«Nature and Mystery.» The Influence of Bartók's Night Music in Italy[1]

Nicolò Palazzetti

A real Bartókian Wave emerged in post-war Italian culture. Indeed, since the early 1940s many composers, musicologists and choreographers harked back to Bartók's figure and poetics. Nevertheless, the legacy of the Hungarian composer was soon forgotten in Italy and has only begun to be rediscovered by scholarly research in recent years [Büky-Sità 2013; Palazzetti 2015a, 2015b; Sità 2008]. Is this oblivion the result of a long-lasting interpretation of the twentieth century as dominated by a cohesive "modernist" paradigm [Buch 2011; Earle 2013]? And is the dominance of this paradigm in Western music historiography reinforced by music analysis practices whereby pitch and duration are conceived as the "structural" parameters [Buch-Donin-Feneyrou 2013; Schuijer 2008]? Whatever the reason, the investigation of Bartók's reception in Italy should not be separated from a full evaluation of the so-called "non-structural" parameters – namely timbre. Thus, to overcome the amnesia concerning this reception means, at the same time, to reconsider the preconceived hierarchies informing our analytical approaches.

In order to support these ideas, in this article I will focus on Bartók's Night music and its reception in Italy. This musical style presents an excellent analytical challenge since it places the alleged "secondary" parameters at the core of the musical structure – e.g. articulation markings, textures, instrumental techniques and non-syntactic pitch relations [Meyer 1989, 340-341; Bayley 2000]. Moreover, the Night music had a strong influence on Italian composers from the early decades of the twentieth century onwards. As a result, the study of its reception allows us to broaden our awareness of Bartók's influence in Italy, redefining our preconceptions of Italian modernism in a more contextualised, pluralistic, way.

The article consists of two parts. In the first part, I will reconstruct the origin and the scholarly reception of Bartók's Night music, and describe his most idiosyncratic qualities. Secondly, by drawing on the results of my previous analysis, I will examine some Italian compositions by Casella, Dallapiccola, Turchi and Gervasoni that are clearly influenced by Bartók's Night music.

1. Bartók's Night music

1.1 «Does Night music exist as a specific genre?»

The stylistic and aesthetic prototype of the Night music is the fourth piece, *Az éjszaka zéneje* ("The Night's Music"), from the set of five piano solo works entitled *Szabadban* ("Out of Doors", Sz. 81, BB 89), composed by Bartók in 1926. At its first public performance on 8 December 1926, this piece was described simply as a «signal contribution to a specifically Hungarian tradition of poetic representations of the night» [Schneider 2006, 84]. Nonetheless, less than three years later (in March 1929), Aladár Tóth, one of the most important and influential Hungarian music critics of his time, transformed a specimen of the Hungarian pastoral tradition into an entirely new style of modernist expression, somewhat peculiar to Bartók's oeuvre. Indeed, in his review of the third movement (Adagio) of the Fourth String Quartet (1928), Tóth asserts that «a completely unique enchantment pervades this sublime Adagio, an enchantment related

exclusively to that found in other works of Bartók's, above all in the piece for piano entitled *Night Music*» [Tóth 1929] [2]. A new musical language was born: from that moment onwards, all the following slow movements in Bartók's chamber and orchestral output were classified as Night music works (e.g. the famous Adagio of the *Music for String, Percussion and Celesta*), despite the fact that none of these have a title that makes explicit reference to "Night" or "nocturnal" themes. At the same time, the beginnings of the Night music were retraced in some of Bartók's works composed before *The Night's Music* (i.e. the dark atmospheres of the *Bluebeard's Castle*). Eventually, the widespread notoriety of the Night music, and the abuse of the term in Bartókiana, led some scholars to challenge its historical and aesthetical validity.[3] In 2003, Jürgen Hunkemöller posed a somewhat polemical question: «Does Night music in the works of Béla Bartók exist as a specific genre? Asserted repeatedly in musicological and theoretical writings, there have, however, been no attempts to date to prove this thesis according to the criterion of tradition, compositional means, or biographical facts» [Hunkemöller 2003, 40]. His point here is vastly exaggerated, somewhat misrepresenting the real picture. In fact, in the last decades there have been some articles that have engaged with this cliché and searched for an alternative analytical description of Bartók's Night music. It is true, however, that the "hidden" hermeneutical tradition of the Night music is highly heterogeneous and hard to define precisely: scholars do not quote one another and adopt different approaches ranging from biographical research [Szabolcsi 1961] and narratological analysis [Harley 1995], to historical reconstructions [Schneider 2006]. Moreover, these analytical investigations frequently focus on one aspect or feature of Night music to the detriment of others. By drawing on the most significant results of scholarship on Bartók, I aim to unravel some of this confusion and present an overall analytical description of his Night music.

1.2 Explaining Night music

I would like to start my investigation by focusing on a contribution by Gary Danchenka [1987]. Even though it is not quoted by other scholars and its title appears to be strongly connected to a pitch-centred analysis, Danchenka's article is probably the most complete compendium on Night music. Initially, Danchenka outlines four major theories that have been developed to account for Bartók's Night music [Danchenka 1987, 16-21]. He then circumscribes a corpus of recognized nocturnal examples from Bartók's catalogue and identifies the recurring qualities characterising this style [Danchenka 1987, 21-27].[4] In order to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of Danchenka's contribution, I will follow its structure starting from his explanations of the Night music.

The first theory is recovered from József Ujfalussy's 1971 monograph, in which Night music is conceived as a result of the composer's keen sense of hearing: «beyond the world of everyday realities [...], Bartók's acute hearing enabled him to create a special world of his own, the world of his "night music"» [Ujfalussy 1971, 359]. I agree with Danchenka when he judges this explanation to be «shadowy at best» [Danchenka 1987, 18]. Therefore, let us now proceed with the second theory. This latter theory affirms that Night music is related to Bartók's love for nature [Szabolcsi 1961]. Although Danchenka criticizes this hypothesis, Schneider [2006] has recently demonstrated – by harking back to Tóth [1929] and Lendvai [1947] – that the descriptions of natural landscapes at night (such as the *Putzsa*, i.e. the Pannonian Steppe in Hungary) have a long-lasting and established tradition in Hungarian poetry (Sandór Petőfi, Mihály Vörösmarty) and music (Ferenc Erkel, Mihály Mosonyi, Ernő Dohnányi, Leó Weiner). Moreover, it has been argued that the concept of Nature, crucial to understanding Bartók's poetics, already encompasses his interest in folk music. Indeed, from the composer's point of view, «peasant music [...] is just as much a natural phenomenon as, for instance, the various manifestations of Nature in fauna and flora» [Bartók 1976, 321]. From this perspective, Night music should be conceived as a mere subset of Bartók's Nature music [Harley 1995].

One further hypothesis maintains that the Night music is derived from Debussy's impressionism [Moreaux 1949], though this seems to be excessively narrow-minded. On the contrary, the last theory reported by Danchenka is simple and incisive: Night music is to be perceived as a result of Bartók's eagerness to experiment with new timbres and fresh sonorities. In support of this thesis, Danchenka quotes from Damiana Bratuz:

> Bartók's intuition of nature as a mystery is manifested by his continuous need for creation of sound, by his passionate explorations at the threshold of noise. Bartók satisfies this need of invention of sound by means of the instruments, which are the most classical, and, it would seem, the least congenial [like] strings and piano [Bratuz 1981, quoted in Danchenka 1987, 20].

My investigations have revealed that this quotation is not by Bratuz! In fact, Bratuz's article is overtly based on the ideas of the Italian musicologist Massimo Mila. To be more specific, in the previous passage quoted by Danchenka (which does not make any reference to Mila), Bratuz has actually quoted and translated into English an excerpt of a 1951 essay by Mila [1951, 100].[5] In a nutshell, the American music theorist Danchenka recovers and supports an explanation that directly derives from the Italian Bartókian Wave of the 1950s. Indeed, in *Nature and Mystery in the Art of Béla Bartók*, Mila describes the Night music as part of a continuous need for the creation of sound, placing the Night music at the core of Bartók's poetics. Mila notes that the essence of the human condition depends upon the relationship to the mystery of Nature, with the Night music being Bartók's means of expressing this mystery [Mila 1951].

However, to take such a univocal stance is not particularly fruitful. Even though the second and fourth explanations are more consistent with Bartók's poetics, none of them provide a compelling proof to account for the origins of Night music. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this article, the absolute centrality accorded by Mila to the Night music seems to be the most useful approach to understand the significant influence that Bartók exerted upon Italian culture.

1.3 Analysing Night music

After presenting summaries of the major theories provided to account for Night music, Danchenka offers «a chronologic[al] listing of Bartók's Night music representatives» including also the precursors of the 1926 prototype piece (Tab. 1).

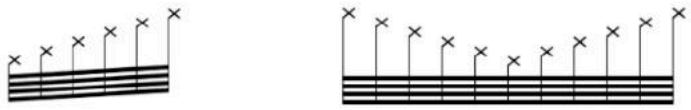
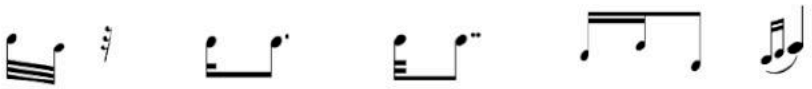
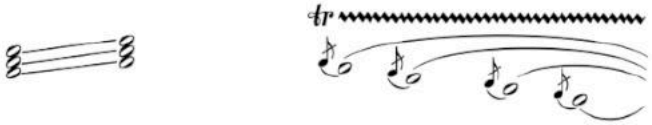
This listing is analogous to those provided by other scholars [Harley 1995, 346; Schneider 2006, 84-85].[6] Nonetheless, Danchenka's catalogue is extremely accurate since it provides specific references to bars within a piece, or specific movements, that correspond to Night music. Moreover, it allows the modern reader to grasp some general characteristics of Bartók's Night music sections.

Piece - Location	Medium	Dynamic Range	Tempo	Formal position	Chorale-affiliation
1. Piece No. 12 from *Fourteen Bagatelles* Op. 6 (1908)	Piano	*ppp-p*	Largo - Adagio = 58 to 50	Complete piece	/
2. Piece No. 3 from *Eight Improvisations on Hungarian Paesant Songs* Op. 20 (1920)	Piano	*pp-mp*	Lento = 52-96	Complete piece	/
3. Piece No. 4, *Az éjszaka zéneje*, from *Out of Doors* (1926)	Piano	*pp*	Lento = 69-92	Complete piece	/
4. Piece No. 144, *Minor Seconds, Major Sevenths*, from Vol. VI of *Mikrokosmos* (1926-1937)	Piano	*p*	Adagio = 56	Complete piece	/
5. String Quartet No. 3: Reh. No. 4 to *Tempo I* (1927)	Chamber - Orchestral	*pp-mp*	Andante = 70	Section of a multi-movement work	/
6. String Quartet No. 4: Mvt. III, bars 34-54, 64-71 (1928)	Chamber - Orchestral	*pp-mf*	Lento = 60	Sections of a multi-movement work	/
7. Piano Concerto No. 2: Mvt. II, bars 23-29, 39-53, 62-63, 85-120, 209-217 (1930-31)	Chamber - Orchestral	*p-pp*	Adagio = 72-80 and Presto = 184	Sections of a multi-movement work	bars 1-22, 30-38, 54-61, 209-217, 240-245
8. String Quartet No. 5: Mvt. II, bars 1-9, 26-35, 50-56; Mvt.IV bb. 1-22, 90-101 (1934)	Chamber - Orchestral	*p / mp*	Adagio = 38-40; Andante = 70	Sections of a multi-movement work	bars 10-23 (Mvt. II); bars 82-92 (Mvt. IV)
9. *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*: Mvt. III, bars 1-13, 20-30, 75-82 (1936)	Chamber - Orchestral	*pp-mf*	Adagio = 66	Sections of a multi-movement work	/
10. *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*: Mvt. IV, bars 28-47 (1937)	Chamber - Orchestral	*ppp-f*	Andante = 76	Section of a multi-movement work	/
11. Concerto for Orchestra: Mvt. III, *Elegia*, bars 10-18, 106-111, 118-128 (1943)	Chamber - Orchestral	*pp*	Andante = 64-78	Sections of a multi-movement work	bars 112-125
12. Piano Concerto No. 3: Mvt. II, bars 58-88 (1945)	Chamber - Orchestral	*pp-f*	Adagio = 69-76	Section of a multi-movement work	bars 1-57, 89-close
13. Viola Concerto: Mvt. II, bars 30-39 (1945)	Chamber - Orchestral	*pp-f*	Adagio = 69-76	Section of a multi-movement work	bars 1-29, 40-53

Tab. 1 Chronological listing of pieces representative of Bartók's Night music [Danchenka 1987, 22]

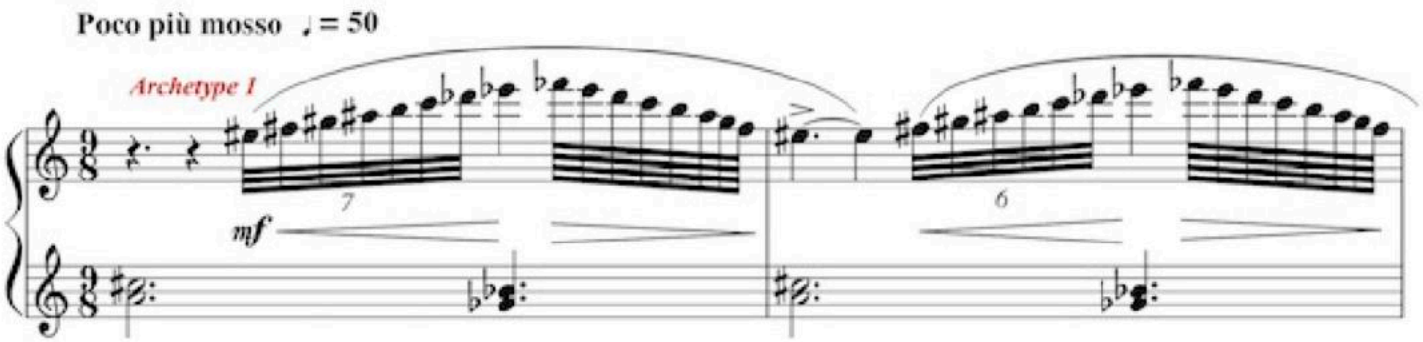
Firstly, as Mila highlights, we can observe that the main media employed for Night music are «the most classical instruments and, it would seem, the least congenial» [Mila 1951, 100], i.e. strings and piano. Secondly, Night music is characterised by a lower dynamic range, centred on pianissimo or piano. Thirdly, Night music passages «are couched in slow tempos where the pacing may range from leisurely to lethargic» [Danchenka 1987, 24]. The final quality «also depicted in the outline/chronology are those instances in which a chorale or sustained chorale-like theme joins forces with, or is structurally affixed to, a Night section» [*ibid.*]. Although the author does not explain this choice, it is important to note that in Bartók's poetics the chorale theme has a specific meaning: it represents the alienation of humans, which is opposed to the natural «oneness» [Harley 1995] or to the affirmative force of the folk community [Grabócz 2009; Somfai 1984] that are expressed through the Night music sections.

Later in his article, Danchenka offers an outline of the stylistic features that invoke the Night environments (Tab. 2). He defines them as five archetypes, i.e. some «unique linguistic cells or sound components distinguished by identifiable properties» [Danchenka 1987, 26]. Even though these properties are not limited to pitch and duration, the graphical and textual description of the archetypes provided by Danchenka allows the modern scholar to better understand their gestural qualities and to reach an adequate level of formalisation.[7]

Intermediate (Melodic) Linear Formation Uninterrupted sequence of short-valued equidurational pulses – asc. and desc. scale-like segments. (Arpeggio scale-lines, notated glissandos, 'sliding' gestures.)	
Small (Motivic) Linear Formation Two-note, three-note segments; intervallic fragment, cellular motif; 'Scotch Snap' figure. Isolated tones.	
Intermediate (Melodic) Linear Formation Abruptly reiterated non-differentiated durational values.	
Ornament I Piano trills, string trills, tremolos, string (and harp) glissandos, timpani glissandos, timpani rolls.	
Ornament II Grace-note turns with cluster chords; solitary clusters.	

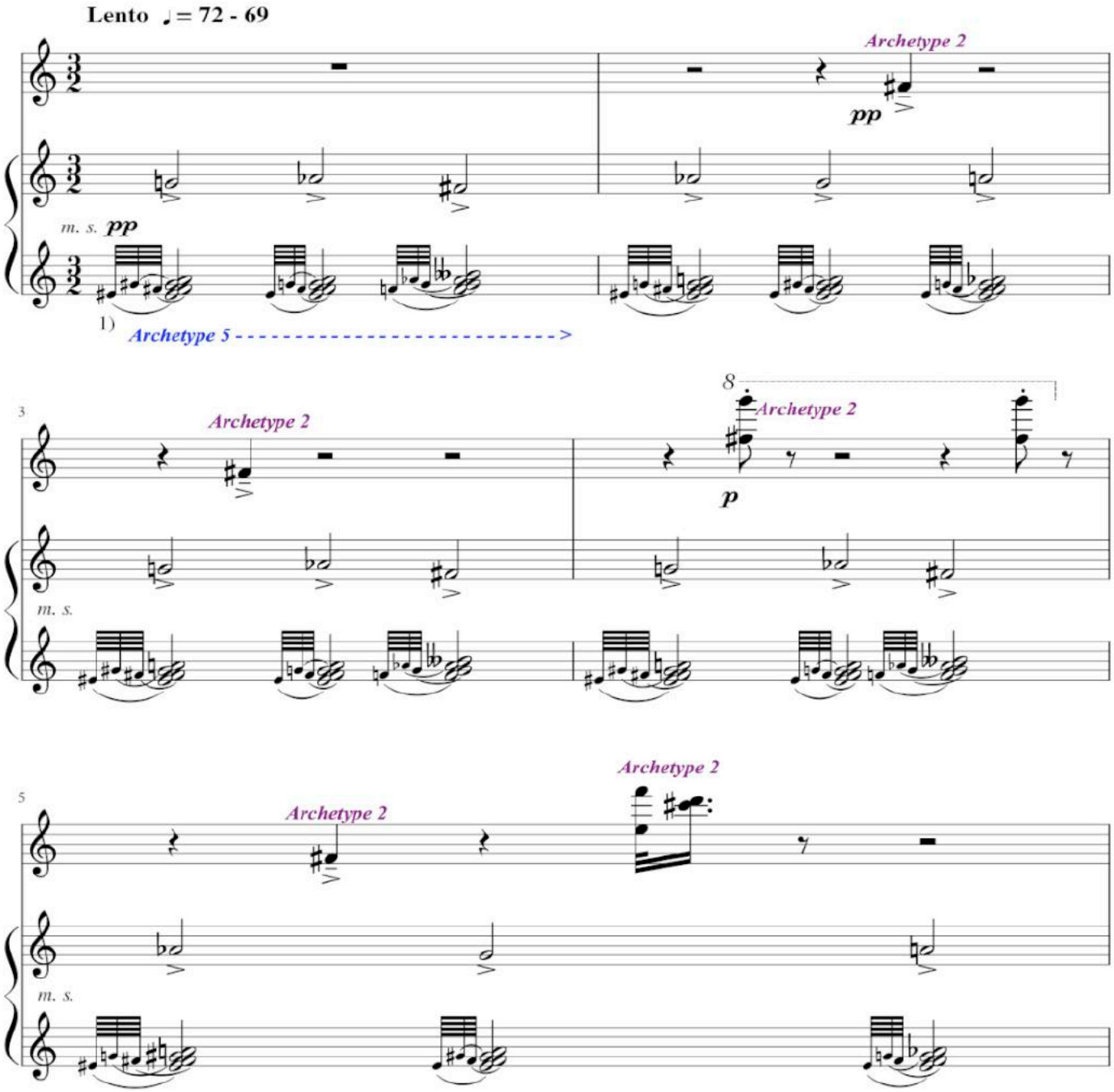
Tab. 2 Night music archetypes with distinguishing features [Danchenka 1987, 23]

The first archetype consists of an uninterrupted sequence of pulses of short equal values, organised as ascending or descending scale-like segments. It also includes notated glissandos and gestures characterised generally as "sliding" (Ex. 1).



Ex. 1 B. Bartók, Piece No. 12 from *Fourteen Bagatelles* Op. 6 BB 50 (1908), bars 9-10

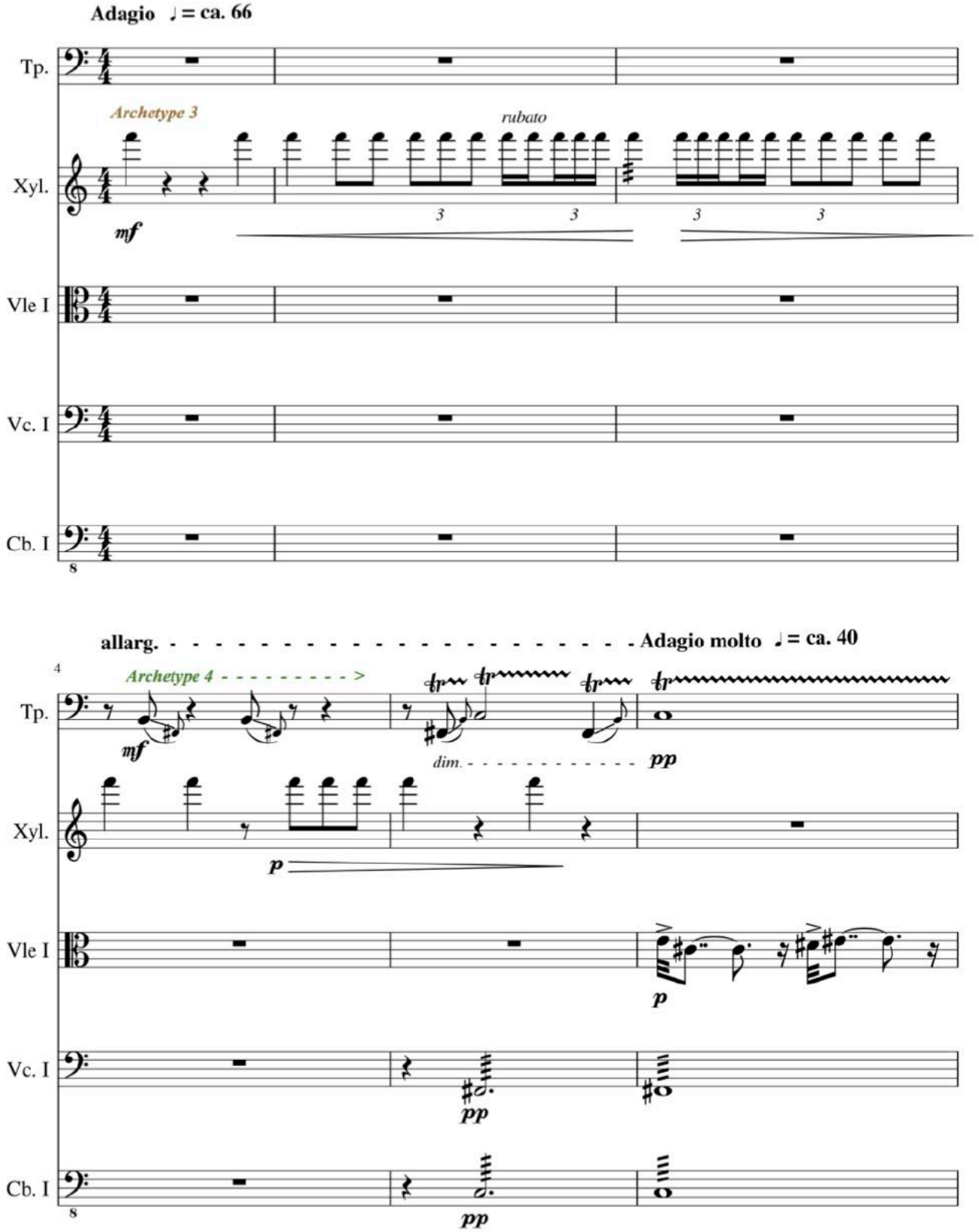
The second archetype concerns those motivic formations that appear abruptly in Night music passages: segments of two, three or four notes; cellular motifs; "Scotch snap" figures (related to Bartók's research in folk rhythms), and isolated tones (Ex. 2).



1) Begin each of these groups on the strong beat

Ex. 2 B. Bartók, Piece No. 4, *The Night's Music*, from *Out of Doors* BB 89 (1926), bars 1-5

The third archetype is characterised by a single reiterated pitch that can occur either as a regular ostinato or in *accelerando/decelerando*, such as in the beginning of the third movement of *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* BB 114 (Ex. 3).



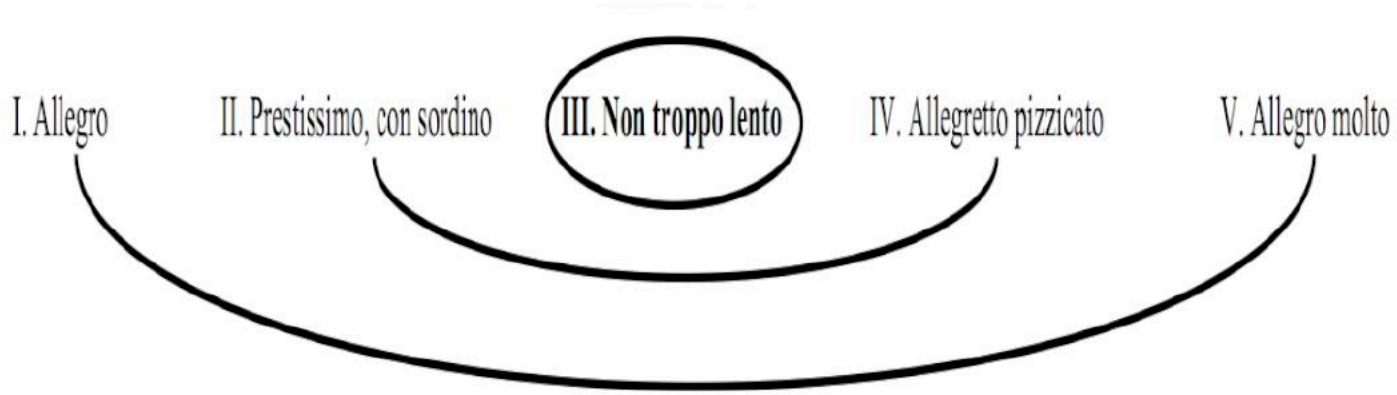
Ex. 3 B. Bartók, *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* BB 114 (1936): Mvt. III, bars 1-6

The two last archetypes are eminently gestural and improvisatory: the fourth one consists of trills, tremolos, glissandos, rolls (see again Ex. 3); the last one includes grace-note turns with cluster chords and solitary clusters (see again Ex. 2).

These archetypes – which do not occur all together in the same work – have usually been conceived as stylised versions of the natural sounds at night: birds, frogs, owls, crickets [Mâche 1992, 199; Somfai 1984; Zieliński 1969, 307-308]. However, Bartók does not use them to merely "imitate" the nocturnal nature. For example, in the fourth movement of *Out of Doors* (Ex. 2) the natural sounds, i.e. the five archetypes, are «placed in a structure that is highly consciously designed» [Somfai 1984, 6] through other essential formal tools. Although Danchenka does not examine these formal tools, they are indispensable for a global understanding of Night music.

First of all, the archetypes outlined above are deployed within a "multi-layered texture": at least two independent instrumental layers are superposed, with each layer having its particular technique (for example, *legato* or *marcato*), specific density (that is, the quantity of musical events), rhythmic profile and its own phrase structure. Concurrently, in Night music we observe a "pitch stasis", a technique characterised by Harley as occurring when «individual motifs [are] frozen in their registers» [Harley 1995, 333]. A further characteristic is a high degree of micro-motility within a context characterised by the absence of any harmonic movement. In order to describe this latter quality, Schneider evokes the concept of *Klangfläche* ("sheet of sound"), which Carl Dahlhaus uses to describe the prelude to act 1 of Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre* [Dahlhaus 1989, 307]. As in Wagner's depictions of the natural world, Bartók's Night music seems to be «outwardly static, but inwardly in constant motion» [Schneider 2006, 111].

Finally, many Night music movements have a symmetrical form and/or they are placed at the core of a symmetrical musical architecture, such as in the *Non troppo lento* of the Fourth String Quartet (Tab. 3). In other words, the aesthetical centrality of Night music movements proposed by Massimo Mila is echoed by their formal centrality within a symmetrical arch form.



Tab. 3 Arch form of Bartók's String Quartet No. 4 BB 95 (1928)

2. Italian Night music

By drawing on the results of the previous analysis, in this part of the article I study some Italian compositions that are clearly influenced by Bartók's Night music and that recover overtly its characteristics. In the following table (Tab. 4), I have chronologically listed these compositions (and their subsequent transcriptions), which range from 1910s to 2010s.

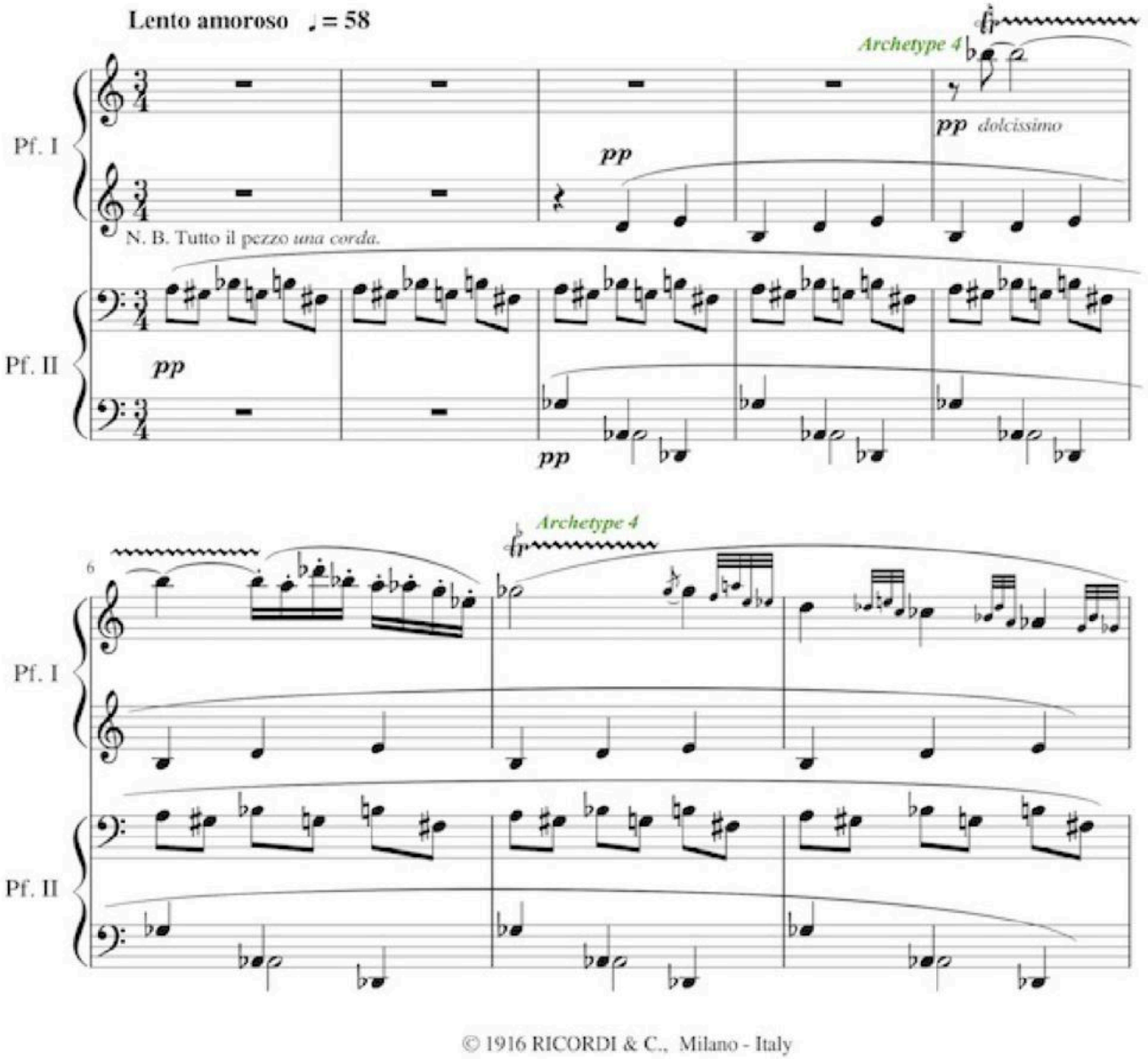
Piece	Year	Medium	Bars	Dynamics	Tempo	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	Static Motion	Pitch Stasis	M-l Texture	Chorale	Arch Form
Casella, Piece No. 4, *Notturnino*, from *Pupazzetti* Op. 27a	1915	Piano four-hands	1–8	pp *una corda*	Lento amoroso ♩=58	(✓)			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Casella, Piece No. 4, *Notturnino*, from *Pupazzetti* Op. 27c	1915-1918	Fl., Ob., Cl., Fg., Pf., Vl. I, Vl. II, Vla, Vc.	1–8	pp *una corda* (piano) *con sordino* (strings)	Lento amoroso ♩=58	(✓)			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Casella, Piece No. 4, *Notturnino*, from *Pupazzetti* Op. 27b	1915-1920	Orchestra	1–8	pp *una corda* (piano) *con sordino* (strings)	Lento amoroso ♩=58	(✓)			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Dallapiccola, *Musica per tre Pianoforti (Inni)*: Mvt. II	1935	3 Pianos	1–16	ppp – p	Un poco adagio, funebre (♩+♩) =54-56		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓
Maderna, First String Quartet: Mvt. II	ca. 1943	String Quartet	83–86	pp – p	Lento a fantasia ♩=48		(✓)		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Turchi, *Concerto breve "alla memoria di Béla Bartók"*: Mvt. I	1947	String Quartet	17–22	pp – p *con sordino* (Vl. I)	Molto lento ♪=56-58	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	(✓)	✓	✓
Turchi, *Concerto per archi "alla memoria di Béla Bartók"*: Mvt. I	1947-1948	String Orchestra	17–22	pp – p *con sordino* (Vl. I)	Molto lento ♪=56-58	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	(✓)	✓	✓
Gervasoni, *Clamour. Terzo quartetto per archi*	2014-2015	String Quartet	107-120	pp – p	Inerte (... in apparenza) ♩=40		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		(✓)

Tab. 4 Chronological listing of compositions representative of Italian Night music.

As Tab. 4 makes clear, the instrumental media employed are similar to Bartók's ones (i.e. piano and strings), and the dynamic range and tempo are reduced. The other columns indicate all the occurrences of the aforementioned characteristics of Night music: the five archetypes identified by Danchenka; the multi-layered texture, which is usually related to the pitch stasis described by Harley; the "static motion" discussed by Schneider. I have also specified if the considered Night section is related to a chorale and if it is inserted in or constructed through a symmetrical form.

2.1 Alfredo Casella

An early example of the Night music in Italy can be found in *Notturnino*, the fourth piece of Alfredo Casella's *Pupazzetti* Op. 27a (1915) for piano four-hands (Ex. 4).[8]



Ex. 4 A. Casella, Piece No. 4, *Notturnino*, from *Pupazzetti* Op. 27a (1915), bars 1-8

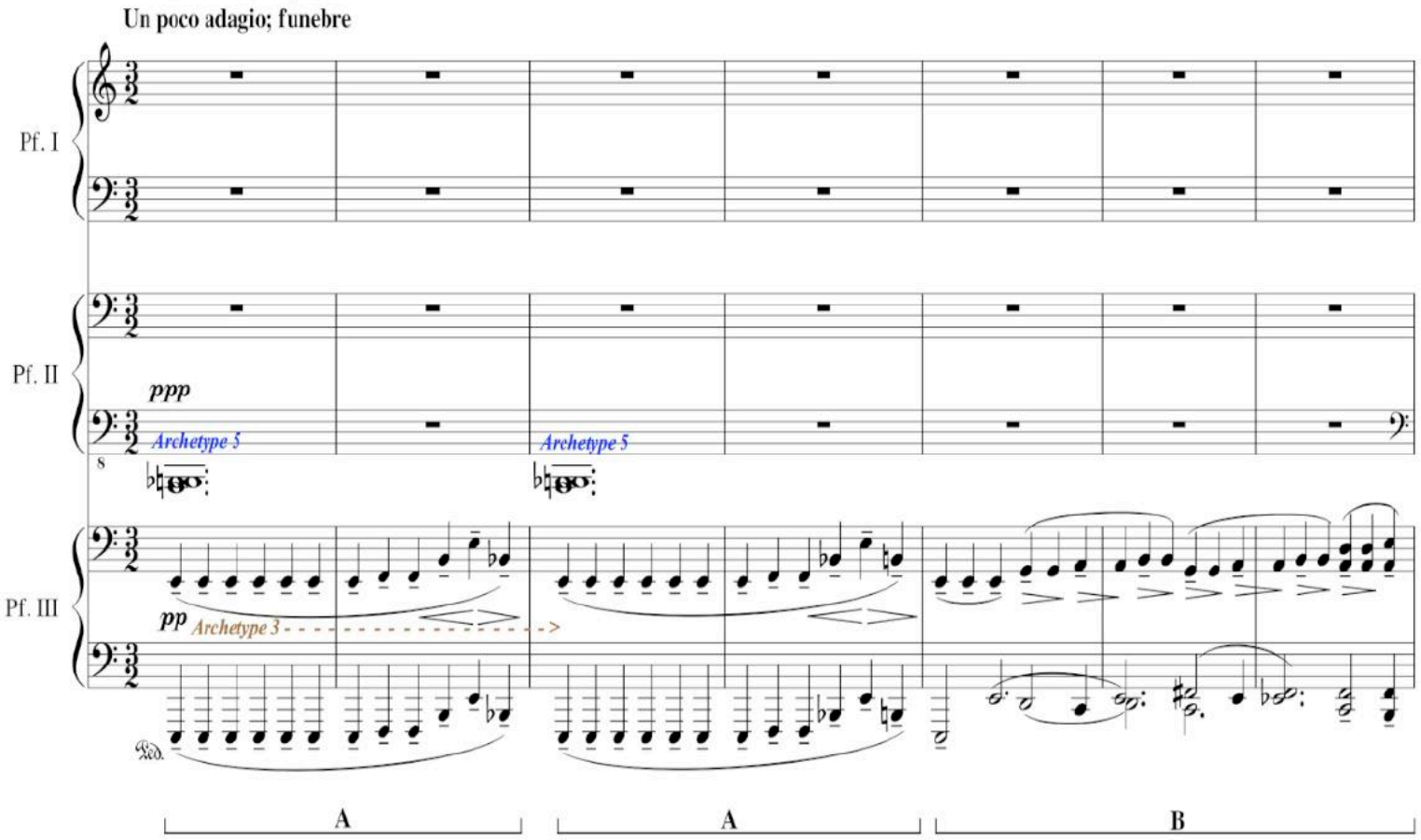
The beginning of this work (bars 1-5) abides by the rules of a perfect Night music. First of all, the tempo is slow (*Lento amoroso*, 58 quarter notes per minute) and the dynamic level is highly reduced (*pianissimo* and all the piece played *una corda*). Furthermore, we notice a multi-layered texture constituted by the superposition of three independent ostinato figures that are «frozen in their register»: a progressively and symmetrically expanded chromatic motif on the Pf. II (right hand); a three-note cell on the Pf. I (left hand); a quartal chord (3-9) played as an extended arpeggio on the Pf. II (left hand). The pitch stasis, the multi-layered texture and the ostinatos create a sense of immobility, which is only moderately disrupted by the sudden appearance of the trills (archetype 4) at bar 5 (Pf. I, right hand). It is important to note that the motivic figures expressed in these initial five bars recur several times throughout the piece, reinforcing this sense of stasis.

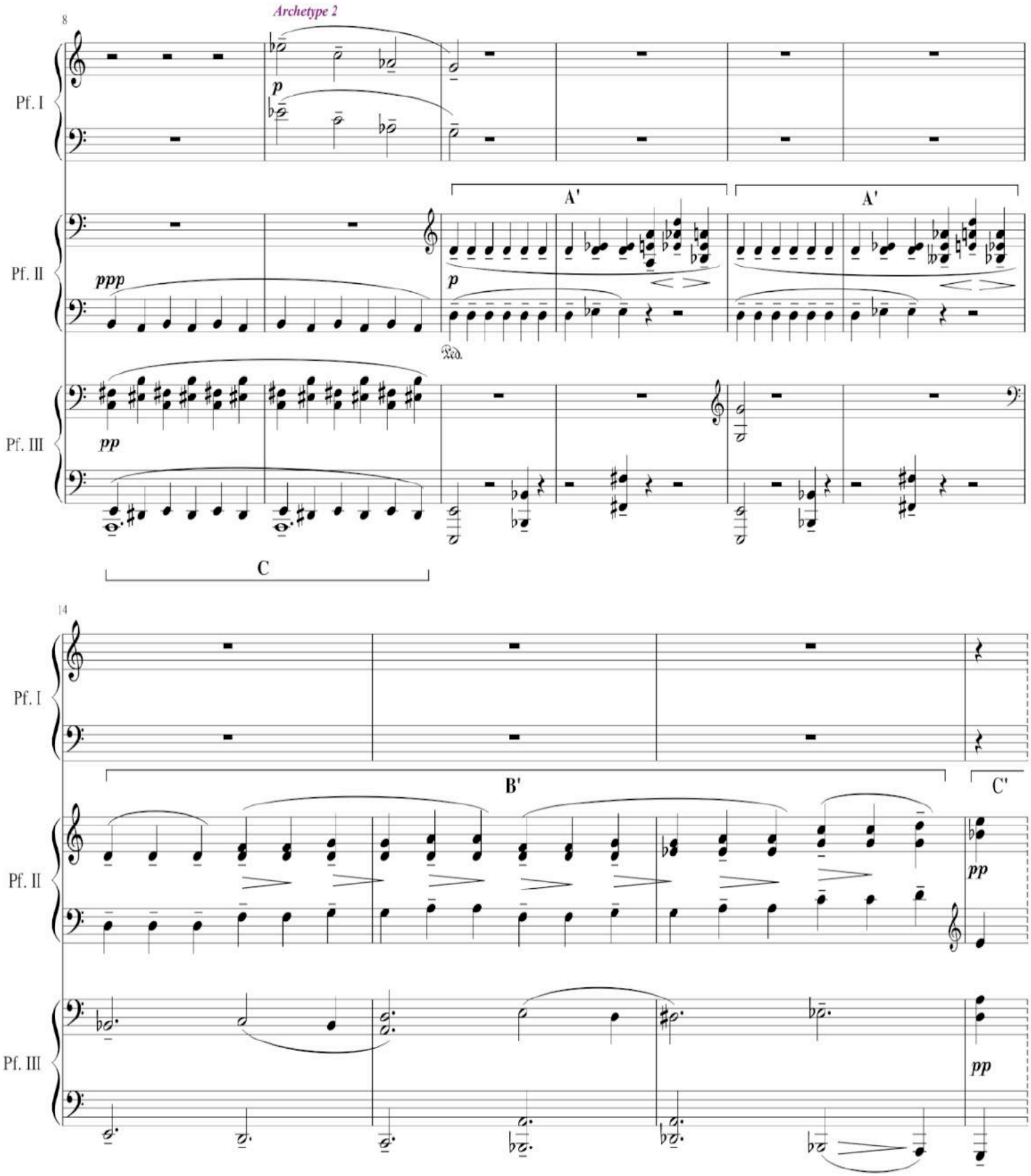
The title *Notturnino* is somewhat prophetical given that Casella's piece was written in 1915. Nonetheless, the exceptional coincidence with Bartók's Night music is not so anachronistic as it might seem at first glance. Many scholars, such as Danchenka [1987], Schneider [2006] and, as already discussed, Mila [1951, 1996], point out that the first signs of Night music are already clear in many Bartók's works composed long before 1926 (such as in the *Fourteen Bagatelles* Op. 6 BB 50). Furthermore, in the 1910s Casella was highly fascinated both by nocturnal atmospheres[9] and by Bartók's

music.[10] Indeed, when Casella was asked in 1918 by the Futurist painter Fortunato Depero to choose the music for the Balli Plastici – an experimental ballet in which machine-like puppets would replace human actors and dancers –, Casella transcribed for chamber orchestra many contemporary works, including his own *Notturnino* and Bartók's *Bear Dance* (from the *Ten Easy Pieces* for piano BB 51).[11]

2.2 Luigi Dallapiccola

In the years that immediately followed, Bartók made several piano tours in Italy with the help of the Coorporazione delle Nuove Musiche, led by Gian Francesco Malipiero and, importantly, Casella [Büky-Sità 2013; Palazzetti 2015a; Sità 2008].[12] Bartók's music was reviewed in newspapers and academic journals, gradually entering the repertoire of some Italian musicians and began to exert an influence on the compositional style of many Italian composers. As a further example of this growing interest in Bartók's music, we can look at the central movement of Luigi Dallapiccola's *Musica per tre pianoforti (Inni)* for three pianos (1935, Ex. 5).





Ex. 5 L. Dallapiccola, *Musica per tre pianoforti (Inni)* (1935): Mvt. II, bars 1-17

Even if Dallapiccola is considered to be the first musician who diffused the serial technique in Italy, evidence in this piece points towards a different musical direction from that of the composers of the so-called Second Viennese School [Fearn 2003, 22]: for instance, the percussive medium of multiple pianos and the arrangement of material in blocks is recovered from Stravinsky's *Les noces*. More profoundly, Bartók's Night music informs this funereal slow movement, expressed as a sombre *pianissimo*. The texture is multi-layered through Bartók's nocturnal archetypes: four-note segments (i.e. the archetype 2 played by the Pf. I at bars 9-10), low register clusters (archetype 5: bar 1 and 3 at the Pf. II) and, most of all, a repeated-note statement, a recurring *ribattuto* (archetype 3) that constitutes the central obsession of this *Un poco adagio*. Moreover, the musical discourse is «outwardly static, but inwardly in constant motion», since the set of blocks played by the Pf. III (bars 1-9) – that is A (bars 1-2) + A (bars 3-4) + B (bars 5-7) + C (bars 8-9) – is replayed in the same order and dynamics but in a different register by the Pf. II (bars 10-18) at the end of the first exposition, i.e. A' (bars 10-11) + A' (bars 12-13) + B' (bars 14-16) + C' (bars 17-18). These blocks (A, B and C) recur throughout the piece in different registers. Finally, as Raymond Fearn perceptively noted, the whole movement is conceived as an arch form:

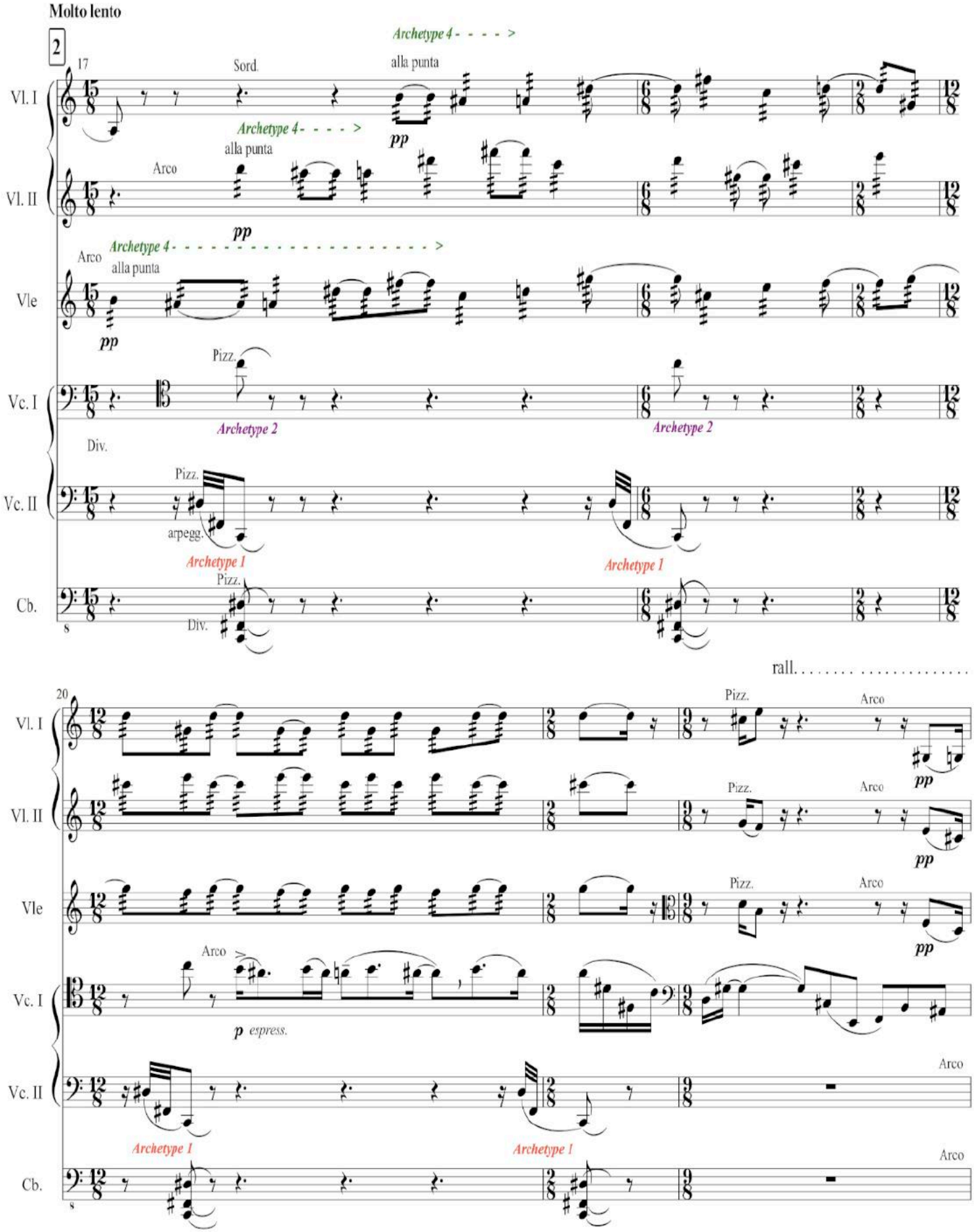
> In the slow central movement [of the *Inni*] Dallapiccola writes music that is indebted to the examples of nocturnal music that Bartók had frequently penned. As in the Bartók models, this movement is conceived in an arch form, reaching its apogee in an episode in which a varied reprise of the opening music appears (bars 43-76). [...] The gradually accumulating tensions suggest a barely suppressed violence, itself almost Bartókian in character [Fearn 2003, 24].

2.3 Guido Turchi

The influence of Night music in Italy is not limited to the piano medium. During the 1940s, in the midst of the Italian Bartókian Wave, Italian musicians finally began to retrace the canon of Bartók's poetics through the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta* and in the Fourth and the Fifth String Quartets (BB 95, BB 110). As a consequence it is possible to observe the same «broadening in range of techniques» [Danchenka 1987, 24] in the Italian Night music tradition, and a progressive shift towards works of increased size that we have already noticed in Bartók's Night music catalogue.

Two explicit examples of this development are found in the *Lento a fantasia* of Bruno Maderna's First String Quartet (ca. 1943, which I recently analysed [Palazzetti 2015b]) and, perhaps most clearly, in the *Concerto per archi "alla memoria di Béla Bartók"* (1947-1948) by the less famous composer Guido Turchi (1916-2010).

Originally composed for string quartet in 1947 as a *Concerto breve* and then transcribed for string orchestra, Turchi's *Concerto per archi* has four movements and was conceived as a tribute to the memory of the Hungarian composer to such an extent that the name Béla Bartók, used as a musical cryptogram, is encoded as the fundamental motif of the second movement. Throughout Turchi's piece, there are many Night music passages. In a recent contribution, Maria Grazia Sità provides some fruitful considerations on the nocturnal characteristics of the beginning of the third slow movement (*Elegia II*) and on the symmetrical properties of the macroform of the work [Sità 2015]; instead, I would like to briefly concentrate on an excerpt from the first slow movement (*Elegia I*, Ex. 6).



Ex. 6 G. Turchi, *Concerto per archi "alla memoria di Béla Bartók"* (1947-48): Mvt. I, bars 17-22

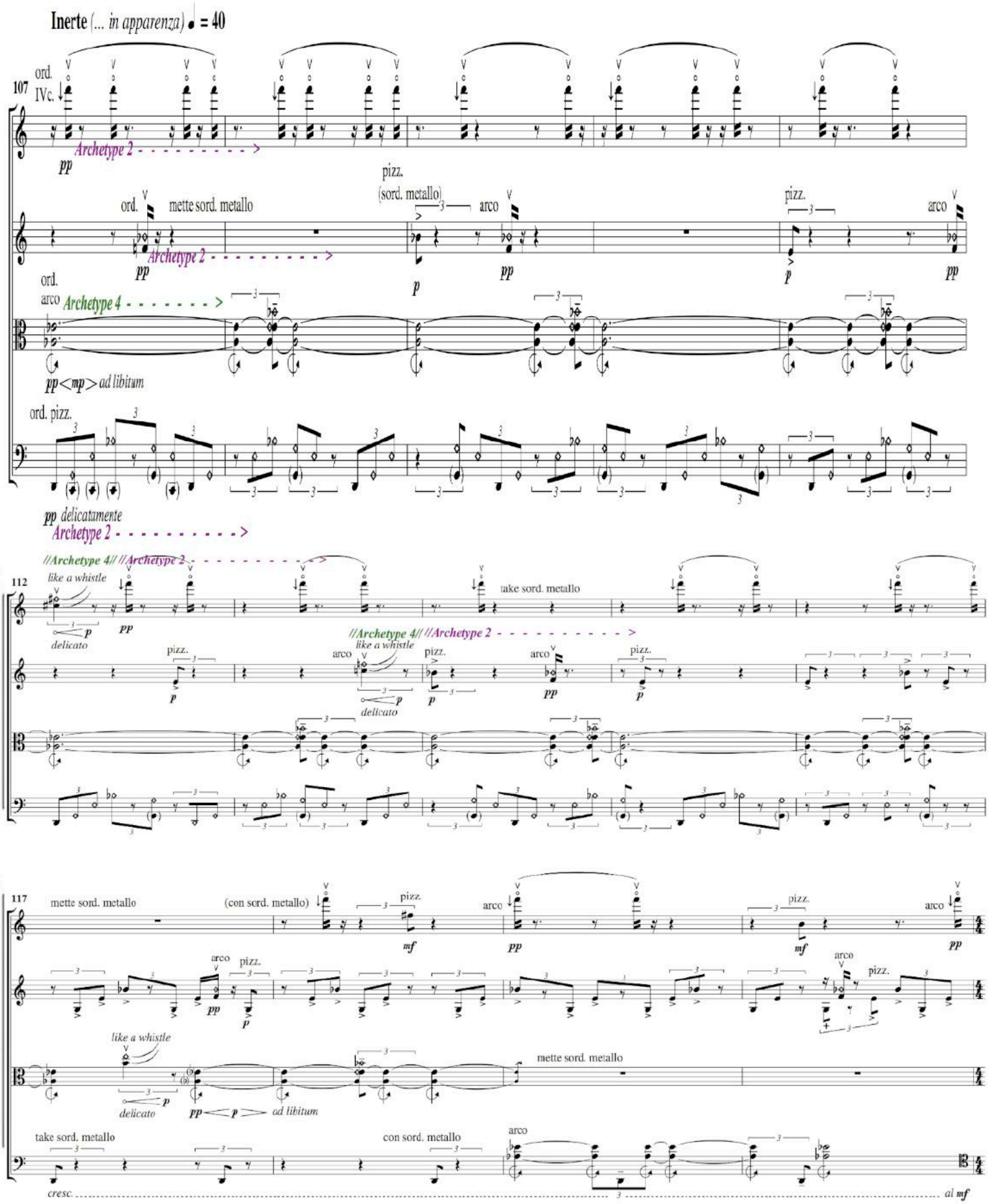
In this passage (bars 17-22), Turchi creates an eerie and seemingly static environment (pianissimo/piano and "very slow") through a complex three-layered texture: a pizzicato "sliding" gesture (archetype 1, Vc. II and Cb.), some isolated tones played by the Vc. I (archetype 2, bars 17-18), and the extensive use of tremolo in the imitative three-voice counterpoint played by the high register strings (Vle, Vl. I and II, archetype 4). Indeed, the research on the timbre and technique of the string instruments (tremolo, pizzicato, *con sordina*, harmonics, glissando) plays a crucial role in Turchi's *Concerto* and, more broadly, in his interpretation of Bartók's poetics.

2.4 The Italian Bartókian Wave between oblivion and revival

Turchi's *Concerto per archi "alla memoria di Béla Bartók"* was premiered at the 11th International Festival of Contemporary Music of Venice on 8 September 1948[13], seemingly at the apex of the Italian Bartókian Wave [Palazzetti 2015a, 162-165]. At the Venetian Festival the following year, Bartók's Six String Quartets were performed on subsequent evenings as a complete set,[14] and then broadcast by the Italian Radio along with the commentary of Guido Turchi[15]. It was through Turchi's analysis of Bartók's Fourth String Quartet that the young Franco Donatoni discovered Bartók's music [Donatoni 1982, Sità 2015]. In the same period, Roman Vlad [1947] and Mila [1951] canonized Bartók's Night music as the most relevant aspect of Bartók's poetics, with some Italian composers producing other nocturnal examples, such as the *Piccolo concerto notturno* for orchestra (1950) by Turchi and the *Piccola musica notturna* for orchestra (1954) by Dallapiccola [Perotti 1988, 154-157]. Finally, in the second half of the 1950s, Bruno Maderna composed two early examples of Italian electronic music at the Studio di Fonologia Musicale di Radio Milano: *Notturno* (1956) and *Continuo* (1959), both for magnetic tape. Although these pieces seem to perfectly represent the spreading of post-war avant-gardes in Italy and the paradigm of the so-called *Fase seconda* [Bortolotto 1969], Massimo Mila continued to identify a certain degree of Bartókian influence in them. In his first monograph on Maderna in 1976, he wrote that *Notturno* achieves «the illusion of the creation of sound» already evoked by Bartók through the piano and the string quartet [Mila 1999, 18-19]. On the following page, Mila reiterates the same idea in relation to *Continuo*: «its magical beginning, almost whispered, and mottled with nocturnal efflorescences, is still today one of the loftiest heights of poetry reached by the electronic music [...]. This could be the Night music that Bartók would have composed if he had known the electronic medium» [Mila 1999, 20].[16]

In the second half of the century, Bartók's musical figure has survived as a hidden resource for Italian composers, especially via the Night music style. To prove this thesis, we can look at the Italian contemporary works, such as the Stefano Gervasoni's (born in 1962) third string quartet, *Clamour*, premiered in November 2014 by the Quatuor Diotima. [17]

By drawing on his poetics based on the ambiguity and the paradox [Albèra 2015], Gervasoni tries to track the silence down through a long and forced exploration of exaggerated expressiveness in this work: e.g. at bars 272 sgg., indicated as *Volgarmente solenne, estenuato* ("Vulgarly solenne, exhausted") with the addition of the expressive designations *fff* and *vibrato lento*. In other words, *Clamour* conveys "mystery" and "serenity" through their contraries. [18] However, in some crucial passages the mystery and the silence emerge through the recovering of Bartók's Night music style (Ex. 7).



Ex. 7 S. Gervasoni, *Clamour. Terzo quartetto per archi* (2014-15), bars 107-120

At bars 107-116 it is possible to recognize a perfect nocturnal environment that appears to be static and «apparently motionless», i.e. Inerte (... in apparenza). Each layer is independent and iterative: the archetype 2 is represented by the segments in the Vc. and by the recurring overtone F5 (slightly flat) in the Vl. I; the archetype 4 appears in the glissando «like a whistle» (which adds a further layering in the part of the first violin) and in the perfect fifth (Ab2-Eb3) played tenuto by the Vla through a specific technique represented as  [19]

In *Clamour*, pushing the artificial research on the timbre to the extreme is a way to imitate the sounds of nocturnal environment and to find, once again, an irrepressible relationship with nature.[20]

3. Conclusion

In this article I have attempted to describe, both analytically and historically, Bartók's Night music and its legacy in Italy. The study of the Night music, as a Bartókian style and then as an Italian genre, allows us to rediscover the pluralism of the last century and to lay the groundwork to enhance our understanding of the present. More importantly, it demonstrates that historiography, politics and music analysis are inextricably intertwined. During an international conference held in Venice in 1981 to celebrate the centenary of Bartók's birth, Luigi Nono affirmed that we need different analytical tools in order to valorise «the great lesson of Bartók», that is the «anxious eagerness of the unknown» [Nono 2007, 213], or, as Mila already phrased it, his enthusiasm for «the mysterious nocturnal life of nature» [Mila 1951, 103]. [21]

References

Albèra P. (2015), *Le parti pris des sons. Sur la musique de Stefano Gervasoni*, Genève, Contrechamps.

Antolini B. M. – Salvetti G. (cur., 1999), *Italia millenovecentocinquanta*, Milano, Guerini e Associati.

Bartók B. (1976), *Essays*, ed. by B. Suchoff, London, Faber and Faber.

Bayley A. (2000), *Bartók's String Quartet No. 4/III: A new interpretative approach*, «Music Analysis» 19/3, pp. 353-382.

Bónis F. (ed. 1995), *Így láttuk Bartókot* [As We Saw Bartók], Budapest, Püski.

Bortolotto M. (1969), *Fase seconda. Studi sulla Nuova Musica*, Torino, Einaudi.

Bratuz D. (1981), *Béla Bartók: A centenary homage*, «Studies in Music from the University of Western Ontario» 6, pp. 77-111.

Buch E. (2011), *Réévaluer l'histoire de l'avant-garde musicale*, in E. Buch – D. Riout – P. Roussin (dir.), *Réévaluer l'art moderne et les avant-gardes*, Paris, Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, pp. 85-103.

Büky V. – Sità M. G. (2013), *Bartók e l'Italia. Viaggi, contatti, concerti*, «Fonti Musicali Italiane» 18, pp. 119-175.

Dahlhaus C. (1989), *Nineteenth-century music*, trans. by J. Bradford Robinson, Berkeley, University of California Press.

Danchenka G. (1987), *Diatonic pitch-class sets in Bartók's Night Music*, «Indiana Theory Review» 8/1, pp. 15-55.

Donatoni F. (1982), *Presenza di Bartók* (1981), in Id., *Il sigaro di Armando. Scritti 1964-1982*, cur. Piero Santi, Milano, Spirali pp. 87-91.

Donin N. – Feneyrou L. (dir., 2013), *Du politique en analyse musicale*, Paris, Vrin.

Earle B. (2013), *«In onore della Resistenza»: Mario Zafred and symphonic neorealism*, in Adlington R. (ed.), *Red Strains. Music and Communism outside the Communist Bloc*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 149-171.

Fearn R. (2003), *The music of Luigi Dallapiccola*, Rochester (NY), University of Rochester Press.

Fontanelli F. (2015), *Casella, Parigi e la guerra. Inquietudini moderniste da* Notte di Maggio *a* Elegia Eroica, Bologna, Albisani – De Sono.

Gervasoni S. (2014), *Clamour. Terzo Quartetto per archi*, Milano, Suvini Zerboni.

Grabócz M. (2009), *Un scénario typique dans l'œuvre de Bartók : le rencontre entre l'homme et la nature*, in Id., *Musique, narrativité, signification*, Paris, L'Harmattan, pp. 293-322.

Harley M. A. (1995), *Natura naturans, natura naturata and Bartók's nature music idiom*, «Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae» 36/3-4, pp. 329-349.

Hunkemöller J. (2003), *"Klänge der Nacht" in der Musik Béla Bartók*, «Archiv für Musikwissenschaft» 60/1, pp. 40-68.

Lampert V. (2001), *Bartók at the piano: lesson's from the composer's sound recordings*, in A. Bayley (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Bartók*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 231-242.

Lendvai E. (1947), *Bartók: Az éjszaka zéneje (1926)*, «Zenei Szemle» 4, pp. 216-219.

Mâche B.-F. (1992), *Music, Myth and Nature or the Dolphins of Arion*, trans. S. Delaney, Chur (CH), Harwoord Academic.

Meyer L. B. (1989), *Style and music: Theory, history, and ideology*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
Mila M. (1951), *La natura e il mistero nell'arte di Béla Bartók* [Nature and Mystery in the Art of Béla Bartók], «La rassegna musicale» 21/2, pp. 95-105. Then revised in «Chigiana» 22, pp. 147-168.
Mila M. (1996), *L'arte di Béla Bartók*, cur. F. M. Colombo, Torino, Einaudi.
Mila M. (1999), *Maderna musicista europeo*, cur. U. Mosch, Torino, Einaudi (first edition 1976).
Moreux S. (1949), *Béla Bartók. Sa vie, son oeuvre, son langage*, Paris, Richard-Masse.
Nono L. (2007), *Bartók compositore*, in Id., *La nostalgia del futuro. Scritti scelti 1946-1986*, cur. A. I. De Benedictis - V. Rizzardi, Milano, Il Saggiatore, pp. 208-213.
Palazzetti N. (2015a), *«Il musicista della libertà»: l'influenza di Béla Bartók nella cultura musicale italiana degli anni Quaranta e Cinquanta del Novecento*, «Rivista Italiana di Musicologia» 50/1, pp. 147-197.
Palazzetti N. (2015b), *Italian harmony during the Second World War: Analysis of Bruno Maderna's First String Quartet*, «Rivista di analisi e teoria musicale» 21/1, pp. 63-91.
Palazzetti N. (2015c), *«Una posizione di centro.» La ricezione italiana di Béla Bartók da Alfredo Casella a Roman Vlad*, presented on 1 November 2015 at the 22th Annual Conference of the Italian Society of Musicology (SIdM), Perugia (Italy).
Perotti S. (1988), *Iri da Iri: Analisi della musica strumentale di Dallapiccola*, Milano, Guerini e Associati.
Schneider D. E. (2006), *Bartók, Hungary, and the renewal of tradition: Case studies in the intersection of modernity and nationality*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
Schuijer M. (2008), *Analyzing atonal music. Pitch-class set theory and its context*, Rochester (NY), University of Rochester Press.
Sità M. G. (2008), *Béla Bartók*, Palermo, L'Epos.
Sità M. G. (2015), *Gli esordi bartokiani di Donatoni (via Guido Turchi)*, in C. Felici (cur.), *Franco Donatoni. Gravità senza peso*, Lucca, Libreria Musicale Italiana, pp. 91-114.
Somfai L. (1984), *Analytical notes on Bartók's Piano Year of 1926*, «Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae» 26/1-4, pp. 5-58.
Stevens H. (1953), *The life and music of Béla Bartók*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
Szabolcsi B. (1961), *Man and nature in Bartók's World*, «The New Hungarian Quaterly» 2/4, pp. 90-103.
Starke S. (2000), *Vom «dubbio tonale» zur «chiarificazione definitiva». Der Weg der Komponisten Alfredo Casella*, Kassel, Gustav Bosse.
Tóth A. (1929), *Új Bartók-művek bemotatóelőadása* [Premiere of New Bartók Works], «Pesti Napló», 22 March.
Ujfalussy J. (1971), *Béla Bartók*, trans. by R. Pataki, Boston, Crescendo Publishing.
Vlad R. (1947), *Béla Bartók*, in A. Casella – Vlad R., *In memoria di Béla Bartók*, Roma, Della Bussola, pp. 9-13.
Weissmann J. (1949), *Bartók's piano music*, «Tempo» 14 (Winter 1949-50), pp. 60-71.
Zieliński T. (1969), *Bartók*, Kraków, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne.

---

[1] This article was originally presented on 9 July 2015 at the University of Keele (UK) during the annual conference of the Society for Music Analysis (KeeleMAC). I would like to thank the organising committee of the conference and all the participants for their insightful comments and suggestions. I am also particularly grateful to the anonymous reviewers of «Analitica» and to the Institute of Music of the Fondazione Giorgio Cini (Venice). Finally, I would like to thank Adam Whittaker and Gaja Maestri for their help in correcting this text. Any errors that remain are my own.

[2] The English translation of this Hungarian text is quoted in Schneider [2006, 84].

[3] Explicit references to "Night music" are not found in the numerous essays or the hundreds of letters written by the composer. First used by Aladár Tóth, the term was also adopted by Ernő Lendvai [1947] and then diffused in English-speaking countries through the fundamental Bartók's monograph by Halsey Stevens [1953].

[4] I will not discuss the last section of this essay [*ibid.*, 28-55], which is entirely dedicated to the diatonic pitch-class sets in Night music, because it is beyond the scope of this article.

[5] The original 1951 essay deeply informed the lectures given by Mila during the course dedicated to the Hungarian composer at the University of Turin in the academic year 1960/1961. The 1951 essay was also revised in 1965, eventually constituting the basis of Mila's monograph on Bartók [Mila 1996], published posthumously.

[6] It should be noted that Mila [1996], Stevens [1953] and Weissmann [1949] identify many Night music examples without arranging them into a summative table.

[7] Ferenc Bónis [1995, 148] reports a curious anecdote, translated by Vera Lampert as follows: «Another student, Mária Comensoli, recalls her astonishment at Bartók's comment when she first played him *The Night's Music* from *Out of Doors*: "Are you playing exactly the same number of ornament that imitate the noises of the night, and at exactly the same place where I indicate them? This does not have to be taken so seriously, you can place them anywhere and play of them as many as you like"» [Lampert 2001, 240].

[8] Susanne Starke has already analysed the *Pupazzetti* paying attention to Stravinsky's influence [Starke 2000, 25-57].

[9] Many 1910s works by Casella make explicit reference to "Night" or "nocturnal" themes, such as: *Notte di maggio* for voice and orchestra Op. 20 (1913), the aforementioned *Notturnino* (1915), and *A notte alta* for piano Op. 30 (1917) [Fontanelli 2015].

[10] Casella lived in Paris from 1896 to 1915. As I have recently demonstrated [Palazzetti 2015c], Casella was a champion of Bartók's music since the early 1910s. Firstly, Bartók's 1910 *Two Romanian Dances* for piano Op. 8a BB 56 – namely, the theme of Op. 8a, No. 1 "Allegro vivace" – are quoted by Casella in his 1910s piano works: *Nove pezzi* for piano Op. 24, No. 9 *In modo rustico* (1914); *Sonatina* for piano Op. 28, Mvt. III (1916); *Undici pezzi infantili* for piano Op. 35, No. 1 (1920). Indeed, the *Two Romanian Dances* were performed twice in Paris in the early 1910s: on 12 March 1910 by Bartók and on 23 April 1914 by Theodor Szántó. Secondly, in the 1910s Casella uses the adjective "barbaro" in two occasions, i.e. in the *Nove pezzi* for piano Op. 24, No. 2 *In modo barbaro* (1914) and in the Cinque pezzi for string quartet Op. 34, No. 1 "Preludio. Allegro vivace e barbaro" (1920). The adjective "barbaro" is probably a reference to Bartók's *Allegro Barbaro* for piano BB 63 or constitutes a reaction to the expression «jeunes barbares hongrois» used in a Paris review of Bartók's 1910 concert. Thirdly, on 20 January 1913 the Société Musicale Indépendante – in which Casella was "secrétaire général" – planned to include Bartók's String Quartet No. 1 in one of its forthcoming concerts (see the letter that Florent Schmitt sent to Igor Stravinskij on 21 January 1913, quoted in Fontanelli [2015, 45]

[11] In 1918 Casella orchestrated all of the *Pupazzetti* for nine instruments (this version was published only in 1926 as Op. 27c). Depero's ballet also presented some of the compositions of Gian Francesco Malipiero (*I selvaggi*) and Gerald Tyrwhitt alias Lord Berners (*L'uomo coi baffi*). Bartók was present under the name of Chemenov. In 1920 Casella made a third version of *Pupazzetti* for orchestra (this version was published in 1921 as Op. 27b).

[12] *The Night's Music* from the *Out of Doors* received its Italian premiere on 12 April 1929 in Rome, with the composer at the piano.

[13] Fernando Previtali, who performed Bartók's music many times during this period, conducted the Orchestra Sinfonica di Roma della Radio Italiana.

[14] These were performed on 13, 14 and 15 September 1949 by the Végh Quartet at the Teatro La Fenice.

[15] It is curious to notice that the radio programme in which Bartók's Quartets were commented upon by Turchi was, coincidentally, entitled

Notturni dell'usignolo, i.e. "Nightingale's Nocturnes" [Antolini-Salvetti 1999, 187].

[16] Translation my own.

[17] The last version of *Clamour* was performed in Milan on 23 October 2015 at the 24th edition of Milano Musica Festival.

[18] Gervasoni wrote an *Introduction* in French for his Third String Quartet (<http://www.stefanogervasoni.net/index.asp?page=catalogo&id=82&cat=chamber>, accessed 24/10/2015).

[19] As an instruction on how to play the symbol  to achieve the desired effect, the composer writes: «brush the strings with the bow in a circular motion, passing from the bridge to the fingerboard» [Gervasoni 2015b, III].

[20] These ideas have been confirmed by the composer during a private conversation held in Paris on 4 July 2015.

[21] Translation my own.