

The *Sillabazione Scivolata* by means of Salvatore Sciarrino's *Superflumina*

b. Interfaces between music theory, analysis, and composition

The title of this opera by Salvatore Sciarrino, which premiered at the Nationaltheater Mannheim in 2011, refers to a biblical text, namely the beginning of the 137th Psalm - "super flumina Babylonis". The heart and centre of this symmetrically structured, one-act opera are three canzoni. This is also where the lowest point of the action takes place, described by the protagonist, La Donna (a homeless woman) as follows: "I cannot sink any lower. You understand: the bottom is ideal for me". At the end of the second canzone, the protagonist even leaves her stage role and interacts directly with the audience, asking them: "Do you want more? This is precisely one of the moments when Sciarrino Sciarrino brings the performative aspect to the forefront of the opera.

The unique vocal style of Salvatore Sciarrino, which he himself called *sillabazione scivolata*, is supposed to contribute to the expression of the text that appears in these canzoni. The vocal part of La Donna as well as the other characters' brief parts show characteristics of this style. It is composed of modules which Sciarrino uses to construct the melody of the vocal part. These are short building blocks that have a typical two-part basic structure full of tension (cf. Kühnel 2008). This consists of a long tone with a crescendo that transitions seamlessly into a fast figuration.

The short modules of Sciarrino's vocal style are particularly well suited to creating musical dialogues between the characters. All the more exciting is the fact that the *sillabazione scivolata* is also used to form the melody of the instruments. As a result, imitations and melody takeovers occur between the singing voice and the instruments. For example, in the first canzone, the solo voice of La Donna is often taken over by the solo violin, which in this way increasingly approximates the human voice:

La Donna

man - - - glo - vun - que

mangi man- gi

Vni I
I. solo

arco IV alto sul tasto

50

La Donna

man - - - - - gi - cibo se -

Vni I
I. solo

f pp mf pp pp pp f

Salvatore Sciarrino (2011), *Superflumina*, Canzone No. 1, p. 158, mm. 47-52, © RaiCom.

In my paper, I examine Salvatore Sciarrino's treatment of the voice on the basis of his three canzoni from *Superflumina*. In addition, I devote myself to Sciarino's implementation of the so-called *sillabazione scivolata* in the instrumental parts. For this purpose, I analyse the score and refer to literature that already described Sciarrino's vocal style. Through my research, I also observe, on the one hand, the compositional relationship between voice and instruments and, on the other hand, shed light on the semantic meaning of Sciarrino's unique vocal style and its application to the instrumental parts, which Antares Boyle 2021, for example, already did with regard to other works by Sciarrino. To compare the semantic component present in this opera, I also draw on, for example, the article by Christian Utz (2009) mentioned in the bibliography.

KEYWORDS:

Treatment of the voice. Strategies for composing an opera. Sillabazione Scivolata. Salvatore Sciarrino. Compositional relationship between the voice and the orchestra.