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Recitative in the female roles of Stefano Landi's *Il Sant'Alessio*

Three female characters: Wife, Mother and an old Minder, closest to the main character, Alessio, perform crucial functions. Their roles are rather not extensive, spreading over 332 lines (including ensemble sections), which amounts to slightly more than 22 percent of lines in the whole drama. These characters only feature in five scenes.[1] However, apart from scene 4[2] of act 3 their entrances are well developed and central to the plot, as not only are the characters related to the protagonist, but also to many other persons of the drama. Demonio is well capable of using them against Alessio's holiness; a member of the family, Eufemiano (Alessio's father), shares the pain and despair of the women following the difficult to understand disappearance of the son. Finally, two buffoons, who cannot approach anything with seriousness, make fun of the grief and torment of the women.

Melody line plays an important role in recitatives, especially for female characters. In the lament of the Wife (act 2, scene 3) melody is most diversified, contrasted, and emotionally striking, since it shows the heroine's feelings in the most evocative way. Additionally, in this section Landi applied a variety

[1] That is act 1, scene 5; act 2, scene 3 and 4; and act 3, scene 3 and 4

[2] In this scene the Mother has a two-line utterance, whereas the Wife's part comprises one line.

of technical solutions to emphasise emotions; specific words or phrases were highlighted by means of dissonant harmonies or *intervalli falsi*. This scene clearly shows the extent to which Landi shaped the melody of the recitative in relation to the content of the text, permeated with the expressions of hurt and sorrow experienced by the Wife bewailing the loss of Alessio. Nearly all ascending and descending tendencies in the melodic line, as well as its more changeable or uniform character arise from the content of the text.

The scene in question displays the features of an operatic lament, as established by the first representation of its form in *L'Arianna* by Rinuccini-Monteverdi. The text in the form of *verso sciolto* reveals succeeding emotional states of the heroine, who bids farewell to her motherland, neighbourhood, and home, and, finally, breaks into pangs of sorrow longing for her husband; she suspects that he has betrayed her. Next, however, comes a moment of reflection, nearly mirroring Rinuccini's poetry:

G. Rospigliosi	O. Rinuccini
Lasso, dove trascorre il dolor mio?	*Che parlo, ahi! che vaneggio?*
Che parlo, e che vaneggio?	*Misera, Ohimè, che chieggio?*

After that contemplative moment the Wife observes that she should complain about her fate, not about Alessio. This inner turnover brings her to the praise of Alessio's virtues. In accordance with the intonation, the composer marked this moment by repeating the first four syllables at the highest pitch ($b\flat''$) and a descending fourth on the fifth syllable.

Both laments have in common also other features, such as remarks of the third parties (the Minder in Rospigliosi's text and the choir in the work by Rinuccini) who separate the lament into three different phases of distinct mood. The Wife is not aware of the fact that the old Minder witnesses her expression of grief. The Minder does not approve of her intention to leave and look for Alessio, and she doesn't share the enormous despair caused by his disappearance. She remains level-headed and wants to encourage the Mother to dissuade the Wife from taking an unnecessary journey (Example 1, bars 28–33):

[14] *Ma poichè la sua fuga ho ben compresa,*	But as I well predicted her escape,
[15] *Già non permetterò sì vana impresa.*	I will not allow such pointless endeavour.

At this point Landi proposes two musical solutions, outstanding in character. Just before line 14 he introduced a minim rest to stress the fact that the Minder was considering the best method to most effectively safeguard the Wife against her imprudent idea. The second solution involved aligning the last two syllables of line 15 with the longest notes in the entire scene.[3] In effect, the listener's attention should be attracted to the fact that such a foolhardy undertaking cannot bring the right result, according to the Minder. The triple repetition of the line in the middle section of the lament (Example 1, bars 45–47):

[20] *Dove, deh dove sei, dove t'ascondi?* Where, oh, where are you, where have you hidden?

both splits this segment and adds to it the taint of despair through very explicit musical setting. Division of this eleven-syllable verse into three groups by means of two crotchet rests seems the most crucial element: there are two-, three-, and four-note groups (a method used by Landi a number of times). The first appearance of the reiterated verse is distinguished by its surrounding rests: after line 19 there is a minim rest, which signifies reverie over the happy days the couple once spent together. Suddenly, the Wife comes to realise the depressing reality, and line 20 brings her cry of despair, with triple exclamation *dove?* [where?] (set at the high pitch of *g♯″*, *g♯″*, and *a″*). At its second and third appearance line 20 comes slightly changed rhythmically and not surrounded by rests; still, the elements that constitute the core of this line remain the same:

1. the rests that split the line into three segments,
2. the augmented triad in the second inversion (*c♯″–f″–a″*) which reappears at the third appearance of the word *dove* (the use of this characteristic triad emphasises the importance of the repetition, therefore, it can be considered as an unusual example of the rhetorical figure of *gradatio*[4]),
3. long note values (minims, and at the third appearance of the line, an ornamental cadence) on the last two syllables of the words *t'ascondi,* which the entire verse heads towards.

The word *dove* bears special significance in the lament: it reappears in the role of the Wife as many as 14 times; out of which 9 times in the reiterated line 20, as well as in line 16, 17, 18, 45, and 50. Each time the emotional context is

[3] The note on the tenth syllable is a semibreve, whereas the one on syllable eleven is a dotted semibreve.

[4] Most typically, *gradatio* comprised a group of notes repeated gradually at higher and higher pitches.

similar: the mention of wonderful past, that is the time spent with her husband contrasted against the painful present situation. Each time the word *dove* is accompanied with a descending interval: a second (once), a third (ten times), and a fourth (once), apart from lines 16, 18 and 50. In verse 18 (Example 1, bars 39––41) Landi's priority was the exclamation *Ah,* which he paired with the highest, longest and sectioned by leaps of fourths note *g″*. Additional emphasis on the word *dove* would disturb the balance of the exclamation, as the content of the lines 18 and 19 (bars 39–44) paves the way to the final words: *i dì giocondi?*[5] [bright days]. It is distinguished by a minim rest, which plays an important role at this point—it separates contrastive emotions: positive—the memory of the time spent with her husband (lines 18 and 19) and painful—coming to realise the tragic present situation: no information about where the husband could now be (line 20, bars 45–47). Lines 16 and 50 give account of a different situation.

In the section in question the long rests (an eight in the part of the Wife and a ninth appears in the part of the Minder) become important as the means of organising the recitative, distinguishing its individual verses or segments, as well as the sign indicating a given character's time for reflection; they also underline some exclamations.

The first two long rests (bars 13 and 15) set apart line 7—the Wife succumbs to the will of Heaven. What is more, this line has been singled out by three consecutive leaps of perfect fourths (alternately up and down) and becomes the last, recapitulating verse of the Wife bidding farewell to her home (Example 1, bars 5–15):

[3] *Mura dilette, a Dio,*	Farewell, beloved walls,
[4] *Che pur sete dilette,*	You are all dear to me,
[5] *Quantunque entr'a voi solo*	Even though it was in your midst
[6] *Sia nata la cagion del mio gran duolo.*	that my great sorrow was born.
[7] *Bramai viver in voi, ma il Ciel non volle.*	I longed to live in here, but Heaven forbade it.

Having announced that the Wife gets ready to leave.

The rests after line 14 in the part of the Minder and before line 20 in the part of the Wife have already been mentioned, whereas the rest before line 22 (extended by a crotchet rest) points to the beginning of the apostrophe to

[5] At this point, through the rhetorical figure of *interrogatio* the melody was raised by a second.

Alessio, which lasts till the repetition of verse 20 (as verse 26). However, the rest at the end of line 42 appears to be the most essential and the most expressive, though less often applied, as it is the general pause. In lines 41 and 42 the Wife starts doubting Alessio's faithfulness (Example 2, bars 88–90):

[41] *Ah, gioventù fallace,*	Oh, treacherous youth
[42] *Spergiura è la tua fede.*	How faithless is your fidelity.

The general pause that follows suggests deep reflection over Alessio's capability for betrayal. The coming two lines express the Wife's doubt about such possibility:

[43] *Misera, a chi mai più creder poss'io?*	Poor me, whom could I believe?
[44] *S'Alessio fu mendace?*	If Alessio cheated on me?

In lines 45 and 46 the already reassured heroine reproaches herself:

[45] *Lasso, dove trascorre il dolor mio?*	Poor me, where has my suffering brought me?
[46] *Che parlo e che vaneggio?*	What am I saying and raving on?

Ensuing the general pause, come a number of specific devices introduced by the composer in order to diversify the recitative. Enclosed within the *ambitus* of a tenth, it comprises lines stretching over a fourth (nine lines) and a fifth (three lines).[6] Apart from the alternation of short repetitions of several notes and more heterogeneous shapes, melodic restlessness is also expressed by more extensive leaps—out of the total number of twelve there are nine fourths and three fifths.[7] A considerable majority of them represents descending intervals (all fifths and six fourths), as they undoubtedly refer to *res tristes* and arise from the content of the text.

In their message, lines 50 and 51 pave the way to the last, yet, key and most vital word: *Sole* [sun] (Example 3):

[50] *Là dove ogni virtù risplender suole,*	Where every virtue used to shine,
[51] *Di virtù fosti, e d'innocenza un Sole.*	You were the sun of purity and innocence.

The opening of line 50 (syllables 1–6, 8) is recited on the high pitched *a"*. The first word of this verse *Là* [there] has been distinguished by its duration (minim) and shows that in their content both lines prepare the aforementioned

[6] Still, line 49 makes an exception with its *ambitus* of a second followed by the range of a third in line 50.

[7] On average, a new leap appears every bar and a half.

word of verse 51, i.e. *Sole*. Admittedly, repetitions become predominant in line 50; nevertheless, it is the coming line that brings a range of methods (also the less common ones) aimed at exposing the word *Sole* even more: omitting elisions, pairing some syllables with two notes, and a quaver rest after the fifth syllable, all of which resulted in stretching the 51st line over 15 notes. Moreover, syllables 3, 5, 8 and 11 bring long note values (especially minims), whereas at the last two syllables, where the word *Sole* arrives, the listener's attention is attracted to two longest durations—semibreves. Landi uses such long values on key words, which he intends to underscore in this way, especially when they are the last two syllables of the line. The following are examples from the scene in question (Example 1 bars 9–33): on the word *duolo* [pain] in bars 11–12, in verse 10 *Aspra pena è la vita* [Life is bitter suffering] on the word *vita* (bar 22––23), in line 15 on the words *vana impresa* [futile undertaking] (bars 31–32).

Just like in act 1, scene 5, in act 2, scene 3 as well as in act 3, scene 3, the descending third (sometimes fourth) has been clearly emphasised as the interval opening the parts of female characters. In addition, it features in the melodic lines of various exclamations. The descending third *e″–c″* (or its inversion: *c″–e″*), reappearing a number of times in the vocal part in scene 5 of act 1 could be referred to as the unifying interval. It opens the scene and appears 19 times along its lines, including nine times as the beginning of the part of a given character. Even both recitatives of Martio and Curtio, who mock the grief of the women, start with this interval. One could go as far as to resolve that the third (especially if descending) has become a characteristic feature, which Landi especially likes to introduce in the recitatives of the Mother, the Wife and the Minder.[8] The descending third can frequently be found in the scenes featuring Eufemiano, who (just like the women) truly grieves for his lost son; it can also be traced in the part of Alessio in scene 5 of act 2, which forms an internal monologue, a type of lament.[9] (The protagonist learns about his Mother's and Wife's intention to leave home in search of him). All these scenes correspond to one another through the type of emotions that they illustrate. These five persons (the Wife, the Mother, the Minder, Eufemiano

[8] Scene 5 of act 1 contains 29 descending thirds; scene 3 of act 2—33, whereas scene 4 of act 2—53.

[9] Opening the verses with a descending third becomes evident too in scene 8 of act 2, in the dialogue between Demonio and Marzio. Demonio is disguised as a hermit, thus having a human form he employs the interval that characterises the parts of other people.

and Adrasto) who were the closest to Alessio and who cared about him most, identify with his actions and behaviour. That behaviour triggers the same emotions that unify the aforementioned characters. It seems that Landi underlined it by applying some general and discrete musical devices. Undoubtedly, the downward-tending thirds play a role again, and they prevail in the parts of characters bewailing their loss of Alessio. What is more, the devices include large leaps coming both separately and in groups, which clearly marks the degree of emotional involvement of specific persons. Given below is the ratio of the quantity of leaps (more extensive than a third) to the number of lines in the most representative scenes of the six main characters;[10] one could remark that the more frequent the leaps are in a given part, the deeper are the character's feelings of sorrow resulting from Alessio's retreat. Consequently, the person most affected by the bereavement is Eufemiano—the leaps feature in his laments on average every 1.2 bar. In turn, the person who seems most distanced to the intentions of the Wife and the Mother to leave in search of Alessio is the Minder. Her recitatives contain a leap nearly every three bars. In terms of emotional involvement, the most affected person is the Wife—her recitative displays leaps almost every bar and a half; when it comes other parts, the leaps come with the frequency of more than every two bars. Alessio's anxiety over his Wife's and Mother's will to leave in search of him in foreign countries is expressed in his monologue (act 1 scene 2) by relatively frequent use of larger intervals (every two and a half bars).

The leaps involve running the melody along an arpeggiated triad. Admittedly, this way of shaping the melody has been so commonly employed by Landi that it can be found in each scene, and in the part of each character. However, in the scenes with females it is persistent, and recurring repetitions of one note in conjunction with leaps create the impression that the entire long parts develop along the notes of triads. It serves as a method of making the recitative more 'tuneful' as well as emphasising an important verse, expression or word. Out of the four scenes featuring women, the longest melodic line consisting only of the notes of a triad, altogether 28, belongs to the part of Alessio (!) in act 2, scene 4. In the whole scene there are as many as 208 notes that are

[10] For the Wife and the Minder the crucial scenes include number 3 and 4 of act 2, whereas for the Mother—scene 4 of act 2; for Eufemiano it is scene 1 of act 2, for Alessio—scene 2 of act 1, and for Adrasto scene 1 of act 1.

connected with triads.[11] In scene 3 of act 3 there are only two such segments with a greater number of notes (each containing 14).

In scene 5 of the first act nearly each utterance of the female characters stretches over a wide *ambitus* of seventh up to a tenth; whereas in the fragments where the parts only consist of one line, the *ambitus* in a quick (conversational) exchange ranges from a fourth up to a sixth. A wider *ambitus* results from the fact that the composer employed larger leaps, both within specific verses, and between verses, and as so-called 'defunct intervals', which can nevertheless be clearly audible, as they transfer given parts to other registers. Next to the fourths, which seem most common, the next in frequency come fifths (also diminished fifths) and sixths; octaves may be used too.

As it was mentioned before, Landi quite often based recitatives on the notes of arpeggiated triads. This type of restless melody line sharply opposes long passages consisting of repetitions of notes, also transferred by a larger interval (fifth, sixth) up or down, neighbouring the unsettled lines. Therefore, it may happen that the general *ambitus* of one utterance of a female character is wide, whereas some lines are of narrow scope.

The length of specific notes also influences the dynamism of the type of recitative used by Landi. The composer reaches for contrastive combinations relatively more often in the parts of women: on the one hand, there are semiquavers, on the other hand, minims and semibreves, as well as two notes paired with one syllable. Scene 5 of act 1 includes as many as 15 examples of the last method of structuring the musical setting; in most cases they represent ornamental cadences or clausulae, with durations always longer than minims,[12] with two exceptions to be found in a quick exchange between the Mother and the Wife.

The line summarising the utterance of the Mother (Example 6, bars 126––128):

[65] *Sperai d'esser felice, e piango ohimè* I hoped to be happy, yet, I'm crying, woe is me!

is clearly distinguished, as its arrangement (only once again reappearing in the whole piece, in close proximity) exceptionally links one syllable with two

[11] Among others there are 2 segments with 17 notes each, one with 15 notes, 4 containing 12 notes each, two with 11 notes and many segments with several notes.

[12] They usually involve alignments of quavers, crotchets and minims, predominantly with minims, less often with semibreves.

semiquavers connected with a large descending interval (bar 127): minor sixth on the conjunction *e* and a perfect fifth coming on the first syllable of the exclamation *ohimè*.

The juxtaposition does not merely refer to note values. Of more crucial value and characterising the emotions are combinations of diversified melodies, of long repetitive segments directly turning into heterogeneous lines, both when it comes to note durations and various rests introduced within lines. What seems crucial here is the end of the second utternace of the Wife, not capable of coming to terms with the sudden, unexpected disappearance of her beloved husband (Example 5, bars 67–75):

[36]	*Ond'io co'miei pensier miseri, e lassi*	Thus, with my woeful and tormenting thoughts
[37]	*Con sospiri interrotti,*	with interspersed sighing,
[38]	*Vo misurando i passi*	I measure the steps
[39]	*Delle tacite notti.*	of silent nights.

This point marks a decisive contrast between the first two and the following verses. Apart from a descendant minor sixth (the interval forbidden in the study of counterpoint) in lines 38 and 39 the second syllable of verse 38 brings only repetition of *e'*. In turn, the first two verses display more diversified melodic arrangement (verse 36 is enclosed within the *ambitus* of a diminished fifth *g♯''* – *d''*) as well as other special solutions. After verse 36 Landi introduced a minim rest, which in the history of *dramma per musica* was applied to emphasise the moments of contemplation of the characters (how they should act, or how they should respond to a fact or a remark made by somebody else). For the discussed fragment the rest would not be necessary, as the Mother only lives by the thoughts of her son, thus, she does not have to consider how her grief should be expressed. Still, most probably the composer's intention was to stress *pensieri lassi* [tormenting thoughts] than to give the character some space for reflection. The rests in the following verse seem to have more bearing, though. At the words *Con sospiri interrotti* [with interspersed sighing] Landi employed a device known from madrigals, so far not used by composers in *dramma per musica*. In madrigals the word *sospirare* [sigh] was quite often illustrated by crotchet rests before, after, or even in the middle (!). To strengthen the meaning of the words Landi introduced that rest in the middle of both words (*sospiri* and *interrotti*). Thus, the entire verse was emphasised in two ways: by the unconventional use of a rest and, as a result, by splitting the melodic line of the

short verse (*settenario*) into three segments (each containing only three or two notes). These devices created the atmosphere of unrest in line with the emotions described by the Mother.

What is particularly frequent in the parts of women as well as in the part of Eufemiano is the characteristic melodic figure associated with the feelings of pain, with crying or complaining. It consists of three notes separated with leaps (of a fourth or a third more often than bigger intervals), mostly ascending and descending (more rarely the opposite). The bigger the interval the more vivid the emotion or word that is underlined.[13]

In respect of tonality and counterpoint the recitatives of individual characters have not been contrasted. The diatonic scale dominates most of the composition, whereas sharp dissonant harmonies, clearly marked with figuration of *basso continuo*, were introduced by Landi in order to bring some focus. For instance, in verse 10, when the Wife replies to the Minder that one should not forbid others to cry (Example 4, bars 17–18):

[10] *Pur lagrimar non lece.*	It ill befits me even to cry.

the word *lagrimar* [cry] has been accompanied by the four harmonies of a seventh: prepared and resolved.

The final, the summarising utterance of the Wife has been marked in a unique way by a repeated dissonant harmony, when the heroine states that even after she has died her heart will remain faithful to Alessio (Example 7, bars 168–177):

[78] *Temo, ch'il nodo adamantino, e forte*	I'm afraid that node is adamant and strong
[79] *Onde il mio cor già restò teco involto,*	After all, my heart will ever stay with you,
[80] *Abbia l'acerba morte*	Even when the ruthless death
[81] *Con empia man disciolto.*	cuts through the strand of life.

Between the word *nodo* [node] in line 78 and the word *teco* [with you] in line 79, Landi used a dissonance of a seventh as many as 17 times in a row. It was not prepared, but correctly resolved into an octave. This segment contains a dissonant reappearing throughout approximately three bars—the longest in the entire composition.

[13] This figure reappears in the four parts of female characters almost 70 times. It is most predominant in the part of the Wife, where it can be found 26 times, and the least common in the part of the Minder—9 times.

A diminished fifth has a special meaning in this scene —it always spreads over the distance of *g♯′* and *d″*. It can be described as the *ambitus* of line 36 and in lines 16, 45, 57 and 92 it singles out some pessimistic words and emotions: in line 16, in the part of the Mother the emphasised words are *accumulare duolo* [to summarise the pain], in line 45, in the part of the Wife an entire line *Amara, infida notte* [bitter unfaithful night] has been emphasised; in line 57, in the part of the Mother saying that the sufferings after losing Alessio has been as numerous as (Example 6, bars 108–111):

[57] *Stelle in Ciel, fronde in terra, arene in Mare.* The starts in the sky, leaves on the ground and sand in the sea.

Only in line 93 in the part of the Minder there are words comforting the Wife and the Mother

[93] *Al Ciel volgete i vostri prieghi e'l core.* To heaven raise your hearts and prayers.

Next to the devices that individualised recitatives, the composer also applied the means unifying or homogenising the parts of specific persons. Among others, the devices included the way of developing the recitative through several bars against the backdrop of one unchanged note in the bass. This solution was applied especially for the melody of a recitative built on the notes of a chord.[14]

An interesting compositional practice to represent the emotions arising from the poetic text helps to render a fragment describing how the loss of Alessio is bewailed by the Wife, and the Mother, who refer to him with the words (Example 6, bars 112–128):

Sposa
[58] *Perchè privarmi, o Dio, degl'occhi tuoi?* Oh, Lord, why do you deprive me of your presence?
Madre
[59] *Come, crudele, abbandonar mi puoi?* How, oh cruel, can you leave me?
Sposa
[60] *Quanto, oh quanto fugace* How, oh, how swift
[61] *Avesti, Alessio, il piè?* were your feet, Alessio?
Madre
[62] *Quanto, oh quanto fallace* How, oh, how misleading

[14] For instance, verses 1–3, where for the bass note *A* there are 22 notes in the vocal part, out of which only 4 do not belong to the triad A–C–E; in lines 11–13, for the bass founded on *C* there are 27 notes in the vocal line, 7 of which are not part of the triad C–E–G.

[63] *Fortuna è la tua fè?*	is your faithfulness, oh, Fortune?
Sposa	
[64] *Teco sperai gioir, son senza tè.*	I hoped to share my joy with you, yet, I'm without you.
Madre	
[65] *Sperai d'esser felice, e piango ohimè.*	I hoped to be happy, yet, oh, I'm crying.

In this segment the suffering of female characters is growing. Each coming one-sentence utterance of the Mother has its equivalent in the following sentence of the Wife.

Landi musically interpreted each pair of the dialogue in an elaborate manner emphasising at the same time the similar reasoning of both women. Each phrase of the Mother resembles, though it does not copy, the previous phrase uttered by the Wife; the Mother confirms the feelings of the Wife. And thus, the melodic line in both verses of the first pair (lines 58 and 59) is almost identical (the descending fourth at the beginning of the line, and a minim rest at the end). However, each utterance heads for a different final chord of the same mode, i.e. a-Aeolian. In the same vein, the second pair of utterances (lines 60/61 and 62/63) melodically remains nearly the same, although the final phrase is different. The third pair of utterances (lines 64 and 65) brings slight melodic variation. Still, it is integrated by the same modal device consisting in an excursion to the mode a-Aeolian into the sphere of *molle*, symbolising the happiness that had been awaited but was eventually lost (at the words *sperai gioir* and *d'esser felice*).

The anguish reaches its peak in a short duet finishing the dialogue.

In act 2, scene 4, which partly extends scene 3 of the same act, the melody of the recitative, even though resembling the previous scene, is not that dynamic any more, and the *ambitus* is not that wide. This scene does not bring emotions as strong as those from the previous one. The composer introduces a number of repetitions, especially in the dialogue of the women with Alessio, the dissonant harmonies are most often marked in the figured bass, several words and phrases have been distinguished by specific pitches, intervals or dissonances, just like in the previous scene. There are a few specific solutions that need to be focused on.

When the Wife finally abandons the idea of looking for Alessio, (Example 8, bars 164/65):

[136] *Dunque, rimango, ahi lassa*	Staying then, oh, hapless

the music brings a descending diminished fifth (from *g″* to *c♯″*), and next, to emphasise the exclamation *ahi lassa,* on the first syllable Landi repeats the same interval, but in the opposite direction. In the following fragment of the part of the Wife, on the words expressing that she gives up entirely (Example 8, bars 280–285):

[143] *Già moro per Alessio e già dal seno*	That is how I die because of him, and that is how from my bosom
[144] *Se n'fugge l'alma, e il viver mi vien meno.*	departs my soul and my strength fails me.

her fainting has been illustrated in a truly evocative way by lowering the melodic line by a ninth to *g♯′* (bars 283–285) and by repeating *g♯′*, which additionally forms a major seventh in reference to *basso continuo*. The melody of the vocal part enters at *a′* (and, together with the bass, constructs an octave), still, after a while, the last syllable of the line 144 brings back *g♯′*. In this way the melody remains unresolved through dissonant harmony and *cadenza tronca*, which illustrates absolute helplessness of the Wife. This state renders her speechless till the end of the scene.

The comment of the Minder that ensues refers to the condition of the fainting Wife, which Landi underlines in a special way (Example 8, bars 286––298):

[145] *Ah, più non si sostiene, e resta esangue,*	Oh, she has weakened and looks pale,
[146] *E freddo gielo il suo vigore opprime.*	The cold frost has sapped her strength.
[147] *Pur le palpita il cor, languido, e lento.*	Also her heart beats weakly and slowly.
[148] *E la lingua dell'alma in fronte esprime*	And the words of her soul brand on her face
[149] *Con voci di pietade il suo tormento.*	Her suffering with the voice of love.

This fragment is full of dissonances, repeated many times, marked both in the figured *basso continuo* (sevenths), and between the notes of *basso continuo* and the vocal part (fourths, ninths). The shape of the melodic line of the vocal part in line 145 (bars 286–288), through the gradually decreasing distance between the vocal line and *basso continuo* (octave, fifth, fourth, major third, and minor third), demonstrates the intensifying paleness of the fainting Wife. The Minder closely watches her, which is reflected by means of a minim rest at the end of verses 145, 147 and 149. Verse 147 starts a series of repeatedly reappearing dissonances[15] illustrating the Wife fainting, which finally happens on

[15] Out of 35 notes of the vocal part, 26 dissonate with the notes of *basso continuo*.

a descending major sixth that comes with the words *suo tormento;* bars 302/303 in *basso continuo* brings *clausula basisans* for the octave sound of *f–f''*.

To recapitulate, the recitative in the female parts of *Il Sant'Alessio* is strikingly diversified in the melodic and rhythmic layers. The composer applies both the devices that can be found in other points of the composition (although really rarely) and those only related to the recitative of women. Landi best expressed the feelings of pain and sorrow experienced by grieving women by means of basic compositional devices, little details which cannot always be immediately noticed, but bring about truly diverse effects. He mastered the method of introducing the apparently insignificant alterations resulting in constant diversification of the recitative while applying hardly any new solutions.
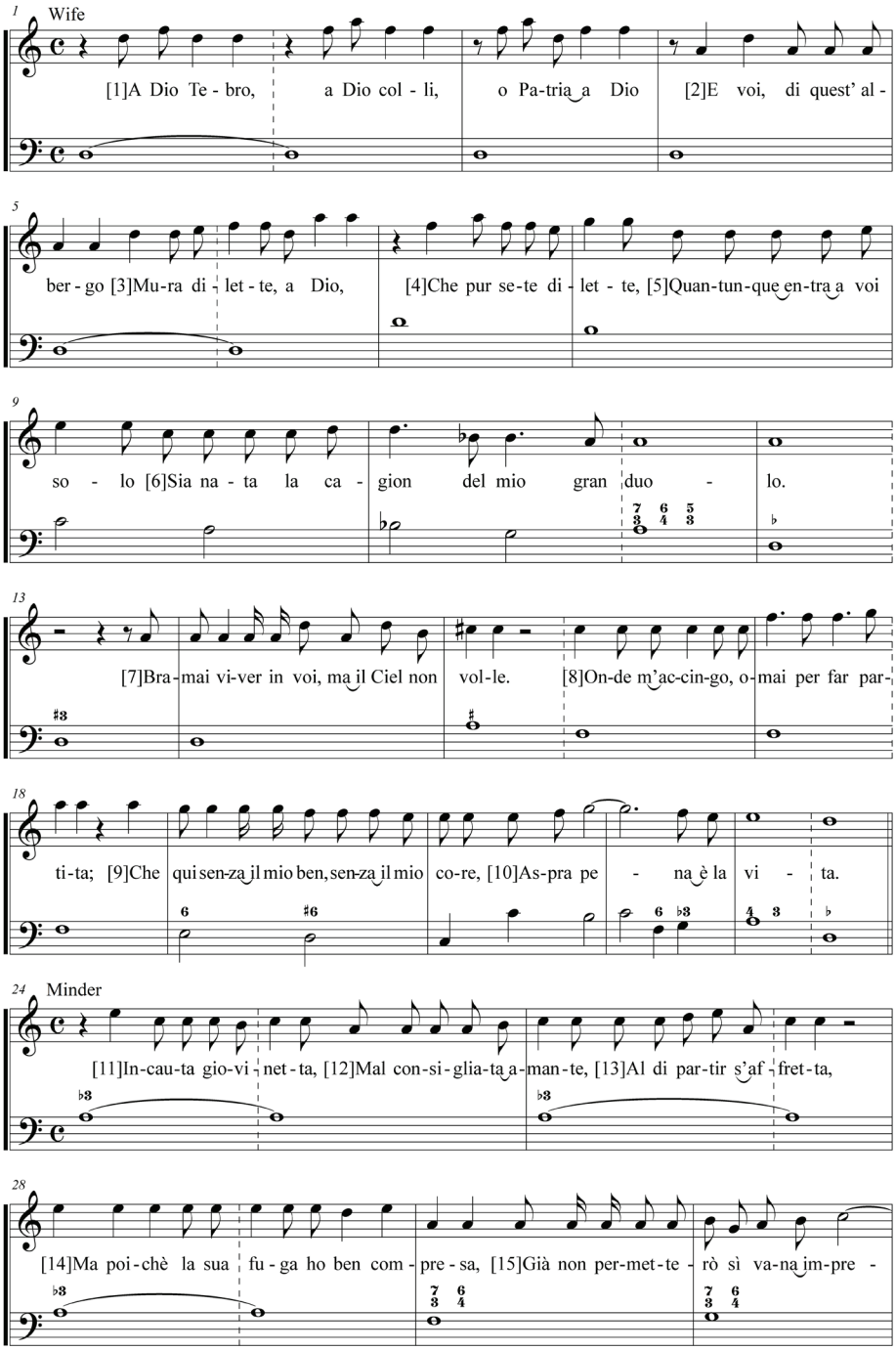
Translated by Agnieszka Gaj
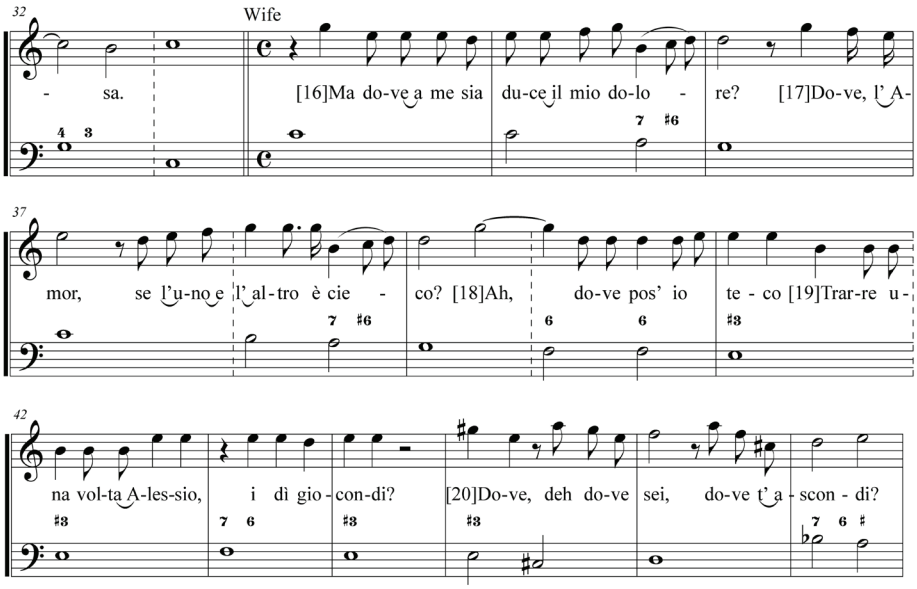
Abstract

In the recitative parts of the female roles, Landi introduces a number of technical solutions (mainly in the melody line), which appear in the female parts exceptionally often (sometimes not used in other parts). For instance: an interval that is always present between the same pitches (a third, a diminished fifth), leading the melody along an arpeggiated triad, long emphatic rests, grouping of melodic leaps within a short section, contrasting juxtaposition of repetitive and heterogeneous melody lines. These solutions always emphasize important words and emotions expressed in the text.

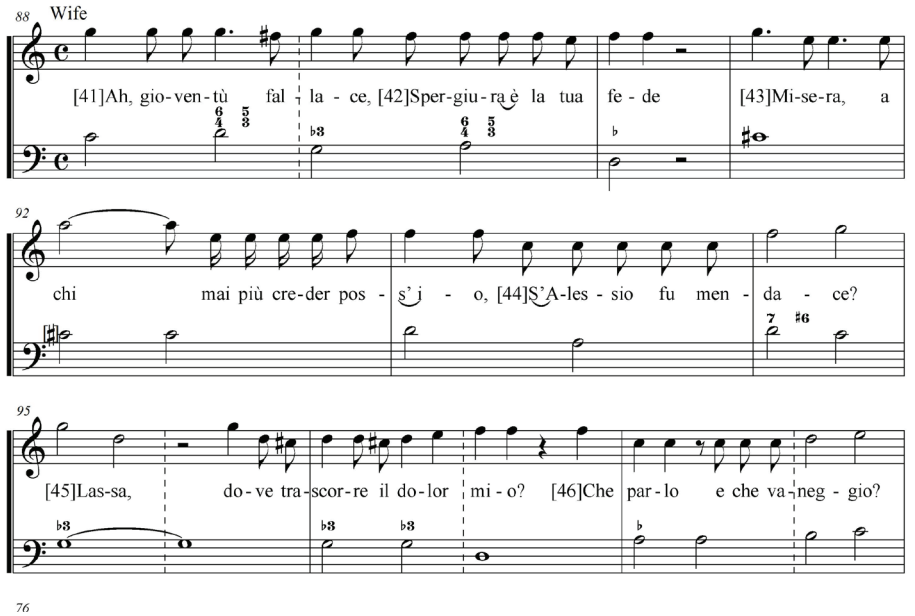
Keywords: Stefano Landi, *Il Sant'Alessio*, Baroque, Italian music, Early Baroque dramma per musica, Word-Music relations.

Example 1. Stefano Landi, *Il Sant'Alessio*, Act Two, Scene Three b. 1–47

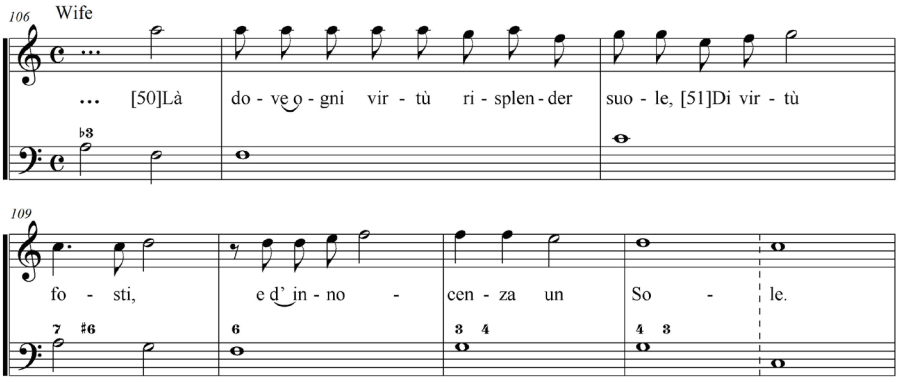




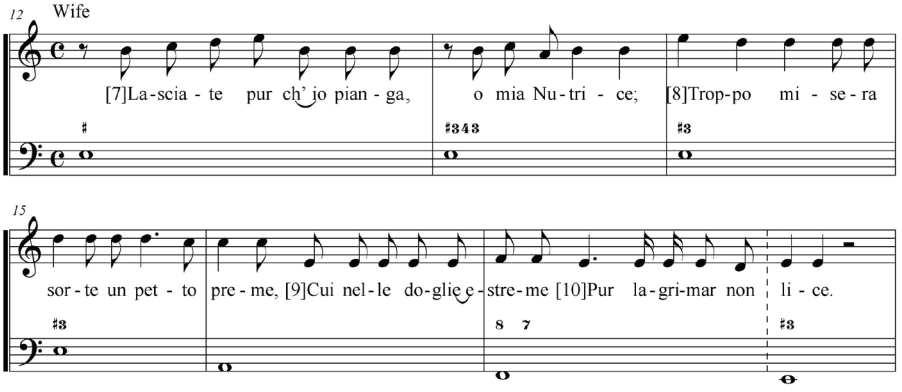
Example 2. Stefano Landi, *Il Sant'Alessio*, Act Two, Scene Three b. 88–100



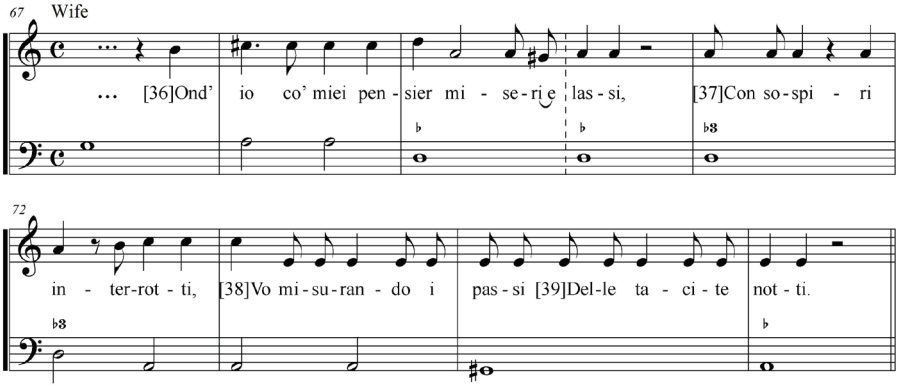
Example 3. Stefano Landi, *Il Sant'Alessio*, Act Two, Scene Three b. 106–113
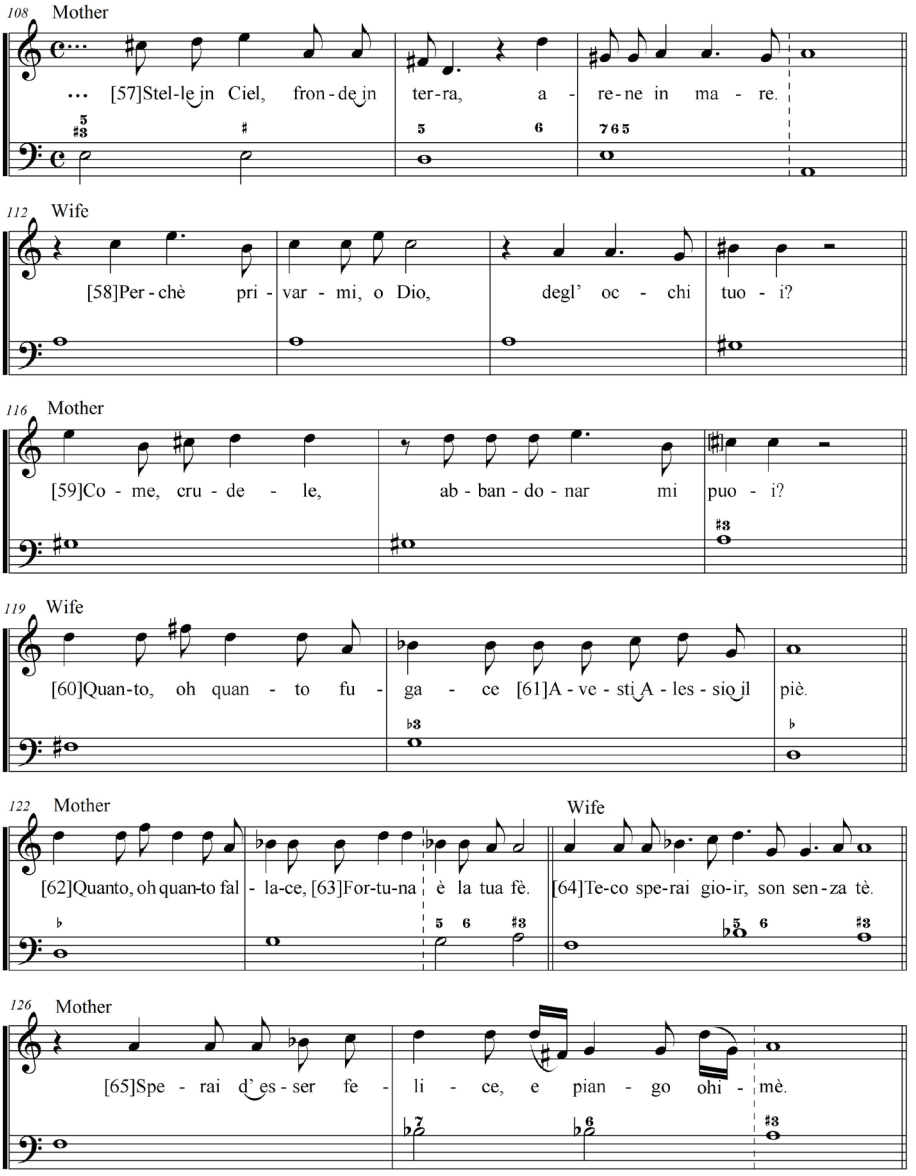


Example 4. Stefano Landi, *Il Sant'Alessio*, Act One, Scene Five, b. 12–18



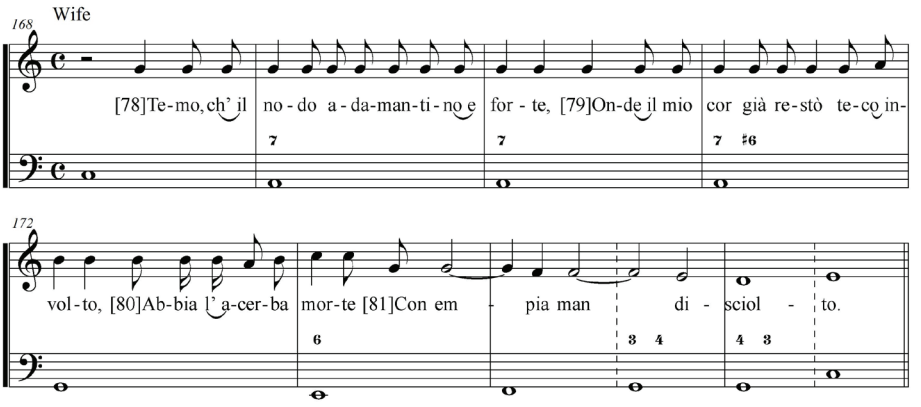
Example 5. Stefano Landi, *Il Sant'Alessio*, Act One, Scene Five, b. 67–75
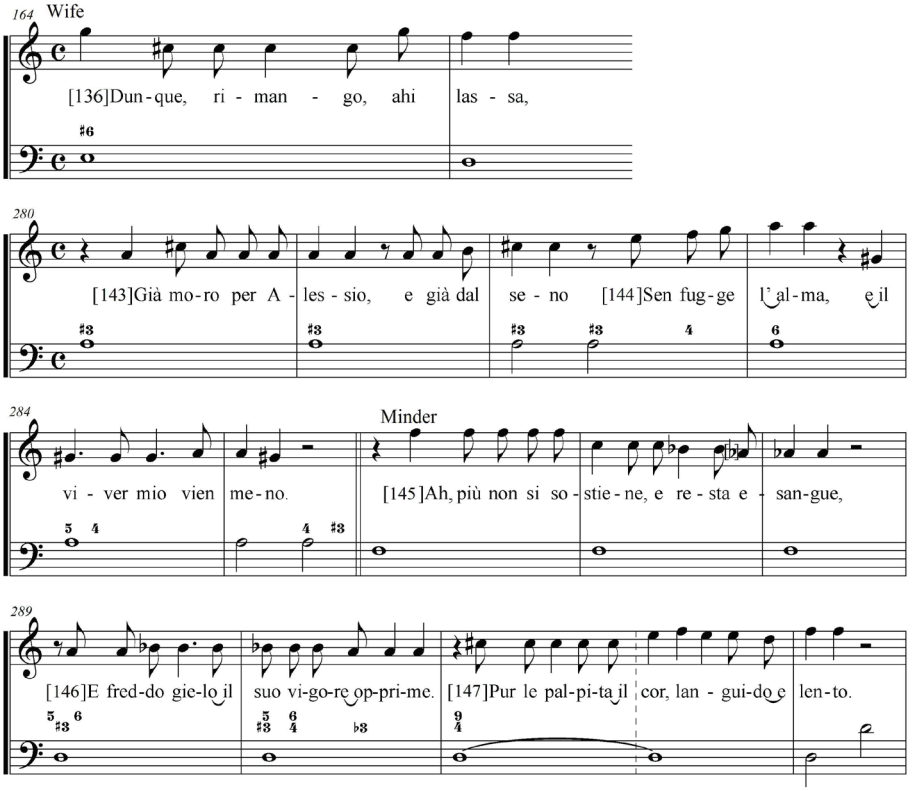


Example 6. Stefano Landi, *Il Sant'Alessio*, Act One, Scene Five, b. 108–128
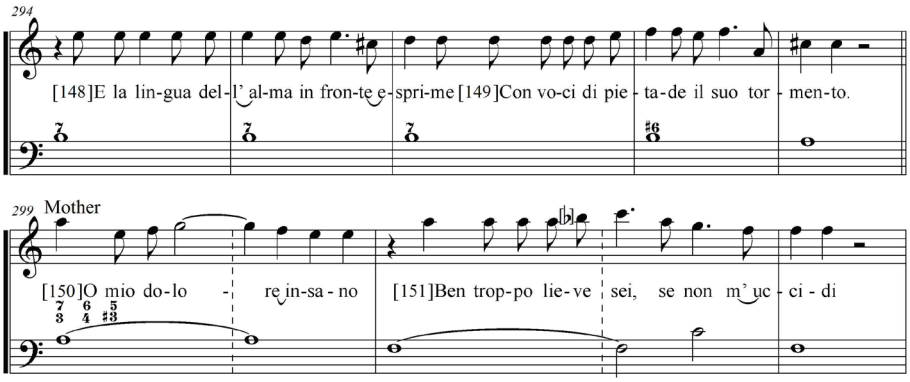


Example 7. Stefano Landi, *Il Sant'Alessio*, Act One, Scene Five, b. 168–177



Example 8. Stefano Landi, *Il Sant'Alessio*, Act Two, Scene Four, b. 164/65, 280–303




294
[148]E la lin-gua del-l' al-ma in fron-te e-spri-me [149]Con vo-ci di pie-ta-de il suo tor-men-to.
299 Mother
[150]O mio do-lo-re in-sa-no [151]Ben trop-po lie-ve sei, se non m' uc-ci-di