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### A NEW SOUND AND ANTICIPATION OF UNIMAGINABLE REALITY – *SEQUENZA III* BY LUCIANO BERIO

**Abstract:** This paper examines how composer Luciano Berio with his composition *Sequenza III per voce femminile* (1965/66) succeeded in exploring something that is reality behind reality through the unique treatment of artistic material, in this case musical and verbal, much like certain avant-garde artists. It is a search for something that listeners cannot see because of the complex psychological mechanism of the human organism and which is deeply covered by ideologies, spoken language, ideas and similar elements. It is what the painter Piet Mondrian refers to as “the sublime reality”, for example. I employ naturalized components of psychoanalytic theory in this study, therefore the expressions “reality behind reality” or “sublime reality” are also related to the psychoanalytical term “Reality” according to Lacan. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate, using a specific musical example, how art, in this case musical art, can attain outcomes that have been attempted by researchers from other fields, artistic or scientific.

**Keywords:** Luciano Berio, singing, voice, body, signifier, soul, psychoanalytic theory

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*Sequenza III* for female voice (1965/66) by Luciano Berio (Luciano Berio, 1925–2003) predominantly performed by Cathy Berberian (Catherine Anahid ‘Cathy’ Berberian, 1925–1983) is one of the most analysed works in the domain of the new vocal, avant-garde sound. Aside from this work, the same can be said of John Cage’s *Aria* (1955), which was performed by the same artist. Why is the performance of *Sequenza III* so intriguing, even more than Cage’s *Aria*, when it was created at the time when new sound potentials were already being explored intensively – immediately after the Second World War, in Darmstadt or in Paris? Apart from the development of sound as a medium, what was the objective of sound research at the time? In this paper, I shall discuss how Berio, like many visual artists during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, explored with his music the world revealed behind the imaginable world, the so-called reality.

In beginning this consideration of the intriguing character of *Sequenza III* from the aspect of the specifics of the singer’s voice, we can immediately say that Cathy Berberian’s voice can be an opera voice, but not necessarily, it can do *bel canto*, but not necessarily, it can be the voice of many other genres of music, but not necessarily. Cathy Berberian improvises everything that can be performed with her voice and her body at the same time. She does not dance in the manner, for example, of a flamenco singer, giving rhythm to her movements and enhancing the emotional intensity of the music being performed, she does not improvise a dance to the beat of the music, like pop and rock singers do. Her body does not dance. Her body sounds.

It was just a matter of time before many composers accepted Cathy Berberian’s improvisations and her style of vocal and body performances, first Cage and subsequently her husband Luciano Berio, and adapted it to their own opuses.

When Cathy Berberian or another artist sings, dances, or performs with movements in Berio’s *Sequenza III*, the question arises as to whether sound or movement is more important in the performance. The body motions performed by the singers of *Sequenza III*, for example, bear no resemblance to the coded gestures of classic opera singing, which are less essential than the singing itself – because the singing style is not the same. What is the difference? First of all, opera singers do not perform movements in harmony or cooperation, as a kind of counterpoint, with the sound of a voice like a pop or rock singer, but rather in accordance with the mannerisms of a particular epoch and the appropriate situation. Opera singers’ facial expressions will surely communicate, very roughly or quite clearly, the emotional state of the

opera role, unlike pop or rock singers' faces, but Berio's singer will not. She will express *something* with her voice and her body sounding simultaneously with her voice and body parts (if the voice is a part of the body).

Berio was acutely aware that he could not call his composition a traditional name (aria, Lied, song), even ironically or provocatively, because the kind of singing he devised, inspired by Cathy Berberian's voice, does not fall within the singing tradition that prevailed from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In opera arias, for example, the entire body is only important if it falls while the hero or heroine is dying, creating a visual spectacle that can be seen from the last row in the theatre. Unlike the body, the expression of the opera face – which may be difficult to recognize very well from the fifth row of the theater, is a kind of “reflection of the soul”. If the face cannot be recognized, a voice (accompanied by instruments) is always heard, which, according to its rules, conveys the codes of emotional expression/soul expression. *Sequenza III*, on the other hand, requires constant attention to body movements, facial expressions, and the sound of the voice. There is no support of any musical instrument.

How did it happen that in Berio's music, the entire body fused with the soul, although this was not the case in earlier music, or in a wider sense, when the body was separated from the psyche, from the 'soul'? Was it the moment in the Ancient world, in Plato's dialogues when Timaeus was talking that the body was only an external frame, carrier, mantle of the soul (Plátōn 360 π.X./1995)<sup>2</sup> or the turning-point was marked by René Descartes' statement “I think, therefore I am”, followed by the sentence “The soul, which makes us what we are, is completely separated from the body?” Despite the fact that Descartes' claim was misinterpreted from the very beginning and that Descartes made great efforts to unequivocally and constantly point out in his correspondence that for him the unity of the human being still consists of the interaction of soul and body, the dichotomy of body and soul was criticized, questioned, disputed, reinterpreted for centuries, but attributed to Cartesianism.<sup>3</sup> So, it can be said that the separation of body and soul received an impetus in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, the above-mentioned conclusion reached by philosophers can be seen in Italian operas of the period. Although the same conclusion could have been reached for different, entirely artistic reasons, it was nevertheless in line with the philosophically dominant viewpoint.

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<sup>2</sup> Platon, *Timaj*, transl. by Marjanca Pakiž, Beograd, Mladost, 1981, from 72.

<sup>3</sup> Jasna, Šakota-Mimica, “Dodir duše i tela”, *Filozofija i društvo*, 1/XXVI, 2005, 126.

On the other hand, Descartes' statement, "I think, therefore I am" – that is, self-awareness in the act of thinking, including doubt – and those discourses in which the so-called soul, in the era of Enlightenment, was identified with the mind, which appeared to have a dominant position over the body – created a special relationship towards what is opposed to soul/spirit/mind – insanity. Consequently, during the Enlightenment, the *ratio*, mind, formed a new relationship with its opponent – madness.<sup>4</sup> Singing and opera both quickly drew attention to this.<sup>5</sup> It is mentioned here because some authors believe the voice from Berio's *Sequenza III* is that of a mad body.<sup>6</sup>

What, then, is the position of a mad body in art, or even earlier in Ancient *techne*, amongst all other mad bodies that did not aim to achieve proper artistic or craft results through their expressions? In Ancient Greece, insanity was condemned, but not in opposition to logos; in tribal communities, the insane, madmen, and lunatics were entrusted to sorcerers, shamans, or sent to them for treatment with their miraculous mixtures of plants and rituals; in

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<sup>4</sup> This paper employs the phrase madness/insane/lunatic etc., which is neither exact nor politically correct, but which Michel Foucault (in translation) employs throughout his work. Because Michel Foucault is an important interlocutor in this study, therefore his expressions are adopted.

<sup>5</sup> Operas abound in characters who are in a state of affect, temporary or permanent, or false lunacy, due to the possibility to display the performer's talent or to achieve a comic or tragic result. These include, for instance:

1. The character of Likori in Monteverdi's lost opera *La finta pazza Licori* (1627);
2. The character of Orlando from Handel's opera of the same name (1733);
3. The character of Ann Boleyn in Gaetano Donizetti's opera of the same name premiered in 1830;
4. The character of Lucia of Lammermoor in the opera of the same name by Gaetano Donizetti (1835).
5. The character of Maria Padilla in the opera of the same name by Gaetano Donizetti (1841);
6. The character of Boris Godunov in the opera of the same name by Modest Mussorgsky (1868–1873)
7. Many characters, such as Elsa from the opera *Lohengrin*, Jose from the opera *Carmen*, Herman from the opera *The Lady of Spades*, Prince from the opera *Rusalka*, Werther, Othello, Tosca, Madame Butterfly, Melisande, Vocek, Pauline from the opera *The Gambler*, murder or kill themselves in pain or die of pain etc. etc.

<sup>6</sup> John Potter, *Vocal Authority; Singing Style and Ideology*, Cambridge – New York etc., Cambridge University Press, 1998, 129; István Anhalt, "Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III*", Canada Music Book, 7, Autumn-Winter 1973.

the Middle Ages, lunatics were excluded, expelled to the margins of the community with convicts and the poor, while in the Renaissance they were expelled from the community and left to wander the land or sea on ships, possibly imprisoned in special buildings, but only if they were financially supported.<sup>7</sup> Psychiatry, a new scientific discipline of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, found lunatics in the confines of these general shelters, but left them there from the beginning.<sup>8</sup> The shelters and similar Church-established facilities were not venues for the medical treatment of souls. In the gap between the vanishing monarchy and the emerging republic with the bourgeoisie as the ruling class, shelters, at least in France, first became places of semi-judicial structure, a kind of administrative structure which, in addition to officially established court institutions, judged and passed judgements themselves,<sup>9</sup> and, in time, they became places where work and earning were obligatory.<sup>10</sup> In short, in the shelters was no healing for the soul of the lunatics but their bodies were forced to work, that is, they were turned into objects of earning. Foucault noticed that it was the technology of power, the power to exclude, to silence, the power to administratively regulate the phenomenon in the same way the same technology began to be applied to many other aspects of society and population such as health, hygiene, the birth rate, mortality, housing conditions, migrations, and so on. It was one of the technologies that defined the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a new kind of regulation, control, surveillance, and classification of life in the conditions of the capitalist bourgeois state.

According to the impulse of Plato's philosophical discourse, the thesis of poets' divine lunacy survived all this time. Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus) describes it as 'gentle madness'. Pliny the Younger (Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus) claims that poets are allowed to go insane, which was a valid attitude even during the Middle Ages, while at the end of the Middle Ages, the theme of madness in its ambiguity became widespread on the European scene "as a threat and mockery, the moody insanity of the world and the petty ridicule of people".<sup>11</sup> Then, as previously indicated, lunacy became a theme in scientific and intellectual discourse, as well as in painting, literature, and opera. According to Foucault, the face of lunacy began to occupy the imagi-

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<sup>7</sup> Mišel Fuko, *Istorija ludila u doba klasicizma*, trans. by Jelena Stakić, Beograd, Nolit, 1980. (Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1961.)

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, *op. cit.*, 1980, 24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

nation of Europeans in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> When it is argued that lunacy dominated the imagination of Europeans, in the context of art it usually refers, since the Enlightenment, to the artist's inspired soul, rather than his body, or it refers to the insane mind of a fictional character. As a result, the troubled mind was only exploited in art as a theme or an issue involving the soul, while corporeality as a relationship with the mind was suppressed and masked. Another aspect of corporeality – sexuality – was concealed until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whether in a healthy or perverted (or another adjective according to some other classification) mind.

Then, at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *fin de siècle* brought the interweaving of two enormous technologies of power: “[...] the one that stressed sexuality and the other that separated lunacy” said in Foucault's logic and terminology.<sup>13</sup> In fact, on the threshold between these centuries, two significant echoes of the body mode emerged: one in Freud's psychoanalysis, a psychoanalytic theory that, in synergy with Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic conclusions, influenced a large number of thinkers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the other in Nietzsche's philosophy, whose elements were later developed, among others, by Deleuze and Guattari in an anti-Freudian, anti-Saussure, antipsychiatric manner. Despite Nietzsche's explicit rejection of Cartesianism and the statement from his book *Also sprach Zarathustra* that says, “[b]ody am I entirely, and nothing more; and soul is only a word for something about the body” by studying sexuality, Sigmund Freud uncovers the truth hidden by reason (mind, consciousness, and soul), and with the help of researched sexuality, he discovers the unconscious ‘below’, the soul, and deciphers lunacy. That is why thinkers after him, such as Lacan, intentionally used Cartesian language to state things like “I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think”.<sup>14</sup> For, there – in the mind, consciousness – is where the Cartesian subject is, according to Lacan, who followed Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic path while re-reading Freud's opus in a

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<sup>12</sup> Mišel Fuko, “Odnosi moći prelaze u unutrašnjost tela”, razgovor sa L. Finas, *Moć/Znanje, Odabrani spisi i razgovori 1972–1977*, transl. by Olja Petronić, Novi Sad, Mediterran Publishing, 2012, 165. (Michel Foucault, “Les rapports de pouvoir passent à l'intérieur du corps” (entretien avec L. Finas), *La Quinzaine littéraire*, 4, 1977, 4–6.

<sup>13</sup> Žak Lacan, *Spisi* (izbor), transl. by Danica Mijović, Filip Filipović, Radoman Kordić, Beograd, Prosveta, 1983, 106. (Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 1966; Jacques Lacan, *Écrits, The First Complete Edition in English*, transl. by Bruce Fink, in collab. with Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg, London – New York, W. W. Norton)

<sup>14</sup> Žak Lacan, *Spisi* (izbor), op.cit., 106.

way that Freud himself could not – a subject captured in language, in the Symbolic Order that determines the boundaries of the mind, of what we are allowed to think, what can be thought, but within the framework of an already given language and its signifiers that point to each other, instead to reality.<sup>15</sup> I am where I do not think, therefore I am in language, the Symbolic Order. And that means now switching from the topic of madness, insanity, to the topic of desire. In Lacan's key, this means: I think where I am not, where I think through my own Desire, which is, however, the desire of the Other.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century one delicate equilibrium will remain fragile and under dispute, being the balance between giving preference to the study and interpretation of the conscious / subconscious / unconscious (Freud, Lacan, etc.) on the one hand and studying the materiality of the body, on the other hand, in which the most diverse discourses intersect and attribute power and through that power inscribed by gymnastics, nudity, pleasure with a nice body etc., acquires consciousness of the body,<sup>16</sup> or Deleuze and Gattari's understanding of the body as an area that precedes the subject because it is interpreted as a flux, a series of pure contractions, tiny 'consciousnesses' scattered "on the surface that remains Skin even when it is about metaphysics"<sup>17</sup> due to which the subject becomes a multitude of subjects. Because, when researching the conscious, subconscious, and unconscious, Freud concludes that the body is not the same as the organism, but a collection of erogenous zones, a corpus of pleasure. As a result, the subject is merely the subject of the body, as the one that is thin, fluid, and enjoyable by itself.<sup>18</sup> And, as Lacan later proved, since the subject's desire is always dependent on the desire of the Other, the body is always a social body in some sense. Encouraged by Lacan, Deleuze highlighted the relationship between body and language, because speech conceals in itself the function of pleasure, a pornographic gestuality.<sup>19</sup> As a consequence, Deleuze challenged Saussure's view of language as a separate entity from reality, as a collection of signifiers that, like words in a dic-

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<sup>15</sup> A rough draft of this text was done in 2009. In musicology at that time, it was necessary to explain at least the basics of Lacan's opinion, as well as Lacan's concepts, but this is hopefully no longer the case.

<sup>16</sup> Mišel Fuko, "Moć i telo", *Moć/Znanje, Odabrani spisi i razgovori 1972–1977*, op. cit., 62. (Michel Foucault, "Pouvoir et corps", *Quel corps?*, 1975, 2, 2–9)

<sup>17</sup> Nenad Mišćević, *Marksizam i post-strukturalistička kretanja: Althusser, Deleuze, Foucault*, Rijeka, Biblioteka "Prometej", 1975, 138.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 142.

tionary, refer only to one another and not to anything beyond the closed structure of language. Since, in Deleuze's opinion, speech in which desire is embodied cannot be considered a closed system. In this, he partially agrees with Freud, because Freud also observes that repressed instincts always manifest themselves through language.<sup>20</sup> (Bart also mentions pleasure while embracing Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of 'empty' language.)

The desire (body) of speech and body language meet in writing. When interpreting Deleuze, writing, according to Mišćević, is like engraving a sign in the body. It is tattooing, torture that leaves scars, punishment, circumcision, anointing, the imprinting of facts or impressions in memory, and emotions (through the psyche) in the body. As matter is in motion, like language, which is a machine for making sentences, the body is a space for writing, registering, and production.<sup>21</sup> However, liberating that production is the common goal of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud and their followers, as well as Deleuze's anti-psychiatric stream. Some artists had this goal, like, for example, Cathy Berberian and Luciano Berio when writing *Sequenza III for female voice*.

If we move away from the issue and focus on one and the same problem being intriguing to the mentioned psychoanalysts and philosophers, from Freud to Deleuze and Gattari, from psychoanalysis to art, to Berberian and Berio, and that is desire, we can see that, according to the interpretation of psychoanalysts and philosophers, desire is located in unconsciousness, on the body, and in spoken language.

If it is true that desire, as Lacan defined it, is the desire of the Other from which an incomprehensible desire springs to us, when we do not know what the Other wants from us, when he asks us the question *Che vuoi?*<sup>22</sup> confronting us with the abyss of our own desire, that is, with the question of whether we know or do not know what we want, and that we must not, at the same time, betray our desire, step back before it; or if desire is the desire that the Other desires, if desire exists only if the Other is perceived as the one who desires; or if it is a desire – the desire for the lost object of original enjoyment

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 144–145.

<sup>22</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir dans l'inconscient freudien", *Colloques philosophiques internationaux: La dialectique*, 19 au 23 septembre 1960. <http://www.michne-torah.com/medias/files/subversion-du-sujet-et-dialectique-du-desir.pdf>



in the field of the Imaginary, and then it appears as a desire that is with someone else who allegedly took the object of desire from us; or if desire is manifested in the social realm, then where does Lacan's famous word *jouissance* – which could be translated as *pleasure* with caution – fit in with all these and other manifestations of desire? As all scientists in the humanities agree, *pleasure*, *jouissance*, is not pleasure, the satisfaction of a need. While desire, according to Lacan, is also a relationship with the Other, *jouissance* is, a relationship with an *objet petit a*, as stated numerous times. As a result, *jouissance* refers to both language and the body. The speaking creature in the Symbolic Order is cut off from the pleasures of the body and from direct access to reality because it speaks. However, while speaking the individual enjoys the meaning because a part of that enjoyment is transferred to the words and the manner in which they are uttered. As a result, *jouissance* is split between “enjoying beyond the body” and “enjoying of the Other”.

For the story of Berio's *Sequenza III for Female Voice*, it is vital to mention Freud's conclusion that suppressed desire can sometimes become a cause of disease. It is also necessary to point out Lacan's observation that the effect of meaning in speech, and hence pleasure, is achieved by the effect of one signifier jumping into another, establishing a signifier chain that produces its own truth, but also excess of meaning.

On the example of *Sequenza III*, we should now consider the relevance for musicology of Freud's and, in particular, Lacan's insights into desire—desire in the unconscious as a part of the psyche that in some cases manifests itself on the surface of the body as a source of disease and desire as something that is split into what is lost forever and what is structured as language by entering Symbolic Order, but a language that moves from signifier to signifier, metaphor to metaphor, distortion to distortion, whose meaning is incomprehensible because it disappears and evaporates constantly.

In a way, *Sequenza III* for female voice, written for Cathy Berberian, among other numerous symptomatic examples of the postwar music of radical modernism, continues the line of voice treatment carried by Schoenberg's opera *Erwartung*. As a result, as already pointed out, many authors hear the voice of a mad body in the voice from Berio's *Sequenza III*,<sup>23</sup> while others notice gender issues and the technology of the power disciplining body, i. e. the ideology of the private (bourgeois division into female private. and male public space) in the intimate, chamber character of both Schoenberg and Be-

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<sup>23</sup> John Potter, op. cit., 129; István Anhalt, op. cit.

rio's work,<sup>24</sup> while many note Berio's attempt to disintegrate and reintegrate language syntax by turning it into sound necessary to achieve "objective physical reality".<sup>25</sup>

Many scientists and artists in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries aspired to establish "objective reality" for various reasons, given the fact that such a reality was actually multi-blurred (by phantasms, language, ideologies, etc.). It is sufficient to mention Manet's advocacy of a painting reality, Mondrian's search for sublime reality, the metalexical mental language of Viktor (Velimir) Khlebnikov or Alexei Kruchonykh, Malevich's refusal to represent any ideology in the painting,<sup>26</sup> perhaps the need of Hanslick and Shklovski to close the world of art analysis within the framework of a work of art itself, protecting both the work and the discursive interpretation of the work from the influence of other discourses and ideologies that are transmitted by those discourses, etc. in the already limited world of the autonomy of art and l'art pour l'art.

When Berio wrote his piece in the 1960s, psychoanalysis was also dealing with the problem of reality behind reality—the Real, which, in Lacan's opinion, and as it is now mentioned in many scientific disciplines, is not reality, not imaginable reality, but something that cannot be symbolized or articulated in language, and will always remain incomprehensible and hidden as the artists themselves sensed. The reality we see in front of us, according to Lacan and as the artists of modernism noticed, is always structured. This reality is structured by what Lacan calls phantasm, which serves to protect us from a direct confrontation with the horrifying, traumatic Real that is encoded in the very core of human sexuality. Prior to Lacan, it appears that artists were unable to predict this protective role. However, sexuality itself is a lot deeper and difficult problem than varied sexual practices and habits. Because there is something constitutively unconscious in the sphere of sexuality that must be subsequently suppressed. So the question remains: what originally is in the sphere of sexuality and afterwards must be suppressed? This ontological constitutive lack /negativity leads to the conclusion that sexuality is struc-

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<sup>24</sup> James McCalla, "Music and Literature II: Vocal Chamber Music", in: *Twentieth-Century Chamber Music*, London – New York, Routledge, 2003, 77.

<sup>25</sup> Marinela Ramazzotti, "Luciano Berio's Sequenza III: From Electronic Modulation to Extended Vocal Technique", *Ex-Tempore. A Journal of Compositional and Theoretical Research in Music*, XV/1, 2010, 81–96.

<sup>26</sup> Slobodan Mijušković, *Od samodovoljnosti do smrti slikarstva; Umetničke teorije (i prakse) ruske avangarde*, Beograd, Geopoetika, 1998, from 171.

tured around a fundamental lack, just as it is the case with conscious knowledge that is structured in the same way. This is why Lacan claims that unconscious knowledge is not actually unconscious, but knowledge that does not know itself because it is originally missing, because it is missing in the Real.<sup>27</sup> But, aside from that flaw, there is also something that is excess which impacts the perception of external, imaginable reality. Namely, when Freud determined that the body is not an organism but a collection of erogenous zones and that unconscious desire manifests itself on the body's surface and in the language, Lacan noticed, supplementing Freud's observations with Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic insights, and vice versa – Saussure's observations with Freud's insights – that language as a set of signifiers does not direct only certain signifiers to others, thus creating a chain of signifiers independent of external reality. He noted that this supposedly autonomous signifier chain, which is independent of reality, is continually producing unanticipated purport, meaning, or excess of meaning, as Alenka Zupančič puts it (apart from the nothing/lack/negativity that it is constituted around). He did notice, however, that this excess of meaning carries certain amounts of affect or pleasure (as mentioned, pleasure is divided between enjoyment 'outside the body' – in words, and enjoyment of the Other as a source that, like a boomerang, restores desire), and that signifiers are related to external reality through this excess of meaning as pleasure, as Deleuze later reinterpreted.<sup>28</sup> The effects of the signifier can never be returned to the signifier itself, which is why the subject appears to be a creation of incomplete, inconsistent, imprecise language, omissions of words, and so on.<sup>29</sup>

Berio's *Sequence III* for female voice can be read from the field of musical analysis, as well as with the help of the indicated ideas derived from psychoanalytic theory, given the composer's intention to write, after a decade of experimenting with the electronic medium of sound and music production, a composition in which he will treat the human, female voice as a machine/instrument capable of producing new sound. From the standpoint of traditional musicological discourse, Berio's *Sequenza III* for female voice is not easy to categorize in terms of genre, given that it is a composition for voice

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<sup>27</sup> Alenka Zupančič, "Seksualno i ontologija", *Filozofija i društvo*, XXV (1), 2014, 187–188, 191.

<sup>28</sup> Alenka Zupančič, "ABC freudovske revolucije", *Problemi*, 43 (7/8), 2005, 67–89. (Alenka Zupančič, "ABC freudovske revolucije", trans. by Maja Solar and Ivan Radenković, *Stvar, časopis za teorijske prakse*, 2, 2011, 134)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

without any instrumental accompaniment, with facial expressions and body movements, i.e. theatrical elements caused by the voice itself, that is, by the composer's demands. As a way of performing music, Luciano Berio wants the singer or actress to employ movement or mimicry spontaneously, but in a way that the movement is equivalent to the spoken language or singing without going beyond what is written in the composition. Therefore, it is a combination of movement (body language as unconscious speech), speech, and singing, a kind of greater step of vocal music towards performance, with the word "greater step" being used because vocal music performance (s) is always performative. The text of *Sequenza III*, written by Marcus Kutter at Berio's request to write him "a few words for a woman to sing", was unusual for a vocal music genre until that time. Kutter wrote the text in English, starting with Berio's words, which are uttered by a man:

give me	a few words	for a woman
to sing	a truth	allowing us
to build a house	without worrying	before night comes. <sup>30</sup>

These nine "phrases" were "decomposed" by Berio, who split words, parts of words, and syllables. As an example, the first line of the composition text actually reads:

to co us for be /  
sing to me /  
tome to /  
uth be few co /  
e e a /  
to co be words i [...]

Performing such fragmented pieces of words and shifted syllables, vowels, and consonants does not usually result in meaningful phrases, yet certain phrases from the original text appear in clues during the performance. As a consequence, the text cannot be performed in its original form, even though all of its elements are present, and the text "does not vanish". But still there is a question of how important the meaning of the text itself is, aside from serving as a framework, the "preceding" description of the background-idea of *Sequenza III*, as a general landmark for an artist who can create her own world of *Sequenza III*, based on her own desire, especially given Berio's suggestion that the voice should sing for the entire eight minutes, as long as the

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<sup>30</sup> Give me / a few words / for a woman / to sing / a truth / allowing us /to build a house / without worrying/ before night comes.

composition lasts, therefore, changing the expressions that are diametric in character in very short time intervals: *tense muttering, urgent, distant and dreamy, very tense, nervous laughter, impassive, giddy, nervous, wistful, bewildered, ecstatic, whimpering, faintly, tender, apprehensive, languorous, witty, noble, joyful, frantic, subsiding, whining, gasping, increasingly desperate, echoing, serene, extremely intense, calm, anxious, very excited and frantic, relieved, fading?* There are also instructions in the musical score, such as the signs *hm* (*hand/s on mouth*) for putting hands over the mouth to get the sound of silence, muffling, numbness, or the sound of a flickering voice using a hand as a resonance stimulus, and *hd* (*hand down*) for lowering the hands from the lips, coughing marks, hitting the palate with the tongue (*mouth clicks*), cracking of the fingers, and so on. So, it is a language that is not the language of a crazy body, as Potter, Anhalt and other authors or perhaps some listeners easily claim, but a wide range of sounds, singing, meaningless language, language of movement (body language), in fact, it can be claimed that it is the search for the language of the unconscious, the language of desire, using the sources that are not “false”, mediated by ideology, such as spoken language and its seemingly easy to understand meanings. Because the text is not articulated, the attention is directed, on the one hand, to the pleasure or respect for virtuosity provided by the voice itself, despite the fact that it is not the traditional enjoyment in beautiful singing (*bel canto, bell'arte del canto*) or the traditional virtuosity of a soprano or a counter-tenor, etc., but on the other hand, because the text is inarticulate, it testifies about the inconsistency of language (factual, as scientists have discovered), points to a kind of omission in speech i.e. everything that Freud described as the emergence of the unconscious, the desire from the unconscious field.

Desire, in the sense of Freud's understanding of the instinct for life, libido, *eros*, which is always interwoven with the instinct for death, *thanatos*, appears as a voice in *Sequenza III*. Freud believed that the unconscious communicates, manifests itself in language (whose transmitter, medium, is voice), and can be treated by talking to a psychoanalyst, although this was not entirely true. As Mladen Dolar points out, Freud established that despite their intertwining, *eros* and *thanatos* do not appear in the same way. *Thanatos* does not follow the logic of signification, although omnipresent, it is, nevertheless, unlike *eros*, invisible, mute, inaudible, *stumm*.<sup>31</sup> *Eros*, on the other

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<sup>31</sup> Mladen Dolar, *Glas i ništa više*, trans. by Iva Nenić, Beograd, Fedon, 2012, 177. (Mladen Dolar, *O glasu*, Ljubljana, Društvo za teoretsko psihoanalizo, 2003)

hand, is both audible and visual. In the study *Die Traumdeutung* (Dream Interpretation), written in 1900, Freud describes dream as *Wunscherfüllung*—the fulfillment of desire, and in a dream the satisfaction of desire is achieved through the pictorial language of symbols, metaphors, metonymy, which, as Dolar puts it, defies signification while achieving its goal.<sup>32</sup> The psychiatrist deciphers the meaning of a dream, yet its “meaninglessness”, which is most often expressed in pictures without sound, is precisely how the desire is presented or fulfilled in a dream.

If, on the other hand, eros is externalized through the retelling of a dream rather than through the language of the dream, or if it directly employs speech, voice, singing voice, or any other sound as a transmitter, the question is what that instinct conveys by sound and what language it speaks? This can be a consistent, spoken language, as much as possible, an inconsistent language, a language of omissions, a “prelanguage” of coughing, hiccups, beating, screaming or a “postlanguage” of singing,<sup>33</sup> or it can be just one sound, one click, as Mladen Dolar explains in his consideration of one of Freud’s patients.<sup>34</sup> Berio’s piece is about the full range of sounds created by the female body, particularly the voice—about prelanguage, speaking, singing, postlanguage, and body language. But what is voice, exactly? On the one hand it is a bearer of meaning, actually, a potential meaning of the text, but it is intentionally shredded in *Sequenza III*, broken, and so deprived of all narrative building techniques by which it might persuade the audience of whatever truth it can communicate or reality it can produce. It is a disruptive language that is more concerned with sound than with meaning. If *Sequenza III* is about the intentional, feminine language of a male composer (analogous to feminine, if it can be called that, the prose or poetry of avant-garde writers like Mallarmé, Joyce, Cummings, and many others, focused by this tactic on questioning, reassessing the established Symbolic Order) or a mimicry to cover up what cannot be said or a female sexuality articulated by corporeality and language, then, in the first case it is the reason to use precisely the female body, and the female voice in order to express what is impossible to utter. The female body is suitable because, among other things, masculine demands, male interpretations of the imaginary world, and male signifying practices have molded female sexuality and language for ages. As a result, feminism’s

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 40, 44.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 178.

major research issue is the history of the suppression of female language. For centuries, women's talk about their own bodies, even the use of their own bodies to communicate about bodies, had no place in the hierarchy of desirable social discourses. Language was not regarded immanent to the female body since, as previously said, the body was long seen to be subordinate to the mind, hence woman's right to speak was never privileged because she was seen as an object, above all as a body. In fact, as Lin Hejinian argues, women's speech was:

[...] considered trivial, second-rate, because it was placed in the original, not in the public world (of free men), but in the private and home domains (maintained by women and servants). Because the domestic sphere was the realm of the body—the domestic being where the body is fed, dressed, and cleansed, where it gives birth, defecates, and periodically escapes into the world of ultimate privacy and secret, the world of sleep and dreams, it was considered disgusting. Finally, our speech was regarded as threatening because women are knowledgeable in this field.<sup>35</sup>

That is why Julia Kristeva believes that writers like Joyce and Mallarmé, who focused on the materiality of language, especially on its sounds and rhythms, rather than its communicative function, utilized a language devoid of meaning, that is, a language that disrupts meaning, releases new meanings and enables new ways of understanding. As a psychoanalyst, Kristeva notices something very significant for the context of this section of the work: she discovers that writers, by employing literary language in the aforementioned manner, subconsciously relived the union with their mother. Because such language is “incestuous”—since it returns the writer to pleasure (desire and *jouissance*, as Lacan would put it) before knowing the words, and thus to identification with the mother as she exists, in Lacan's vocabulary, as a whole, as a phase of the Imaginary before the Symbolic – such language also refuses to identify with the father and the logic of the father's discourse, that is, the conventional symbolic order and thus the patriarchal world. According to Lacan, it is the language of the search for a lost *objet petit a* defines the entire human life. Instead of a lost *objet petit a*, life only offers fetishes such as God, Nation, Commodity, Ruler, and others which shifting from the Imaginary to the Symbolic language will never restore the original wholeness or compensate for what is lost. Kristeva also believes that “the rhythms of the body and

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<sup>35</sup> Lynn Heginien, “Who Speaks”, transl. by Maya Solar, *ProFemina*, 46/50, 2007–2008, 174.

the unconscious managed to break through the strict rational defenses of conventional social meaning” in the literary works of the mentioned writers, and that “the language of these artists is close to a child’s speech when learning the language and using shouting, singing, gestures, word games, or laughter, everything that, like a dream, defies signification but achieves its goal”.<sup>36</sup> The parallel between the cited artists’ literary actions and Berio’s treatment of the text in *Sequenza III* appears to be apparent.

On the other hand, when listening to the voice in *Sequenza III*, however, the meaning, i.e. its looming, can be fully ignored in order to enjoy the aesthetic dimension of the voice. In Berio’s *Sequenza III*, the voice carries something—a fragmented text that is potentially meaningful, but that meaning is suppressed in favor of the voice, contrary to the purpose of speech in the voice. In terms of the aesthetic dimension, that voice embodies virtuosity as the aesthetic norm, but also something more. It is not coloratura virtuosity, very high or very deep tones, big, excessive or decreased intervals, sound power, and so forth. It’s a virtuosity that could be described as virtuosity of a wide range of sounds for which the performance instructions are not always precisely given, despite the great number of them. This excess, which is ‘attached’ to the virtuosity of performing a wide range of sounds for which precise instructions are impossible to give, occupies a position that is partially analogous—or at least appears to be—to that of the voice in cases where it is an obvious medium, transmitter of signifiers which allows expression but is also drowned in the signifier, “disappears at the same moment when the meaning emerges”.<sup>37</sup> As a consequence, the voice is something that does not contribute to meaning, that is, its creation. It is a blind spot in the meaning-making process, a refuse of meaning,<sup>38</sup> and it is something that linguistics does not study. The signifier, on the other hand, has no materiality; it must utilize the voice or rather silence, suppress the voice in order to establish the reality we know as “imaginable” reality (as opposed to “sublime reality”, “objective reality”, the Real, etc.), by referring to another signifier, and this one to the next, the next to the next, and so on. In relation to the fact that voice is a refuse of meaning or significance, Dolar mentions three elements that oppose the meaning in the voice: accent, intonation and color. The accent of language (English) in Berio’s composition cannot exist and cannot offer resistance to

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<sup>36</sup> Mladen Dolar, op. cit., 2012, 99.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 26.



the text meaning, its signifiers, so that resistance to the text meaning, apart from the composer's intervention to decompose words and syllables, is based on individual "intonation", as Dollar defines it, of everyone's voice,<sup>39</sup> whereas in a speech about music one would write about the composer's articulation marks, the tempo or character of the performing music, and, of course, the color and individuality of the voice. Mladen Dolar reminds us that the voice is like a fingerprint: it can be instantly recognized and identified, and it is full of side effects,<sup>40</sup> which is why Luciano Berio composed *Sequenza III* first and foremost for Cathy Berberian, who has remained a symbol of this composition, despite the fact that it can be sung by other artists. Individuality, color/structure/density of voice is the surplus "attached" to the composition virtuosity, and that excess, like the excess produced by signifiers, provides enjoyment/(dis)like that points to the "reality of humanity" versus the effects of mechanically, electronically realized voice.

In this regard, Berio's attempt to achieve "objective reality", which is a significant tendency of the art of radical modernism, i.e., the aesthetic regime of art during the 20<sup>th</sup> century that immediately reveals its situation in a certain historical and political sequence, led Berio to discover the language of desire manifested by music, even though, if we keep in mind the artistic context of the time in which Berio worked, the composer's intention was most likely the one mentioned – reaching objective reality Berio would not have requested the text for his piece if this were not the case. The composer repeated the gesture of eliminating ideologies carried by signifiers known since Maljevic or the gesture of erasing the patriarchal Symbolic Order known since Mallarmé, by officially ordering the text and then destroying the text template. However, it turned out that the reality Berio sought behind words was the field of the unconscious that Freud and later Lacan and other psychoanalysts spoke about, which he attained in parts but found incomprehensible in its entirety – the field of the unconscious where desire lies. So, while the voice in Berio's composition suppresses and splits the signifiers, resisting imaginable reality with all its policies and ideologies, plunging (unconsciously) into the depths of the unconscious where desire is, that voice suppressing the meaning offers something of its own – virtuosity, which is not just virtuosity. It is not only a traditional virtuosity, the one already adopted by reality, which, if Berio had used it, would have lost its politicalness, in this case, the ability to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 34.

sensorily represent the unconscious language, because it would be traditionally reduced to an expected aesthetic pleasure enclosed by the boundaries of traditional art. This surplus, however, the excess of new virtuosity, on the other hand, is a new pleasure that spills outside the voice, sending the performer or listener to an “imaginable reality”, sheltering them from the dreadful and traumatic Real.

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## Summary

Luciano Berio, as it is well known, composed *Sequenza III per voce femminile* in 1965, inspired by Catherine Anahid 'Cathy' Berberian's singing. The piece was written during a period of intense, avant-garde research into instrumental and vocal sounds across Europe and the search for the so-called reality behind reality. *Sequenza III* is a musical composition that the singer should perform unaccompanied by any instrument using singing, improvised facial expressions and hand movements, as well as a variety of previously unusual sounds that change quickly and suddenly (coughing, whispering, tongue clicks, laughter, sighs, shouts, etc.). The meaning of the composition text is difficult to deduce because it is fragmented into shifting syllables and phonemes. All the mentioned characteristics of this composition have led some musicologists to claim that this type of musical work resembles the singing and speech of a crazy woman. In reality, psychoanalytic and feminist research has helped to prove that this type of vocal virtuosity, which differs from conventional opera singing or singing of popular or folk music, is, in fact, a mode to explore the human unconscious in the way that painters, by exploring the medium of painting, studied the language of painting and developed visual thinking, while also re-examining the reality that was presented to them. So Luciano Berio tried to reach the reality that is not determined by the conventions of any traditional singing, i.e. the conventions of a patriarchal, ideologically represented world, by using the female voice as a medium that produces sounds typical, as feminist authors have noted, of the domain of the house, the home atmosphere, what is private, hidden from the public, intimate, obscene, intuitive. He used a feminine voice, which may be the right medium to introduce a newborn human being to the world, as well as an unarticulated text by which he annulled (similar to Malevich in the field of painting who avoided imitating any scene and thus any ideology with *Black Square*) the world of the already known singing and thus expressing the feeling of reality by centuries-old conventions of the (primarily patriarchal) society. Thus, by exploring the boundaries of the voice medium, Berio came close to reaching the sound of 'reality behind reality', the sound of the unconscious, where, among other things and according to psychoanalytic theories, human desire dwells, and which, according to Freud, can be heard and which speaks out, unlike the instinct

of death, which is inaudible. Is it, then, possible to say that any experimental singing that we are not familiar with, whose conventions we do not recognize is the sound of human desire? Of course not, because, according to the results of psychoanalytic research thus far, desire has its own means of expression. Berio's composition fits into feminist psychoanalytic opinions (for example, those of Julia Kristeva), Mladen Dolar's research into the relationship between the phenomenon of voice and desire, and research into the human unconscious Freud dealt with, among other things, or Lacan's research of *jouissance* – a transgressive kind of pleasure that turns people into never-completed subjects ('split' subjects, separated from the Imaginary, protected from the Real).