the people of the regions who are somehow involved therein. If we consider the heated mechanisms of

rivalry «although they come about within a generally friendly atmosphere», the Ottava rima can be represented as a reverence of certain individuals capabilities «in particular the idea of a gift from nature that must be nurtured/ cherished» whose basis lies in some aspects of the conceptual framework of the region's peasant culture, which is continuously actualized in the scenarios of the contemporary social life of some groups of people.

Musical practices of this type can be found elsewhere and also include other forms of improvised poetry around the world. The idea of a challenge, rivalry and comparison between individual performers, which is organized and coordinated in a frame of multipart alternation, belongs to many cultures, even though it is often differently articulated. One only needs to recall the great variety of music contests «including piano, guitar, and other polyphonic instrument competitions» in which soloists, possibly in the presence of panels of experts, compete for awards, and so on. This competition acts as a mechanism for elite musicians to fill Their Own ranks, thereby producing a distinction between consecrated performers «professionals» and lesser musicians 'amateurs' «in the derogatory sense» based on the romantic notion of the rarity and exclusivity of musical talent, at odds with the idea of making music together.

Many people who make one identity – but not always... One of the world's most popular performance patterns seems to be collective singing «or playing a monodic instrument» in order to achieve «or try to achieve» the same sound emission. Apparently easy, it can breathe life into a virtually unlimited variety of music expressions, performance contexts, conveyed meanings, etc.

Such a pattern is usually a highly inclusive performative one, that is to say, it is able to foster an extremely high collective participation by means of a minimal individual engagement: for those who take part in this kind of musical actions, in brief, it is to do what the other does, overcoming one's personality/individuality with the aim of constructing a sort of collective identity. In a certain sense, it is a making music that is diametrically opposed to the soloistic one I mentioned above. Besides, in this case, the act of the collective synchronization is more important than the content of the performance.

As a rule, this kind of pattern is regarded as being outside polyphony, on account of the lack of musical parts identifiable by listening. Rather, the sound outcomes of this performance pattern are often not considered music in the full meaning of the term, such is the case of the slogans of demonstrating protesters, or those of chanting football fans, or other analogous expressions belonging to our common social experience.

At the same time, the performative principle per se would appear to be beyond the field of multipart music studies since, seeing that all the participants make the same gesture, it lacks the basic idea of interaction/negotiation between individuals. But this is only in theory, because, in actual fact, the issue is far more complex than it is usually represented. Moreover, really significant cases can be discovered by studying specific examples within the endless sets of music practices arising from the performance pattern.

This is particularly true when we consider that the requested synchronization of collective making music in unison is anything but natural «or granted, or hackneyed». As a minimum, it requires that the performers check «with relative care» their emissions and the ones of the other participants in the performance. Small lags, fortuitous overlapping among sounds, uncertainty in tuning and rhythmic stressing, approximation of synchronization, etc. are quite common. Inter alia, studies of experimental acoustics have demonstrated that sounds perceived as simultaneous «even in the presence of an external reference such as, for example, a choir director or orchestra» are never actually perfectly synchronized, since a really perfect synchronization does not exist in reality. Indeed, in some cases, the creation of perfect unison makes conducting music difficult, as it requires extreme precision and rhythmic coordination «see the case concerning the performance of chamber music studied by Giura Longo»

More in general, the apparent simplicity of the performance pattern does not promote «and has not promoted» the carrying out of in-depth «ethno» musicological research. Contributions mostly concern the social value of the performative act. In particular, musical mechanisms have seldom been the explicit focus of examination albeit with certain very relevant exceptions such as Ayats 1997 and 2002.

The presence of one or more individualities that assume «or are delegated to play» a pivotal role in the performance is a recurring element. As a rule, it is the singer(s) or instrument player(s) who has «or has» the task of starting the performance, and whose sound gesture is taken as a reference by the remaining participants. This is the case of the so-called megaphonist who, thanks to a simple portable speaker, leads the scanning of slogans during street protests with the purpose of synchronizing an indefinite number of individual sound gestures in order to create a unified group action against the other, intended as the State, the powers that be, another group, and so on. Selected by virtue of his charisma, the megaphonist has the task of animating the group, of continuously varying the slogans, possibly proposing new ones, and of reviving the performance» changing, for example, the dynamics, the intensity of the sound volume, and so on». His proposals are usually accepted by the group, but situations of mutual misunderstanding can bring his role and prestige within the group into question.

Accordingly, this role-leader involves forms of collective negotiation that are usually not based on music-aesthetic criteria, but on other aspects of a group's values and hierarchies: that is to say, it is not the person with the most aesthetically beautiful voice in the group who guides the performance, but usually the figure who is somewhat more charismatic, independently of his/her vocal quality. The performance, thus, reflects group dynamics and typically reiterates and reinforces them, but special performance acts may also challenge consolidated roles.

«More or less» Consciously avoided synchronism. As I mentioned previously, within many music practices the act of collective synchronization at the unison of individual sound gestures is the reason for the performances. Indeed, the possible lack of this synchronization can have a negative impact and symbolically represent a group's lack of unity. However, many other music practices propose different interpretations of the sense of synchronicity, since, while they are essentially pivoted on the collective performance of the same individual sound gesture, they do not intentionally aim to achieve a shared unison.

This is the limitless field of music practices which, in the perspective of the studies on sound outcomes, fall under the definition of heterophony: the term is actually very generic, not least because it concerns a phenomenon that is seen as a border area between monophony and polyphony, and which, "being intrinsically connected with oral and collective music creation, has no direct analogies in Western written music".

As regards the present discussion, these are mechanisms of behavioural synchronizations deliberately «other» than our idea of homorhythm or homo/monophony, which manifest a different nature at a conceptual level, depending on specific performative practices «and the relative cultural framework». Within the very large and rich bibliography, diverse contributions about significant case studies have underlined the lack of collective coordination, so that any participant performs «or seems to perform» his/her sound gesture addressing him/herself, which gives rise to an effect of simultaneity of solos in the same time and space. Other works emphasize the existence of intentionality «or, on the contrary, the lack of intentionality» in the vertical dimension – but, of course,

the boundary between intentionality and un-intentionality could be almost ephemeral and is impossible to fix objectively. Moving the focus towards the analysis of the musical behaviours which are at the origin of the «seemingly chaotic» resounding of this sound intertwining could offer relevant contributions.

In my limited experience of such a type of music making, there is a special case of collective performance pivoted on the same sound gesture that evidently oscillates between both intentional and unintentional synchronization: namely, the so-called Jovia 'e lardajola «corresponding to Maundy Thursday», within the Carnival festa in the Sardinian village of Gavoi. On this day, the sasortilla 's sos tumbarinos «the coming out of the drums» takes place: hundreds of men and women, organized in flexible groups, make their way around the streets of the village, all playing drums with the same sonic gesture, which is actually made up of a very schematic rhythmic pattern that allows the greatest collective participation. Normally, the groups try to achieve full synchronization, although clearly unintentional approximations are not infrequent both within each group «especially, when it contains young players or people from other villages» and between the groups. At other moments, individual drummers clearly perform intentional lacks of synchronization «including more or less conscious micro-variations of the pattern» to underline specific occurrences in their music wanderings, such as an encounter with a friend with whom they interact for a while «for instance, gradually increasing the speed of the pattern, or performing it in a back-and-forth way, or carrying out a few rhythmic variations, etc». An otherwise large concentration of drummers in one place stimulates enterprising individuals to make 'rhythmic jokes' «for instance, stressing the backbeat of the pattern, or varying its agogic, etc» Some well-known characters «including ones specialized in traditional music making» continuously differentiate themselves from the others by making use of special devices in their sound gestures, and so on: in short, there is a vast range of «mostly conscious» individual sound gestures, which are substantially due to real interactions between real men and women, according to their different intentionalities, purposes, etc. The whole event always respects the basic shared rhythmic pattern - otherwise, the sound gestures would not be allowed. The general result is a sort of organized Carnival music anarchism which is in contrast with the severity of the music making that comes about during the rest of the year, and which, above all, provides an enjoyable frame for conducting personal relationships. Once again, in a case of music densities like this one, I believe that the multipart music approach to human behaviours and interpersonal negotiations is able to give innovative interpretative elements.

Women, men and sound gestures. Within the general phenomenon of multipart music a substantial bi-polarization can be identified between, on the one hand, music practices consisting of interlocking between individual sound gestures, i.e. each constitutive sound gesture is performed by one voice or by one instrument; and, on the other, music practices in which each distinct and perceptible aural component is realized by two or more persons who synchronically sing «or play» the same sound gesture «or try to do so», thereby giving less «or no» relevance to their single individualities as performers. This basic distinction has never been given due consideration in studies on polyphony which consider sound outcomes in terms of texture. In actual fact, it does assume a crucial importance within multipart music approaches and has a significant impact on the real results of a performance, beyond what is permitted by the mechanisms of musical combination/superposition.

There is no clear hiatus between the two poles and one can find a continuum of intermediate possibilities, including patterns where one or more individual sound gestures are combined with aural components performed in unison by more than one individual. Furthermore, depending on the scenario, the same multipart pattern could also be performed by either an individual or a collectively synchronized rendition: this variability gives meaning and value to the performative act with specific social contexts, both in participatory and presentational performances.

At the first pole lie music expressions in which the contribution of each performer «that is to say his/her sound gestures and through these his/her music identity» is evident. Together with the vocal/instrumental amalgam, each individual contribution is «more or less» immediately perceptible by listening and has a basilar value since it directly characterizes and qualifies the musical image of a performance. At the other extreme, the individual performers lose «or tend to lose» their individuality and become part of a kind of different micro «or, sometimes, macro, in the cases of large choirs or big orchestras» collective identities. The latter come into play with other analogous identities according to the mechanisms of intentional collective synchronization mentioned before «including possible unintended approximations, although the special attention needed to achieve unison is assumed by those who are synchronized with each other, especially in the cases of ensemble performances led by a conductor».

This different individual involvement contains various implications: firstly, of course, a different value is assigned to the individual performance engagement. As summed up by several Sardinian singers of orally transmitted multipart practices, it is a matter of responsibility. For instance, Mario Carboni, the contra of the a cuncordu quartet from Bortigali states when one of us fa una voce [makes a voice, i.e. takes part in the a tenore / cuncordu singing] and he makes a mistake, then you suddenly understand that he is wrong, that he is responsible for the mistake and consequently for a bad performance; instead, when one sings in a choir a sa nuoresa [polyphonic choirs with a conductor, whose repertory is made up of written harmonizations of Sardinian traditional tunes], if he is wrong how can you become aware of it? When we sing [in four voices] we assume our own responsibility for what we do; the others do not do this.

It is evident that performing music in a situation oriented towards interlocking between individual sound gestures provides a «relatively» greater music freedom than can be offered by the situation of the overlapping of collective synchronizations. This relative freedom works effectively when singing/playing in small groups, which offer the best possibility for integrating the close attention of individuality with amalgams with other ones. These are very representative situations of multipart music practice because there is a real and conscious interaction-negotiation between different soundful bodies. The real sound over-lappings have an immediate representative value since they can be read as depictions of both inter-individual and collective relationships. At every performance these relationships are reshaped, reinforced or questioned, since the performers have the opportunity to present challenges, to engage in private rivalry or other kinds of relationships, etc. Thus, the performance constitutes very complex and unpredictable performance mechanisms which have their own relevance: any sound gesture is the result of conscious choices made by the particular singers in relation to the real circumstances of the given performance, which, above all, means the identities of the other singers taking part in the music-making and the listeners to whom the performance is addressed.

On the contrary, performances constituted by overlapping between collective synchronizations customarily give an image of overall harmony. They are often a consequence of preceding coordinated operations «including formalized rehearsals» during which musical mechanisms are experienced. Individual comparisons, conflicts or rivalry are not revealed in the performance «they are possibly encountered during the preceding meetings», while individual desires to be the centre of attention are banned «for instance, if someone sings at a high volume or embellishes their singing/playing too much» Within the galaxy of the musical

mechanisms between the two extremes, blends of both individual and collectively synchronized sound gestures lead to mechanisms symbolizing rivalries between individuals and groups within a society.

Iconic values. Another relevant issue for the conceptualization of multipart music concerns the complex relations between sound gestures, i.e. musical roles within the mechanism of musical overlapping/ interaction: this has a crucial significance for both the behavioural aspects and the related meanings. In short, depending on the different musical scenarios and local practices, not all the performance roles are considered as being of equal importance. There are essential or main roles, second leads or complementary roles, inessential or subordinate ones, and so on. One could probably epitomize what is known about the issue as lying along a continuum, where at one end there is a clear distinction between a leader role and one or more accompanying roles, while at the other, we find the co-presence of two or more equivalent music roles. The different relevance of the roles may be interpreted as the projection of the organizational patterns of the society expressing them, following John Blacking's concept of music "understood as expressions of cognitive processes that may be observed to operate in the formation of other structures".

On the one hand, many multipart music practices are pivoted on a main role, usually performed by one individual «even though collectively synchronized leader roles are not rare». Of course, a solo singer with an instrumental accompaniment constitutes the most common practice, of which there is an indefinite and almost illimitable variability. Usually, the leader role offers someone the opportunity to widely express his/her musical individuality, with the feeling of putting something of him/herself into the performance: in fact, the role has a «more or less» large margin of variation, without however ignoring the other roles. In some way, a singer/player who usually performs a leader role in multipart music enjoys special consideration and a good reputation within the ordinary social relationships of his/her group. Leading a multipart performance means leading a group of people in a collective and coordinated action and, consequently, not all the members of a group are capable «or considered capable» of carrying out this task. Indeed, a kind of leadership quality is required to maintain the musical group «and must be recognized by all the performers», and this attitude concerning interpersonal relations is confirmed and depicted by the music performance. The other roles are essentially subordinated to the leader's musical choices but actively contribute to the entire music result. According to the specific performative pattern, music creativities may occur in any of these parts, often including a large component of flexibility and adaptability.

This is particularly evident in so-called homo-phonic music, i.e. the common pattern of the current mainstream of popular music, conceived as a single melody with accompaniment «or backin» by functional chords, according to general Western harmonic principles. This melody-accompaniment dualism is the common basis for constructing musical meaning: the foreground/ background relationships propose a clear distinction between the individual and the rest of the social reality that has immediate iconic contents referring to social experiences.

For our purposes, however, the notion of homophony is far too reductionist and deterministic: notwithstanding the relatively rigorous musical constraints, performances of single melodies accompanied by functional chords could be articulated in different separate aural components, i.e. with sound gestures that manifest intentional distinctive «and creative!» participation.

Even the apparently simplest accompanying sound gesture - such as a single drone on one sustained pitch - implies music choices: for instance, as far as the timbre within a possible scale of nuances is selected or admitted into a music scenario. Agreeing to perform an accompanying part involves both accepting a hierarchical idea of music and the acknowledgement of a leader's role ascribed to somebody else. Through music making, culturally situated hierarchies are somehow negotiated and performed.

Other multipart music mechanisms sketch out an idea of a kind of «music democracy», which is organized in equipollent parts dialoguing among themselves, i.e. in sound identities that interact reciprocally. Of course, this equipollence is not a matter of quantity of notes, but concerns the quality of intentionality and participation in the music making.

For instance, this is chiefly portrayed by the common idea of a string quartet «mainly a kind of quartet writing emblemized by the Beethovenian ones» as an erudite conversation between four equal players. In a sense the quartet seems to have the ideal characteristic of distributing the role and the task, implying a basic interdependence.

Other widely participated orally transmitted multipart musics are pivoted on the iteration of contrasting rhythmic patterns occurring simultaneously and through which relations among social groups are represented. Interactions between «more or less» equivalent roles could determine very exclusive typologies of music making. They are normally performed within particular cultural contexts by very specialized groups which have been trained through a peculiar iter of musical apprenticeship, including the acceptance of unwritten rules of social life settled by local customs.

Every singer aims to sign his performance by means of peculiar vocal elements «often minimal expressive nuances» and this kind of signature is recognized and discussed «appreciated or criticized» by both the other singers and the specialized listeners.

Through conscious and minutely controlled vocal emissions, the quality of the performance is the quality of interaction between unique musical personalities: performances represent and develop the intensity of the relations among the participants, including very personal challenges and rivalry.

Still, many things to do... Multipart music in a sense represents and puts into question the world of music makers, a world constituted with other thoughts and individual doings together. Agreeing to take part in the performance of a multipart music implies both accepting the cultural frameworks concerning the interaction/overlapping of different music roles and agreeing to contribute by playing one of these performing roles. Through the iconic value of multipart music making, these roles are continuously acted, negotiated, and even questioned. The last two polarizations concerning the real actualization of sound gestures and their overlapping, I believe, represent useful operational agendas for the development of the approaches to multipart music. Widening these approaches passes through both the proper scrutiny of the literature and specific research activities. For the moment, I rest my case, in the hope that the previous notes might prove interesting for the discussion within the ICTM Study Group on Multipart Music.

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