

## «Acts of wisdom and trust»: *Sheets, Tapes and Machines in Egisto Macchi's Film Music Composition*<sup>1</sup>

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I am delighted with Macchi as composer, arranger and conductor. I think the music will add greatly to the film, though it most certainly will not and cannot provide an exploitable theme song. He works very fast and very well and closely with me, and the sounds he is producing have extraordinary tension, richness and beauty<sup>2</sup>.

On 4 February 1972 Joseph Losey sent a detailed memorandum to his producer Joseph Shaftel, updating him on his progress with *The Assassination of Trotsky* (J. Losey 1972). These words of appreciation for Egisto Macchi (1928-92) came after several months in which Losey had been deeply dissatisfied with the musical aspect of his film. He had come to an impasse in choosing an Italian composer for his film, an Anglo-Italian-French co-production. As he confessed to his faithful script supervisor Pamela Davies, deciding on a composer was beginning to be a thorn in his side: the contemporary scene of Italian film composers evidently did not meet Losey's needs<sup>3</sup>, as we can see from a tentative list of people that he considered for the score, including some illustrious names such as Nino Rota, Ennio Morricone, Luis Bacalov, Carlo Rustichelli and Angelo Francesco Lavagnino<sup>4</sup>. He eventually commissioned a piece

<sup>1</sup> I wish to express particular gratitude to Sylvaine Couquet Macchi, Ombretta Macchi and Lamberto Macchi for their kindness in allowing me to consult the materials of Egisto Macchi preserved in their private collections in Rome. While working on this essay, the whole Macchi collection was donated to the Istituto per la Musica, Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venice), and I am grateful to Gianmario Borio for his fundamental support. I also wish to thank Jonny Davies and the staff of the British Film Institute (London) for their help in consulting the Joseph Losey Collection, with regard to *The Assassination of Trotsky*.

<sup>2</sup> Letter sent by Joseph Losey to Joseph Shaftel, 4 February 1972, Joseph Losey Collection, BFI, JWL/1/19/25.

<sup>3</sup> On 10 January 1972 Losey wrote to Pamela Davies: «Big problems about the music – both because I don't really like any of the Italian composers, and also because I don't really know what do about it»; Joseph Losey Collection, BFI, JWL/1/19/12.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Losey Collection, BFI, JWL/1/19/12.

to Manuel De Sica<sup>5</sup>, hoping to involve him in the film, but the final choice was to be completely different. In a letter dated 3 February 1972, Losey wrote to De Sica:

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly under the circumstances, your music was very far removed from any concept which I had for this film. It is only now that I have enough time to get around to thanking you for your work, and to inform you that Maestro Egisto Macchi is doing the score for the film<sup>6</sup>.

Against the backdrop of the constant mediation between composition and the processes dictated by technology, Losey's opening quote highlights some of the topics I intend to investigate in this essay. These concern two different levels: the first essentially tackles questions of production and competences implied by the preparation of the musical soundtrack, whereas the second concerns stylistic issues of compositional technique in the strict sense. At the risk of stating the obvious, we can say that Losey particularly appreciated Macchi's threefold competence as composer, arranger and conductor. These three qualities are not necessarily encompassed by a single figure in the film industry: one only has to think of the official distribution of roles in Classical Hollywood music departments, or its rather 'clandestine' counterpart in the Italian system (especially when it comes to orchestration)<sup>7</sup>. As I shall illustrate, the supervision of every aspect of musical production – spanning from the initial musical sketches, through their timbral and dynamic elaboration on paper, to the moment of performance – is the *conditio sine qua non* for Macchi's conception of the soundtrack as a complex, stratified and unitary phenomenon. It is no coincidence that Losey himself, in describing Macchi's expressive palette, preferred the broader notion of *sound* rather than *music*, in order to best render the variety of sonorous features of Trotsky's cues<sup>8</sup>.

Before looking in detail at some stages of the compositional process for the score of *The Assassination of Trotsky*, we shall first clarify the tools available for reconstructing the first developments of Macchi's artisanal approach to film music composition. At the beginning of the 1970s Macchi had been working in cinema for over a decade already, providing scores for a number of feature films. Nonetheless his name was,

<sup>5</sup> Son of Vittorio, Manuel De Sica (b. 1949-2014) is an Italian composer best known for his film scores. Since 1968 he composed a hundred soundtracks for directors such as his father, Luigi Comencini, Claude Chabrol and Dino Risi.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Losey Collection, BFI, JWL/1/19/12.

<sup>7</sup> See Morricone's observations in S. Miceli, *Morricone, la musica, il cinema*, Ricordi and Mucchi, Milano and Modena 1994 (Le sfere, 23), pp. 88-92.

<sup>8</sup> The prominence of new and complex ideas of sound capable of encompassing and surpassing the traditional notion of 'film music' is at the core of the Italian debate around film music in the 1960s. Vittorio Gelmetti, among others, theorised this in several articles: we can recall his address at the conference «Il film sonoro», 1968, organized by the journal «Filmcritica»: V. Gelmetti, *Musica-verità?*, «Filmcritica», 185, 1968, pp. 21-28. For a historical contextualisation of the Italian debate in the international framework, see S. Miceli, *Storiografia musicale italiana e musica del cinema*, «Musica/Realtà», 17, 59, 1996, pp. 191-204 and M. Corbella, *Suono elettroacustico e generi cinematografici: da cliché a elemento strutturale*, in I. Meandri and A. Valle (a cura di), *Suono/Immagine/Genere*, Kaplan, Torino 2011, pp. 29-48: 40-48.

and still is, inseparably linked to the documentary genre, which marked his debut in film composition in 1958<sup>9</sup> and served as an authentic testing ground throughout his career. Within this genre, Macchi shaped his skills and perfected the techniques that would characterise his output.

### 1. *Music(s) for documentaries*

In Italy, the genre of documentary film has represented a particularly fertile field for a critical review of the musical contribution to cinema at least since as early as the 1950s. Already in the immediate post-war years, it was clear that documentaries constituted a peculiar case in the debate concerning the status of film music and in the redefinition of the role of the composer in cinematographic productions. It is symptomatic of this conviction that a volume devoted to film music, curated by Enzo Masetti in 1950, in fact featured two articles specifically devoted to documentary film (already fully acknowledged as a genre) by Raffaele Gervasio and Roman Vlad<sup>10</sup>. These practical reports, written by two composers who were particularly active in the field of documentary, show how, in the documentary genre, the absence of a multiplicity of elements dictated by the dramaturgical economy of the fiction film and a certain loosening of the requirements of production allowed composers to develop new strategies of synchronization and sonorization.

Although it is not possible to go into the technical details of the recording equipment, it is appropriate to recall two fundamental facts: first, during the 1950s and 1960s most Italian documentaries lasted approximately 11 minutes (corresponding to 295 metres of film reel), a duration imposed by the production studios due to economic considerations<sup>11</sup>; secondly, the most commonly used camera, the 35 mm Arriflex, did not allow for live sound recording. Confronted by the silence imposed by

<sup>9</sup> The year of Macchi's debut is inferred from the contract for the documentary film *I maestri della pittura moderna* (P. Bucarelli 1958); see D. Tortora (a cura di), *Egisto Macchi*, «Archivio Musiche del XX secolo», CIMS (Centro di iniziative musicali in Sicilia), Palermo 1996, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> R. Gervasio, R. Vlad, *La musica nel documentario*, in E. Masetti (a cura di), *La musica nel film*, Bianco e Nero, Roma 1950 (Quaderni della Mostra Internazionale del Cinema di Venezia), pp. 69-73. On the same subject, see also the chapters devoted to music for films and for documentaries in R. Vlad, *Modernità e tradizione nella musica contemporanea*, Einaudi, Torino 1955. For a preliminary study of Vlad's activity as a film composer see F. M. Ricci, *La musica di Roman Vlad per il cinema, la televisione e il teatro*, «Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana», 4, 2008, pp. 499-522.

<sup>11</sup> These standards are also the result of the Italian legislative system: the Regio Decreto Legge no. 1131 (August 1941) obliged cinema exhibitors to show a documentary before every feature film; Decreto Legge no. 678 (October 1945) instituted a subsidy for the production of short films, drawn as a percentage from feature films takings. Starting from July 1956, the Decreto Legge no. 897 indirectly gave an impulse to abandon black and white films, by providing economic benefits to short films shot in colour. See R. Nepoti, *L'età d'oro del documentario*, in S. Bernardi (a cura di), *Storia del cinema italiano: 1954-1959*, vol. IX, Marsilio, Venezia 2004, pp. 185-194; B. Birardi, *The Docu-Opera in the Italian Cinema of the 1940s*, in M. Sala (ed.), *From Stage to Screen: Musical Films in Europe and United States (1927-1961)*, Brepols, Turnhout 2012 (*Speculum Musicae*, 19), pp. 19-36: 25.

this technical apparatus, the primary duty of the composer was to create an alternative audio dimension.

There is no doubt that Macchi's musical contribution is one of the most significant in the panorama of Italian documentary production, in both qualitative and quantitative terms. It would nevertheless be arduous to trace a complete picture of his activity in this field, for this would involve discussing several films which no longer exist and, according to records drawn up by Macchi himself, the number of his documentary film scores is well over a thousand<sup>12</sup>! In order to realise such a massive production, he developed a serial-type compositional procedure based on economical efficiency at every operational level, from the choice of instrumental resources – almost always small chamber ensembles – to the ability to keep very tight schedules and even adapt to very basic working facilities, as is manifested in the irregular formats of his manuscript papers, which are often cut out of larger sheets according to the space required for the specific instrumentation. Nonetheless, thanks to the restorations of recent years, a vast corpus of documentaries is currently being rediscovered, fostering the possibility of identifying specific features of the genre, which differentiate it from feature films and encourage comparisons with the preserved musical sources<sup>13</sup>.

If we limit the scope of our enquiry to the first years of Macchi's output, we can identify a series of recurring parameters pertaining to the documentary genre in spite of the great variety in his entire production. We can distinguish three categories in his compositional approach to documentaries: scores employing exclusively acoustic instruments; electroacoustic re-elaboration of pre-existing materials; and entirely electronic sonorization. Here I shall examine only the first category, which will shed light on the textual relations involved in the production process. To begin with, the pervasive presence of music from beginning to end, throughout an entire film, almost always involves a subdivision into autonomous musical episodes, realised according to a segmentation of the film reel. Every cue is labelled by a progressive number (i.e. N. 1, N. 2, etc.), followed by the overall timing expressed in seconds and, occasionally, in fractions of a second. Strict control over the timeline is undoubtedly a feature common to all Macchi's scores. The paper files are annotated with paratextual indications facilitating complete control over the audiovisual result before setting foot in the recording studio. In fact, one always finds precise metronome markings, agogic indications concerning the character of the musical episode and, lastly, mainly descriptive indications related to visual elements or specific camera movements. By converse, one never finds references to the presence (or absence) of the voice-over, the only other audio element present in the documentaries, in

<sup>12</sup> In Macchi's archive collection there are two typologies of lists. One, handwritten, listing 1585 titles, and the other, typewritten, with 559 titles, accompanied by a brief résumé for each documentary.

<sup>13</sup> Among the most recent studies of music in the Italian documentary between the 1950s and 1970s, see the essay by Nicola Bondanese, with an appendix listing 363 titles produced in 1943-87, with indications of the archives preserving copies of the film and score: N. Bondanese, *Musica e generi documentaristici in Italia tra gli anni Cinquanta e Settanta*, in R. Giuliani (a cura di), *La musica nel cinema e nella televisione*, Guerini, Milano 2011, pp. 177-217.

the absence of live sound recording<sup>14</sup>. Beyond these notes written in pencil, we find other annotations, often marked by different colours, which document the working process during the recording sessions. These signs provide clear sync points for the conductor, most often Macchi himself. At this stage we can find coloured diacritic signs that highlight previous pencil notes, as well as new notes that modify the agogic flow (e.g. *ritenuto*, *accelerando*) or redefine precise sync points – expressed in seconds – in the score (Fig. 1). While maintaining a technical and compositional coherence within the whole score, as well as in single episodes, the timbral-gestural component becomes the principal factor of discontinuity in the nodes of audio-visual development. The scrupulous use of timbral differentiation is the key in a type of post-tonal writing, which often rejects the structure of recognisable thematic or melodic units. Nonetheless, in spite of the sheer quantity of documentary films Macchi scored, there is always an extreme care as to the sound profile of each film: this emerges not only from the composer's scrupulousness as a conductor, inferable from the number of takes for each episode which are preserved on tape, but also from the meticulous indications of dynamics he recorded on paper. As an example, one could cite the chord progression that accompanies the opening credits of the documentary *Via Tasso* (L. Di Gianni 1960), scored for harp, piano, violin, xylophone and whip: for each instrument Macchi specifies dynamics ranging from *pppp* for a violin harmonic to *fff* in harp and piano. Such a sharp-cut definition of these parameters, which in the Western notational tradition have always been considered subordinate to pitch and rhythm, must on one hand be seen in the context of the experimentation associated with sound as process as it was developed by the composers involved with Nuova Consonanza<sup>15</sup>, and on the other, it responds to the need to obtain the intended sound from the instrumentalists in the shortest time possible.

The relationship between score and recording – every folder containing the score for the documentary being marked with the number of the corresponding tape (Fig. 2) – is highly dynamic. If the composition on paper is conceived specifically for a certain documentary, resulting in an original, unitary, and coherent project, once the process goes beyond the stage of tape recording, the field of possibilities for its destination widens considerably. In fact, the discrepancy between the large number of documentaries made by Macchi and his apparently incomplete paper manuscripts has to be viewed from a different perspective. Far from being a sign of lack of care in conservation, it indicates that tapes, rather than scores, had become the main musical sources for the composer himself, in some cases. Macchi recreated new hybrid soundtracks by reorganising musical tapes originally recorded for different documentaries, which then could be reassembled for a new film.

<sup>14</sup> Although important writers, such as Pier Paolo Pasolini or Leonardo Sciascia, contributed to the script of several documentaries, the omnipresence of a speaker was normally imposed by productions, and was generally badly endured by musicians. The voice over was in fact planned usually after music had been recorded, so the composer could only take into account just the visual track, while scoring. Macchi's score for *Con il cuore fermo, Sicilia* (G. Mingozzi 1965) is an interesting exception of this practice: on cue *N. 2*, the only piece apparently survived, there are indications about the presence/absence of the voice over.

<sup>15</sup> G. Borio, *Sound as Process: Scelsi and the Composers of Nuova Consonanza*, in F. Sciannoneo (ed. by), *Music As Dream: Essays on Giacinto Scelsi*, Scarecrow Press, Lanham (MD) 2013, pp. 41-52.

*1.50* **ANELLO** **N° 8** (*Uovo*) (57")

11<sup>u</sup>  
da destra a sinistra

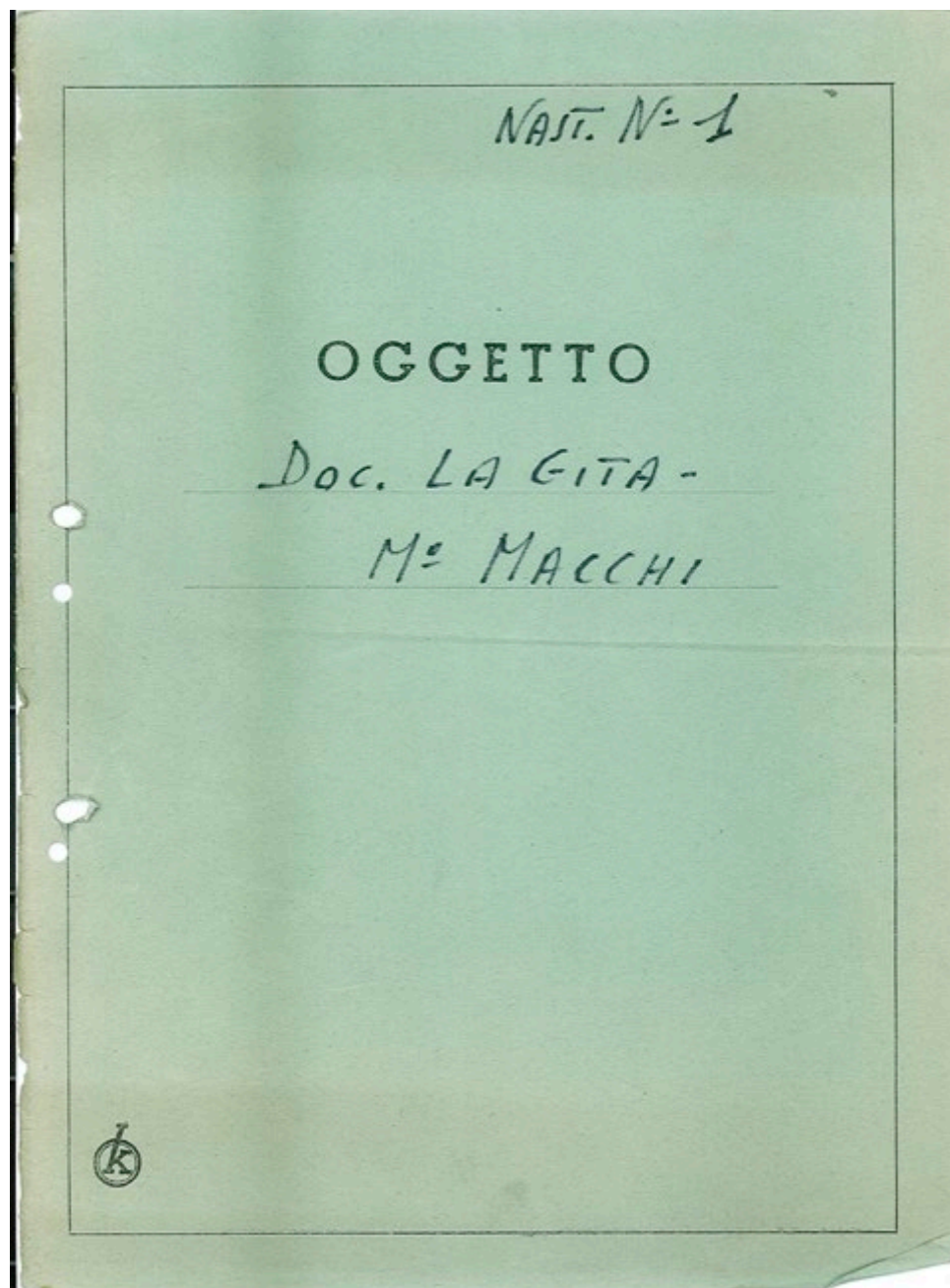
5 24<sup>u</sup>

da sinistra a destra

9 10

Edizioni Musicali Rete

**Fig. 1** Extract from *N. 8, Via Tasso*, Istituto per la Musica, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venezia, Fondo Egisto Macchi.



**Fig. 2** *La gita*, folder frontispiece, Istituto per la Musica, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venezia, Fondo Egisto Macchi.

One striking example is the soundtrack for *Fata Morgana* (L. Del Fra 1962)<sup>16</sup>, awarded with the Leone di San Marco at the XXIII Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica di Venezia, 1962. The soundtrack, curated by Egisto Macchi under the pseudonym Werter Pierazzuoli<sup>17</sup>, is in fact an audio inter-text generated by recombining pieces taken from previous soundtracks of *Spazzapan* and *Afro* (M. Gandin 1961), *Arriba el campesino* (M. Gallo 1961), *Maria e i giorni* (C. Mangini 1959) and *La creazione del mondo* (M. Gandin 1961). The fact that, for a documentary featuring a stream of migrants heading north<sup>18</sup>, Macchi turned to scores originally conceived to narrate respectively the artistic activity of a painter, the agrarian reform in Cuba, a day in the life of an energetic old lady from Puglia and the world of childhood, in no way detracts from the music's efficacy or coherence. Just as the composer set down on paper a dense succession of moments of discontinuity, while maintaining the coherence of timbre and gesture, he was able to dismantle and reassemble new soundtracks on tape, with a variety of inter-textual references, thanks to his careful reorganization of fully integrated audiovisual structures and the strategic reiteration of certain musical episodes. We should point out that, in some specific cases, he drew on his own 'music library' even when the project itself was substantially original. In *La gita* (L. Del Fra 1960), for example, alongside the eleven musical episodes he composed for the documentary, Macchi made use of a piece for solo trumpet he had written that same year for *Il Monte di pietà* (E. Ruffo 1960). The difference in timbre between the pre-existing piece and the rest of the score is justified visually: a dance set in motion by the presence of a gramophone gave Macchi the possibility of creating a musical moment in the storyline.

## 2. Music-Effects-Dialogues

While the manuscript sources for documentaries do not reveal any particular problems concerning the balance between the audio realization and the voice-over, things are rather different when it comes to feature films<sup>19</sup>. As Macchi himself pointed out in one of his rare theoretical writings concerning his work as a film composer<sup>20</sup>, working

<sup>16</sup> This documentary was recently realised in DVD, included in M. Grasso (a cura di), *Scoprire l'Italia: inchieste e documentari degli anni Cinquanta*, Kurumuny, Calimera (Le) 2007.

<sup>17</sup> The name of Werter or Werther Pierazzuoli, associated with Edizioni Musicali Rete, recurs in numerous documentaries and is not to be confused with the musician Werther Pierazzuoli, a double bass player born in Lausanne in 1907 and trained in Italy. See A. Mazzoletti, *Il jazz in Italia. Dalle origini al dopoguerra*, Laterza, Roma 1983, p. 304.

<sup>18</sup> «Fata Morgana» was the name given to a train that carried migrants from Reggio Calabria to Milan, see *Relazione per l'anno finanziario 1960-61*, Azienda autonoma delle Ferrovie dello Stato 1962.

<sup>19</sup> For an overview of Macchi's production for the cinema and a list of his soundtracks for feature films and television programmes, see: S. Bassetti, *La musica applicata*, in D. Tortora (a cura di), *Egisto Macchi*, cit., pp. 67-74; 124-127.

<sup>20</sup> This text, handwritten, untitled and undated, will from now on be identified as E. Macchi, [*Scrivere la partitura per un film*]. For its complete transcription, see Appendix A. Among other writings dealing



as a cinema musician requires first and foremost collaboration with the technical staff in other departments. Instead of idealistically laying claim to the composer's involvement right from the elaboration of the film script<sup>21</sup>, Macchi adopted a decidedly more pragmatic approach. Once it became clear that the musician could actually only intervene at the last stage of the filmmaking process, with the visual editing completed, it was important to establish to what extent he could contribute and indeed influence the final organization of the overall sound balance. A large part of Macchi's essay focuses on the production problems involved in these relationships<sup>22</sup>, with important implications for the composer who, by necessity, cannot neglect either the visual («photographic») or the audio inputs. While recognising the great difficulty of ensuring a dialogue and collaboration between the various departments, to which all too often one must add the director's technical impossibility of adapting music, effects and dialogue balances, Macchi expresses the hope that the musician be given total responsibility for the soundtrack, enabling him to control the various levels, and avoiding

having to work without knowing what the others do, without the others knowing what you are doing, with everyone obliged to give of their utmost, as if a film was only made either of effects, or music, or dialogue. The encounter (all too often a clash) [between each party] takes place in the mixing room, and it is almost inevitably a very unpleasant revelation for everybody<sup>23</sup>.

In this respect it is interesting to note that Macchi's attitude has significant affinities with the theoretical reflections of Pierre Schaeffer who focused on the audio-visual realisation as a unitary whole. Although he did not reject a dialectics between sound and the visual and narrative aspects, Macchi paid close attention to the timbral and

with his film composing activity, see: *Appunti per [una] conferenza*, transcribed in D. Tortora, *Nuova Consonanza 1989-1994*, Libreria Musicale Italiana, Lucca 1994, pp. 159-162 (Musicalia, 2a); *Dalla preistoria e dalle ricerche su illusioni ottiche e fotografia al teatro ottico di E. Reynaud*, typescript for a seminar held at the Università di Palermo, A.A. 1985/1986; *Riproduzione meccanica del suono e del movimento. Il cinematografo. La musica e le immagini*, typescript undated; *Cinema d'avanguardia – Entr'acte di R. Clair (1924)*, typescript undated; *Lo sviluppo del cinematografo dal punto di vista visivo e sonoro. Georges Méliès*, typescript undated. These three latter typescripts were all preserved in a folder, together with photocopies of several articles dating up to 1980. Therefore, they were probably written for the same seminar at the Università di Palermo.

<sup>21</sup> Gelmetti, for example, in speaking at the conference «Cinema e linguaggio» organised by «Filmcritica» in Rome, 29 February – 1 March 1964, argued that the composer's involvement would ensure greater consideration for the musical input in films. See V. Gelmetti, *Aspetti della musica nel film*, «Filmcritica», 143-144, 1964, pp. 146-147. Gino Marinuzzi Jr went even further demanding a complete freedom to interpret musically a film, as an opera composer. See G. Marinuzzi Jr, *Aspetti della musica per film*, in E. Masetti (a cura di), *La musica nel film*, cit., pp. 35-39. Regarding Marinuzzi, see M. Corbella's contribution in this issue.

<sup>22</sup> Macchi uses the term relationship meaning both the links between audio-visual components and, consequently, between the persons technically in charge of every department.

<sup>23</sup> «di dover lavorare senza conoscere l'opera degli altri, senza che gli altri conoscano l'opera tua, costretti a dare il massimo come se il film fosse formato solo di effetti, o di musica o di dialogo. L'incontro (tanto, troppo spesso, lo scontro) avviene in sede di missaggio ed è una rivelazione quasi sempre spiacevole per tutti» (E. Macchi, [*Scrivere la partitura per un film*], cit.).

formal structuring of the soundtrack, which derives from the constant relations and the balance between all the audio components<sup>24</sup>:

It will not be possible to obtain a decent soundtrack until its elements are entrusted to a single person who can oversee the levels *a priori*. Once the dialogues have been recorded and mounted, the technician who is in charge should proceed with the recording and mounting of the effects, taking into account the dialogue track. Being the last to intervene, the musician should be able to work paying attention to the photography and the dialogue and effects tracks, and establish, in perfect agreement with the director, the type of soundtrack that is most suitable for the individual pieces in the film. It really does seem very important to me that the single tracks with dialogues, effects and music should be combined once and for all into the single concept of soundtrack<sup>25</sup>.

In order to illustrate a compositional approach capable of fully encompassing all the sonic components of a film, Macchi sets out a scheme which includes the overall and partial timing for the elaboration of a hypothetical visual track and, above all, the timing and timbral compilation of dialogue and effects, so as to show the potential benefits of having the composer supervise all the various audio components.

According to the scheme (see Fig. 3) and given the predominance of dialogues and sound effects, the composer has two possibilities: he can either simply renounce to the idea of composing a piece of music in the strict sense of the term and concentrate exclusively on the track containing the sound effects, working to underscore the dialogue; or, alternatively, he can elaborate a musical track capable of effectively blending in with the other elements (in this case, a sewing machine in action, a very soft-spoken woman's voice) without conflicting with them. The solution Macchi proposes is a pedal note on the organ, which would not impinge either on the woman's high-pitched timbre or on the fast percussiveness of the needle.

We can note that here too, in an entirely imaginary scheme, Macchi not only specifies the various points of synchronization in detail, but also pays close attention to the timbral characterisation, giving dynamic markings, just as he indicated the procedures for defining the sound in his scores for documentaries.

<sup>24</sup> Among Macchi's papers, there are photocopies of articles dealing with the relationship between music and image from French sources, such as the 1960 essay by Pierre Schaeffer published in «Cahiers du Cinéma» and an article by Michel Fano, published in the same journal in 1964. As for Schaeffer's theorisation in the field of audio-vision, see N. Bizzaro, *Pierre Schaeffer's Contribution to Audiovisual Theory*, «WAV: Worlds of Audio-Vision», 2, 2011, <[http://www-5.unipv.it/wav/pdf/WAV\\_Bizzaro\\_2011\\_eng.pdf](http://www-5.unipv.it/wav/pdf/WAV_Bizzaro_2011_eng.pdf)> (09/14).

<sup>25</sup> «Non sarà possibile ottenere una colonna sonora decente finché i suoi elementi componenti non verranno affidati a un unico responsabile che ne curi 'a priori' i livelli. Una volta incisi e montati i dialoghi, si dovrebbe procedere da parte del tecnico a ciò preposto alla registrazione e montaggio degli effetti tenendo presente la colonna dialoghi. Il musicista, intervenendo per ultimo, dovrebbe poter lavorare tenendo presenti fotografico, colonna dialoghi e colonna effetti, stabilendo, esattamente d'accordo col regista, il tipo di colonna sonora ritenuto più idoneo per i singoli brani del film. Mi sembra veramente importante che i concetti di colonna dialoghi, colonna effetti e colonna musica vengano una buona volta fusi nell'unico concetto di colonna sonora» (E. Macchi, [*Scrivere la partitura per un film*], cit.).

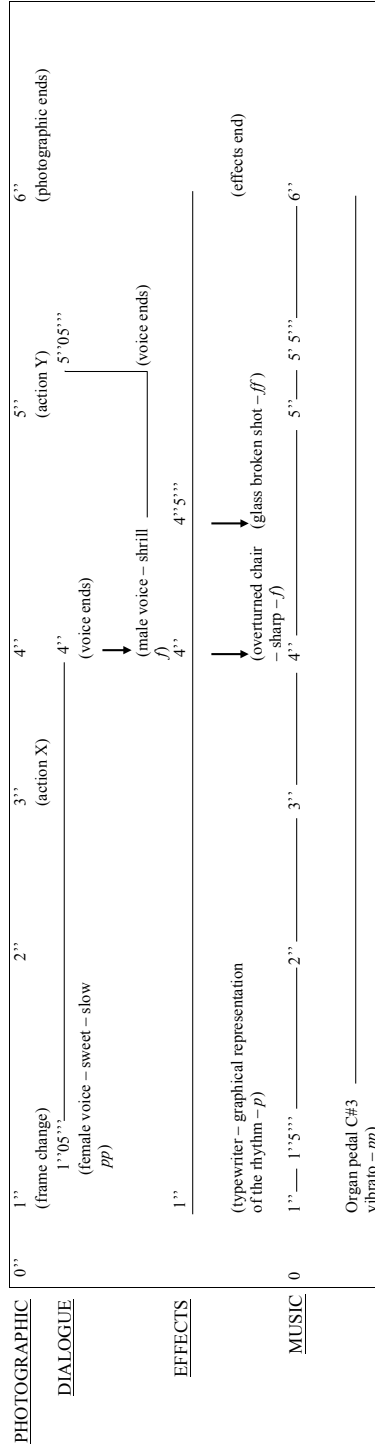


Fig. 3 Diplomatic transcription of Macchi's scheme (English translation), for the original see Appendix A.

### 3. *Mixing on paper*

In order to shed light on the crucial passage from theory to practice, we shall take a closer look at the procedures used in one of Macchi's most prestigious collaborations, his work with Joseph Losey on *The Assassination of Trotsky*. It should be borne in mind that, although this was an international production, filmed partly in Mexico and partly in Rome in the studios of Dino de Laurentiis, the sound realisation was entirely crafted in Italy. The overall postproduction process (including dubbing) took place at the International Recording studios, in Rome, with the contribution of Federico Savina, who was in this case also the dubbing mixer<sup>26</sup>.

Macchi and Losey collaborated very closely. In both their personal archives we find paper files that help us reconstruct the phases of their joint activities in early 1972. One of the first records of an exchange between the two is a series of notes that Macchi jotted down for Losey concerning a preliminary hypothesis for the musical structure of a particular sequence. Since the document bears the generic indication «Sequenza B»<sup>27</sup>, and some of the solutions described were not put into practice, we can infer that this was one of the earliest outlines, preceding the definitive launch of their joint project. Macchi starts by devising a timeline of the narration, with precise references to the cuts, and by defining a broad palette of timbres employing such electronic instruments including the Synket<sup>28</sup> and the electric organ, as well as extra-musical sounds such as a heartbeat. Even though the final version differs considerably from this first sketch – above all in the absence of any musical theme associated with the character of Trotsky – one can nonetheless recognise a corresponding handling of the overall sound balances in the orchestration.

In order to infer from the sources how the technological constrictions of cinema influenced the various stages of the compositional process, we can look at a specific case that was crucial in the film's dramaturgical evolution: the sequence of the *corrida* (bullfight)<sup>29</sup>. This sequence plays a key role in the psychological evolution of Frank, the hitman (Alain Delon), hired to murder the Russian exile (Richard Burton): the bullfight metaphorically mirrors the conflict between the two characters, in which the bullfighter stands for Frank and the bull dying in the arena stands for Trotsky. In other

<sup>26</sup> See the letter sent by Losey on 18 March 1972: «Dear Federico, your job was superb. I have known for more than ten years that you are the best music recordist. I had not known the extent of your genius as a dubbing mixer. It is one of the best tracks I have had, and one of the most difficult to achieve» (Joseph Losey Collection, JWL/1/19/12). In another letter dated 11 April 1972 to Paolo Biondo, Losey also thanked Paolo Biondo and Bernard Shelley for all the help and kindness on *The Assassination of Trotsky*.

<sup>27</sup> *Sequenza B*, handwritten document, undated, Joseph Losey Collection, BFI, JWL/1/19/12. For the entire transcription, see Appendix B.

<sup>28</sup> The Synket was a synthesizer invented by Paolo Ketoff in 1964, and became part of the equipment of the Studio R7 in 1967. Like other composers gravitating around the Studio R7 (one for all, Morricone), Macchi used it in several of his films and documentaries. See M. Corbella's essay in this issue. For an extensive overview on the Synket, see L. Pizzaleo, *Il liutaio elettronico: Paolo Ketoff e l'invenzione del Synket*, Aracne Editrice, Roma 2014 (Immota harmonia, 20).

<sup>29</sup> Some considerations by Macchi concerning this sequence are in *Appunti per [una] conferenza*, cit.

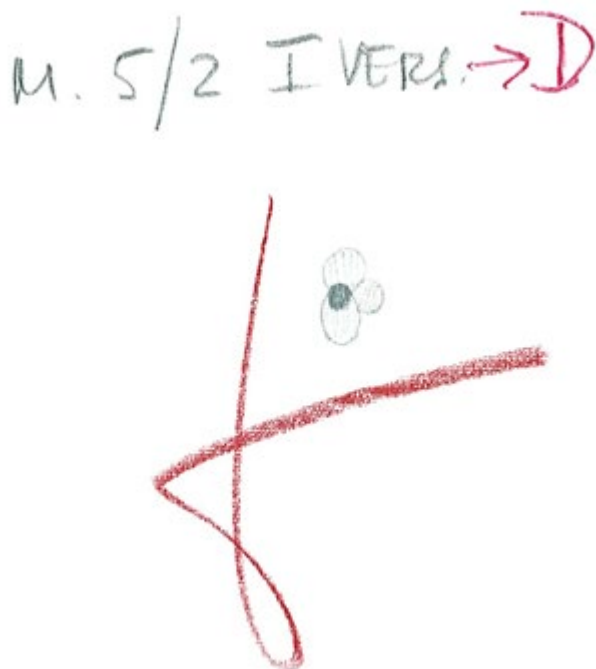
words, the intimate relationship between victim and killer is depicted via the cultural tradition of bullfighting, whose highly spectacular component is reinforced by a continuous alternation of camera angles, showing the audience and the protagonists in the arena from opposing perspectives. Frank's sense of guilt and his emotional instability become even more evident, as does the nervousness of Trotsky's collaborator, Gita (Romy Schneider), who is being used by the assassin to achieve his objective.

As for the sound, the sequence is completely saturated in a shifting equilibrium involving dialogues, sound effects and the music composed by Macchi. In particular I wish to concentrate on the final segment of the *corrida*, following the musical reprise of the opening titles (*Titoli*). Cue *M5/2* begins on the last bars of the piece, without any interruption (0:42:47-0:42:18). The instrumental resources are: two organs tuned a quarter tone apart, a Synket, eight sopranos with aerophones, twelve violins, six violas and six cellos.

This piece is tightly synchronized with the beginning of the agony of the wounded bull uttering its last bellows, interspersed with a fragment of dialogue betraying the increasing strain between Frank and Gita, and concluding with the death of the animal as it collapses in a heap. Beside the definitive version, we have two earlier versions of the piece of music written by Macchi for this audio-visual segment, entitled *I* and *II versione*<sup>30</sup>, both of which contribute to the final released track, albeit to varying degrees. Although the three versions differ in terms of instrumental resources – the first two initially included woodwinds (two flutes and a clarinet) – and in the overall managing of pitches, all three are nonetheless characterised by a clear definition of the visual and sonic points of development, as we shall see shortly. In each version Macchi gives precise indications of duration in seconds, scrupulously establishing the sync points, respectively after «10», «19½» and «23». In fact, this high attention to synchronisation often recurs in the preparatory sketches of this film. Almost every scored cue, notated on A3 manuscript sheets, is enclosed in a folded A4 sheet bearing the number of the episode written in pencil on the back (often accompanied by the indication «Fatto [Done]» or just the abbreviation letter «F» in pen or red pencil, marking those cues that were actually used in the film) together with any indications concerning instrumental resources (Fig. 4), while on the front there is the structure of the piece in skeleton score form, setting out the temporal structure with the division into bars, accompanied by precise indications in seconds.

By comparing the three versions we can identify some compositional aspects that perfectly match Macchi's overall and multi-layered conception of the soundtrack, conceived as an organised sound world (in every aspect). The final segment of the *corrida* is a particularly good example of how the various elements are treated by the composer. In addition to the musical component, there is a dialogue between the two characters and the noises produced by the dying bull (the cries from the spectators are muted and are 'reactivated' only once the animal has died and the music is over). If we look at the preparatory sketch for the first version of cue *M5/2* we notice how Macchi

<sup>30</sup> In the second version there is also an additional layer, marked by red pencil corrections, which slightly alters the dynamic and instrumental arrangement.



**Fig. 4** Cue *M5/2*, detail of folding sheet, Istituto per la Musica, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venezia, Fondo Egisto Macchi.

initially defined a musical structure that featured fragments of chromatic scales, ascending and descending, first in a linear succession and subsequently vertically, with a progressive series of instrumental entries (Fig. 5).

The first version is essentially structured in two chromatic fragments, at first ascending, played one after the other and assigned to two groups of strings, which together complete the chromatic scale. Once this figure has reached its climax (corresponding to the time indication of «10'»), the flow of music stops on a single bar, *fortissimo*, for about 9", after which the same chromatic fragment is played again, this time descending. The piece ends with a general fade-out expressed by a diminuendo hairpin. In the second version we find a radical change in conception: the instruments remain substantially the same, with only the addition of aerophones assigned to the sopranos<sup>31</sup>. It is the piece's overall organization that radically changes here, now

<sup>31</sup> Although Macchi merely indicates «aerophones», it is likely that here, as in other cues in the score, he means the wind machine: «a large cylindrical wood frame covered with silk that is rotated by turning a handle. The silk is stroked by thin pieces of wood, creating a kind of swirling and whistling sound as the velocity of the revolutions accelerate»; S. Adler, *The Study of Orchestration*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York and London 2002, p. 467. This hypothesis is borne out by listening to the recordings, and also by the recollections of Lamberto Macchi, a composer himself, who collaborated in a number of his father's projects.

Sections	I	II	III	IV
<b>Sync points</b>	0''	10''	19 1/2''	23''
<b>Actions</b>	The wounded bull stops	Frank and Gita discuss animatedly	The bull falls to the ground	The last gasps of the bull before death
<b>Dialogues</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>Effects</b>	Bull's clogs/lowing	-	Bull's clogs/lowing	Bull's lowing
<b>Music</b>	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics
I version	Unstable	Stable	Unstable	Stable
	<i>pp</i>	<i>ff</i>		
II version	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics
	F - C - A - O - Sy - St	A - O - Sy - St	F - I C - A - O - Sy - St	A - O - Sy - St
	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
	<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ff</i>
II version (red pencil)	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics
	A - O - Sy - St	O - Sy - St	A - O - Sy - St	O - Sy - St
	Stable	Stable	Stable	Stable
	<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>ff</i>
Definitive version	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics	Instruments Strings Pitches Dynamics
	A - O - Sy - St	O - Sy - St	A - O - Sy - St	O - Sy - St
	Stable	Stable	Unstable	Partially unstable
	<i>p</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>ff</i>	<i>ff</i>

F = 2 Flutes; C = 1 Clarinet; A = 8 Aerophones; O = 2 Organs; Sy = Synket; St = Strings

**Fig. 5** My synopsis of the successive musical reworkings of the bullfight sequence from *The Assassination of Trotsky* (0:42:47-0:43:18).

constructed on only three notes (*g* sharp-*a-b* flat), with the three temporal divisions marked exclusively by changes in timbre and sound: (1) by means of hairpins indicating dynamics – used to highlight the synchronization at the climax of the crescendo; (2) by timbral subtraction, using a pedal of the winds to mark two lulls (between 10" and 19"½; after 23"); and (3) through the use of repeated notes in the strings, in the section spanning from 10" to 19"½. In this second version we find a further stage of editing, marked by interventions in red pencil which add new elements characterising the various sections: two new dynamic hairpins are added in the second section, creating a diminuendo half way through; the aerophones no longer provide an aural continuum but are interrupted in correspondence with the rests in the winds, which in this version are entirely eliminated.

The final version of *M5/2* brings together various aspects of the first two that are consistent with the audio-visual layers of the film reel, allowing each element to maintain its own character quite clearly. In this way, Macchi avoids

sacrificing the two other elements [music and sound effects] to the one element that is deemed to be most important [dialogues], by eliminating or attenuating the effects or the music, or even (as occasionally happens) eliminating the dialogue, so as to obtain the best compromise designed to safeguard the soundtrack in one point or another<sup>32</sup>.

In its final version, this musical episode is built from four sections: from the first version it adapts the descending chromatic procedure, and from the second the principle of static pitches, varied by different levels of dynamic intensity. The first section features a texture which goes from *piano* to *fortissimo* without changing pitches, marking a clear-cut change in the sound world, if compared to the combination of timbres that characterised the preceding cue (*Titoli*) and allowing the noise of clogs and the first wheezing of the bull to be perfectly audible. The second maintains the pitches unaltered but employs a contrary process in terms of dynamics, returning to a *piano* so that the dialogue between the two actors remains in the foreground of the soundtrack. In the third section, featuring the death of the bull, the idea of the descending fragment of a chromatic scale is recuperated, combined with the climax in intensity, with *ff* and *fff*. Lastly, in the fourth section – which merely featured a diminuendo in the two previous versions – Macchi dramatizes the chromatic process, depriving it of its directionality; continuous falling semitones in the violas and cellos occur, while the violins maintain the three held notes in unison with the Synket. This affords a more discreet interplay with the harmonic density, creating a recognisable musical coda marking the death of the animal.

Macchi's willingness to compose and recompose the different layers of the soundtrack highlights another aspect that can be associated with the continuous frag-

<sup>32</sup> «di sacrificare all' elemento ritenuto più importante gli altri due elementi, eliminando o abbassando gli effetti o la musica o eliminando (come a volte avviene) il dialogo, al fine di ottenere il migliore compromesso che valga a salvare in questo o in quel punto la colonna sonora» (E. Macchi, [*Scrivere la partitura per un film*], cit.).



mentation of the film's sonorous planes. As I have in part already foreshadowed, *The Assassination of Trotsky* focuses on and constantly calls into question the acousmatic nature of listening. The filmgoer is confronted with a continuous mutation of timbres, which is not only a question of opposition between noise and music. The on-going divergence between the layers makes for a nuanced soundscape, covering a wide spectrum, namely:

1. sounds whose source is displayed, as in the case of the bull and in part of the audience in the arena;
2. musical (but not exclusively) sounds whose source is never displayed, such as the fragments played on the trumpet;
3. electroacoustically manipulated sounds that bear clear references to their sources, like the buzz produced by children in the cue *Titoli*;
4. sounds that are entirely produced by an electric synthesizer, but which in terms of timbre have more or less explicit ambience references (e.g. the Synket imitating cicadas).

This continuous modulation between the various nuances of the sonic component makes for a reality in which the traditional definition of sound and musical realism is heavily undermined.

The process of rewriting that underlies the various versions shows, through the textual stratifications present in the score, the point of contact between a compositional activity in the traditional sense and its transformations as required by the multimedia film system. In conceiving these aspects on paper, Macchi pre-set particular mixing procedures, so as to integrate each of the audio-visual components. Macchi's scrupulousness and farsightedness certainly did not escape Losey, who in March 1972 officially granted him «any full contractual authority to approve or disapprove the final dubbing and mix of the Italian version of my film THE ASSASSINATION OF TROTSKY»<sup>33</sup>. In this way, the director, perhaps unintentionally, actually turned one of Macchi's greatest aspirations into reality:

Entrusting the composer with responsibility for the soundtrack would be a wise act in view of the benefits that would ensue for the film, and at the same time it would be a manifestation of trust in the musician, who still today is all too often sacrificed on the altars built repeatedly for the great god cinema, in order to placate him for the serious errors committed by others – and not the musician<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Letter sent by Joseph Losey to Egisto Macchi, 30 March 1972, Joseph Losey Collection, BFI, JWL/1/19/12.

<sup>34</sup> «Affidare al compositore la responsabilità della colonna sonora sarebbe un atto di saggezza per i benefici che ne deriverebbero all'opera cinematografica e al tempo stesso un atto di fiducia verso il musicista ancora oggi frequentemente sacrificato su altari eretti volta per volta al dio del cinema per placarlo dei gravi errori commessi da altri che non il musicista» (E. Macchi, [*Scrivere la partitura per un film*], cit.).

## Appendix

A.

Egisto Macchi, [*Scrivere la partitura per un film*], untitled and undated manuscript, Istituto per la Musica, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venezia, Fondo Egisto Macchi.

Scrivere la partitura per un film (lungo o cortometraggio che sia) impone di risolvere una serie di problemi che non investono solo la struttura musicale della partitura e i suoi rapporti con il fotografico per cui viene composta, ma anche i rapporti e le influenze con gli altri componenti la colonna sonora del film, vale a dire effetti e parlato. Si tratta, in altre parole, di una limitazione nell'autonomia del compositore che può essere accettata solo in quanto essa si verifica o dovrebbe verificarsi all'interno di un rapporto di collaborazione fra il compositore stesso e i tecnici preposti agli altri reparti di lavorazione e, in primo luogo, il regista.

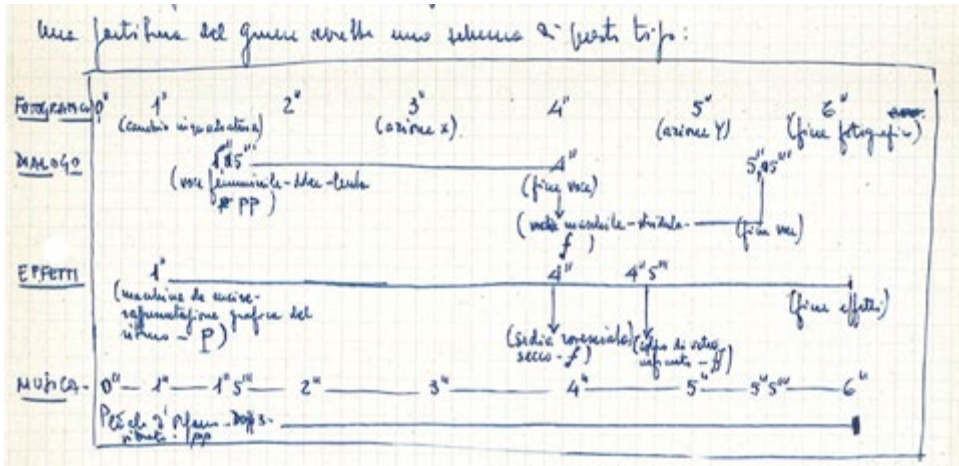
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La lacuna più grossa, sotto questo aspetto, si ha nel rapporto musica-effetti-dialoghi. Sembrerebbe facilmente realizzabile il proposito di un permanente scambio di idee fra i tecnici dei tre reparti ai fini di realizzare una colonna sonora quanto più perfetta, in cui ciascuno di questi tre elementi abbia il necessario rilievo, la giusta misura che sola può garantire l'efficacia della colonna stessa. In pratica gli scambi di idee o non avvengono del tutto, o, se avvengono, sono limitati a constatare ciò che era constatabile anche attraverso la semplice visione del fotografico, dove un'esplosione porta con sé necessariamente il suo equivalente sonoro e il movimento delle labbra degli attori l'equivalente dialogo. Ciò che manca assolutamente è l'unificazione dei risultati dei tre reparti. Il regista, che come tale dovrebbe avere una visione quanto più precisa del suo film, non ha spesso la possibilità tecnica di intervenire per contemporaneamente questi tre importanti elementi; quando lo fa, in sala di missaggio, è già troppo tardi. Allora si tratta solo di sacrificare all'elemento ritenuto più importante gli altri due elementi, eliminando o abbassando gli effetti o la musica o eliminando (come a volte avviene) il dialogo, al fine di ottenere il migliore compromesso che valga a salvare in questo o in quel punto la colonna sonora. Il problema è, più che importante, essenziale, fondamentale. Io credo che il miglior modo per risolverlo sia quello di affidare al musicista la responsabilità totale della colonna sonora. Il musicista dovrebbe affrontare la sua partitura avendo presenti dialoghi ed effetti. La partitura dovrebbe essere composta basandosi:

- a. sui tempi del brano di fotografico (tempo generale e tempi parziali)
- b. sui tempi del dialogo (inizio e fine del dialogo, timbri di voce (maschile, femminile, acuta, grave, dolce, stridula ecc., intensità di emissione)
- c. sui tempi degli effetti (inizi e fine degli effetti, qualità timbriche, ritmo, intensità)

Una partitura del genere avrebbe uno schema di questo tipo: [Fig. 6]

Risulta evidente dal grafico come la colonna sonora, se affidata al musicista, potrebbe essere curata in ogni suo particolare. Nell'esempio riportato (assolutamente immaginario) si ha, ad es., una prevalenza del binomio dialogo ed effetti. In tal caso il compositore potrà scegliere fra l'eliminazione di ogni commento musicale, e l'inserimento di un elemento musicale che sottolinei il carattere generale e del brano o segua invece i due attori nella loro recitazione o ancora che serva da sostegno alla colonna effetti. Nel primo caso (assenza di musica) si dovrà particolarmente cercare la colonna effetti sapendo in anticipo che ad essa spetterà la funzione



**Fig. 6** Excerpt from E. Macchi's, [*Scrivere la partitura per un film*], cit., Istituto per la Musica, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venezia, Fondo Egisto Macchi.

di colonna sonora di base, per cui dovrà affiancarsi al dialogo. Nell'altro caso (presenza di musica) il compositore avrà l'avvertenza di comporre un brano che si unisca agli altri elementi senza disturbarli, ne accresca l'efficacia e non venga da essi danneggiato. Nel caso specifico (una macchina da cucire in azione, una voce di donna dolce in pianissimo, durata 4'') un pedale di organo vibrato piano, potrebbe ben amalgamarsi con la scena tutta: il crepitare veloce dell'ago si staglierebbe efficacemente sulla nota grave tenuta, la voce femminile ben si inserirebbe per la sua lentezza sul ritmo veloce dell'ago, per il suo tono acuto sul tono grave dell'organo e la sua intensità (pianissimo) non verrebbe disturbata dagli altri elementi (piano la macchina, pianissimo l'organo).

Ho detto e ripetuto *usque ad nauseam* che il film è opera di collaborazione, frutto del lavoro di una équipe, i cui membri sono indipendenti nel loro operare, ma tendono tutti ad uno scopo sotto la guida coordinatrice del regista. Che a questi spetti la responsabilità totale del risultato (e pertanto il diritto di intervento nei riguardi di tutti i suoi collaboratori) è principio accettato universalmente, senza eccezioni. Non saremo noi a discostarci da questa posizione che, in generale, riconosciamo giusta, anche se, a questo proposito, sarebbe interessante instaurare un discorso che meglio precisasse *diritti* e *doveri* del regista e dei collaboratori, con un ridimensionamento delle responsabilità, dei meriti, dei demeriti, degli apporti ecc. Ciò che invece ci preme esaminare è la condizione difficile in cui il musicista è costretto a lavorare all'interno di quella équipe, nell'ingranaggio di una collaborazione tanto auspicata, e così poco messa in pratica. La mia personale esperienza, le confidenze dei colleghi, le risultanze dei sondaggi nell'ambiente che ognuno di noi ha occasione di effettuare per ragioni di lavoro, dicono che questa condizione difficile non è propria del solo musicista ma che si estende a tutti gli altri componenti dell'équipe cinematografica. Il fattore tempo, insieme a quello economico, è all'origine della precaria situazione in cui sono costretti a muoversi gli specialisti dei vari reparti, ciascuno per suo conto assillato dal binomio «a basso costo» e più «presto» che «a basso costo». Ma non sono da considerare solo i danni apportati all'opera di ciascuno, quanto, e mi sembra che sia da sottolineare, particolarmente i danni arrecati alla collaborazione indispensabile per

definizione alla riuscita del film. Non mi pare che questo punto venga tenuto sufficientemente presente durante la lavorazione del film: l'individualismo tende a prendere il sopravvento e non penso che ciò si verifichi unicamente per le difficoltà cui si accennava prima. Esiste in ciascuno dei collaboratori una istintiva tendenza al predominio, alla perfezione del proprio prodotto, senza tenere in conto che e come questa propria supposta perfezione giovi alle altrui perfezioni e quanto due prodotti perfetti riescano ad amalgamarsi, potenziandosi, anziché invece a urtarsi reciprocamente, danneggiandosi e togliendo efficacia al risultato totale. Il principio della collaborazione deve essere ancora pienamente appreso e non è affatto così 'pacifico' come si potrebbe pensare e come dovrebbe essere. La collaborazione è conquista, è opera di umiltà e di intelligenza, non una gara di virtuosismo o lotta di predominio. Troppo spesso invece è dato di dover lavorare senza conoscere l'opera degli altri, senza che gli altri conoscano l'opera tua, costretti a dare il massimo come se il film fosse formato solo di effetti, o di musica o di dialogo. L'incontro (tanto, troppo spesso, lo scontro) avviene in sede di missaggio ed è una rivelazione quasi sempre spiacevole per tutti. Il risultato della 'collaborazione' lungi dall'essere stato valutato a priori nei suoi particolari, è affidato quasi completamente al caso, ad un alea [*sic*] le cui possibilità di controllo sono di frequente ridotte al minimo. Non vale l'ovvia constatazione che, nonostante tutto, i films continuano a uscire, e che fra questi è dato incontrare opere di notevole valore artistico: nella maggior parte di questi casi (le solite *eccezioni* sono da riportare alle *eccezionali* doti dei registi) una analisi un po' meno superficiale scoprirebbe la mancanza di una preparazione condotta contemporaneamente e omogeneamente su più binari. Non sarà possibile ottenere una colonna sonora decente finché i suoi elementi componenti non verranno affidati a un unico responsabile che ne curi 'a priori' i livelli. Una volta incisi e montati i dialoghi, si dovrebbe procedere da parte del tecnico a ciò preposto alla registrazione e montaggio degli effetti tenendo presente la colonna dialoghi. Il musicista, intervenendo per ultimo, dovrebbe poter lavorare tenendo presenti fotografico, colonna dialoghi e colonna effetti, stabilendo, esattamente d'accordo col regista, il tipo di colonna sonora ritenuto più idoneo per i singoli brani del film. Mi sembra veramente importante che i concetti di colonna dialoghi, colonna effetti e colonna musica vengano una buona volta fusi nell'unico concetto di colonna sonora. Troppo spesso al musicista capita di scrivere brani estremamente difficoltosi, elaboratissimi da un punto di vista formale, pensati come avulsi da qualsiasi altro elemento non musicale e strutturati quindi in modo da non tollerare intromissioni di sorta, e di dover assistere poi, in sede di missaggio, all'intervento di speaker assolutamente non previsto e che avrebbe richiesto un commento musicale assolutamente diverso, con grave pregiudizio non tanto e non solo per il brano musicale in questione ma per l'economia del film stesso. Affidare al compositore la responsabilità della colonna sonora sarebbe un atto di saggezza per i benefici che ne deriverebbero all'opera cinematografica e al tempo stesso un atto di fiducia verso il musicista ancora oggi frequentemente sacrificato su altari eretti volta per volta al dio del cinema per placarlo dei gravi errori commessi da altri che non il musicista.

B.

Egisto Macchi, *Sequenza B*, undated manuscript, Joseph Losey Collection, British Film Institute, London, JWL/1/19/12

Sequenza B. Le prime tre inquadrature serviranno come introduzione al tema di Trotzky che si svolgerà durante la dettatura al magnetofono dell'articolo contro la politica di Stalin nei

confronti dell'arte. L'orchestrazione del tema non dovrà essere troppo carica, ma neanche troppo debole. Credo che la soluzione migliore sarebbe quella di adottare un temino tipo internazionale socialista (Trotzky fondò l'armata rossa nel 1918) ma non preso eccessivamente sul serio. Basterà forse usare un coro a bocca chiusa con un piccolo colore popolare all'unisono (fisarmonica o balalaika). In effetti le tirate di Trotzky contro Stalin degli anni precedenti (esilio 1929 e 1932) mi sembrano più che altro un fatto personale. Ciononostante l'atmosfera resta estremamente dignitosa e sempre molto piano. A 13" (interno della casa) chiuderei un poco l'orchestrazione (via fisa e archi, solo coro a bocca chiusa + c.b. pizzicati) e introdurrei il personaggio di Delon (20"). Delon interpreta il sicario la cui identità è tuttora sconosciuta. La sua recitazione è sempre molto tesa, quasi impazzita per ciò che dovrà fare, appare evidentemente vittima di un conflitto tra ideologia e missione, per cui credo che la soluzione sarebbe quella di adattare in primo piano un battito cardiaco che accelererà di ritmo (conflitto) (34" ½). Sotto questo effetto si snoderà un canone disarticolato e nevrotico di tastiere, con qualche puntata di *Synket?* Dopo 34" ½ ridurrei l'intensità per preparare il cambio di inquadratura su Trotzky che riascolta il registratore. Anche qui userei il coro a bocca chiusa (siamo all'interno) dato che la frase si rivolge contro Stalin e l'espressione del viso di Trotzky appare molto compiaciuta. Quando spegne il registratore dovrei aver terminato la prima frase del coro e passerei l'orchestrazione a balalaika + fisarmonica + archi per introdurre il flash di Delon + Schneider. Questo flash, secondo me, è una fantasia di Trotzky. Egli infatti da questo momento acquista un aspetto estremamente umano, un uomo solo, esiliato, prigioniero dei suoi stessi sostenitori (vive in una casa fortificata). A 1'34" ½, quando lo rivediamo di spalle alla finestra, continuerei la frase del flash ma lascerei solo una fisarmonica per chiudere con un pizzicato di contrabbassi sulla chiusura della finestra. 1'44". Il simbolismo della finestra credo che stia ad indicare il desiderio di Trotsky di una vita serena, un desiderio di calore umano, di sentimenti sani, spontanei, senza l'incubo di dover pesare sempre ogni parola, direi, insomma, il desiderio di godersi la pensione (Trotsky ha in questo momento 61 anni). Ma subito egli chiude la finestra, anche se a malincuore, a queste riflessioni. Ormai è troppo tardi, le scelte sono state fatte da tempo e questi lussi non sono più concessi. Subito dopo 1'47" vediamo Delon alla macchina da scrivere che sta rimuginando alibi per eventuali domande della Schneider. Il protagonista da questo momento è lui sempre teso e spaventato, preda dei propri problemi ideologici e sentimentali. Riprenderei con il battito e le dissonanze in crescendo fino a fine zoom 2'02" per lasciare un tappeto drammatico ed il battito in accelerazione per diminuire l'intensità gradualmente sull'inquadratura della finestra di Trotzky vuota, dato che questa immagine è evidentemente una proiezione del pensiero di Delon.