

Abstract

The Oscar that Ennio Morricone (b. 1928) won in 2016 for his music for Quentin Tarantino's *The Hateful Eight* came after a decades-long succession of nominations for other film scores. But these represent just the tip of the iceberg for Morricone, who since the early 1960s composed music for hundreds of film and television productions. Although dwarfed by this gargantuan record of accomplishment in music for the screen, Morricone's output as a composer of 'absolute music' nonetheless represents a substantial body of work that includes more than a hundred works for various combinations of instruments, voices, and electronic media. This chapter considers several of Morricone's most significant concert works – including *Cantata for Europe* (1988), *UT* (1991), *Voci dal silenzio* (2002), *Vuoto d'anima piena* (2008), and *Mass for Pope Francis* (2015) – within the context of his broader output. It also examines the considerable influence that opera, traditional sacred music, serialism, and *musique concrète* have had on Morricone's film music.

10

The maestro of multiple voices

The ‘absolute music’ of Ennio Morricone

Felicity Wilcox

Necessity and opportunity led to work in the cinema and hence the dual existence of my absolute music and applied music.ⁱ

When Ennio Morricone (b. 1928) was 11 years old, his father – a professional trumpeter in the nightclubs and music halls of Rome – sent him to learn to play the trumpet ‘properly’ at the Conservatorio di Musica di Roma.ⁱⁱ Ennio joined his father in his early teens, playing trumpet in theatre, variety, and dance revue bands during the American occupation in Rome in World War II.ⁱⁱⁱ This work sustained him into the 1950s, when he left a steady job as third trumpet at the Sistina (a Rome theatre famous for its musical comedies) to work as a professional arranger at the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and Radio Audizioni Italiane (RAI).^{iv} At the same time he was completing formal composition studies with the acclaimed Italian composer Goffredo Petrassi (1904–2003) at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia.^v Florentine musicologist and preeminent scholar of Morricone’s film music Sergio Miceli observes:

His double life began when he was still a student of Petrassi, in the sense that by day he was studying ‘serious’ composition at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia, and in his free time, he either played trumpet as a substitute for his father in local bands, or he worked on arrangements for the fledgling record industry.^{vi}

Petrassi had a profound influence on Morricone, both professionally and personally, influencing him through ‘his precision, his coherence and even the actual way he wrote out the music’.^{vii} It was Petrassi who instilled in Morricone the abiding ‘pursuit of a craft and creative morality’^{viii} that guided his professional choices and brought him consistently back to engage in his ‘great passion’, – the writing of ‘absolute music’ – despite the successful career he was building as a composer of ‘applied music’.^{ix} For Morricone, balancing the two types of activity was sometimes a struggle:

If I am honest there was a time when I resented being known only as a composer of soundtracks. Working in this way was never my ambition, although I do derive a great deal of satisfaction from it. My music is not all about film music even though I had to subsume my other work to it for so long in order to earn money and keep working. I dreamt of being a composer in the classical tradition and it pleases me that more and more audiences know me for my concert music. I probably owe their interest in great part to the fame my soundtracks brought me so I cannot complain.^x

This pragmatism and work ethic underpins the evolution of Morricone's sixty-year career, which spans some 500 scores for film and television, some 150 concert works, dozens of significant credits as an arranger and composer of Italian popular music, and 7 albums as a member of the avant-garde improvising composer collective Gruppo di Improvizzazione Nuova Consonanza (1964–80).^{xi} This essay will deal broadly with Morricone's music for everything *but* the screen, briefly discussing his output in popular music before considering his activities in avant-garde improvisation and the more significant concert works he composed between 1957 and 2017. Where relevant, I will attempt to trace the ways in which certain compositional methodologies and structures intersect within the contexts of both applied and absolute music in order to reveal connections between the multiple voices of this acclaimed 'maestro'.

Popular music

After learning that Morricone was studying composition at the Conservatory, in 1952 composer and RAI orchestra director Carlo Savina hired him as an arranger. The RAI environment nurtured the exploration and rigour so important for Morricone's emerging craft, with the radio station's small, predominantly string orchestra functioning as the vehicle for Morricone's application of his lessons with Petrassi:

I tried to redeem my work by introducing classical citations or virtuoso instrumental passages I learned during my studies, rather than write the normal arrangements used for songs in that period. But naturally I never told Petrassi about this Savina didn't expect such finesse and sometimes got angry in front of the orchestra, but then when he gave me a ride home he would praise me.^{xii}

Before working for RAI Morricone had never done arrangements,^{xiii} and he describes his time with Savina and RAI's regular singers – Nella Colombo, Bruno Rossettani, Achille Togliani, and Gianni Ravera – as a period in which he experimented to reinvent popular music arrangement: 'Musicologists have called me the father of modern music arrangement, and I suppose if this is in part true then it began here'.^{xiv} With his reputation growing, in 1960 Morricone was asked by RCA Italiana director Enzo Micocci to do an arrangement for Gianni Meccia's song 'Il Barattolo' [The Can]. Morricone took inspiration from *musique concrète*, recording the sound of a can rolling along the street and mixing it seamlessly into a rhythm part played on tom-toms and bongos. The decision to incorporate the sound of the rolling can was early evidence of what was to become an important thread in Morricone's

composition: his ability to engage with the ideology inherent in a work and to address this through the incorporation of sounds that go beyond the notes. ‘I am known for incorporating real-world sounds into my music’, he said, ‘but it is always a natural inclusion that I use when it works easily and plays a role in connecting to people or creating the right sound’.^{xv}

One song that Morricone composed and orchestrated during his period at RCA has left lasting traces through his subsequent output in both cinema and concert music. The chorus melody of the 1966 ‘Se telefonando’ (lyrics by Ghigo De Chiara and Maurizio Costanzo, recorded by Mina Mazzini) comprises the same three notes and the same underlying harmony as ‘The Falls’ theme in Morricone’s score for Roland Joffe’s film *The Mission* (1986). In ‘Se telefonando’, Morricone repeats the three notes (on the scale degrees 8, 7, and 5) in a descending cycle across the four beats of each bar so that they sit irregularly in relation to the underlying harmonic movement. In ‘The Falls’, the same three descending notes are connected to another note (7) that moves back up to the tonic, so that the melody aligns more predictably with each bar. This second version of the melody reappears in one of Morricone’s most acclaimed concert works, his 2002 *Voci dal silenzio* for chorus and orchestra.

It was in his role as arranger that Morricone first explored the unusual orchestral combinations and strong instrumental gestures that would later characterise both his film music and concert music. It was in his 1963 arrangement of Edoardo Vianello’s ‘Abbronzatissima’, for example, that he chose to pair horns with voice in unison octave leaps, and in his arrangement for ‘Sapore di sale’ (Gino Paoli, 1963), to set up a dissonant recurring motif between piano and horns for the song’s instrumental passages. It was in his 1965 arrangement of ‘Il Mondo’ (by Carlos Pes, Lilli Greco, Gianni Meccia, and Jimmy Fontana) that he first experimented with complex production techniques, about which he explained:

I had this idea of calculating the right speed: I actually did the math, recording the first part faster and a . . . minor third . . . above . . . and then lowering it by the same minor third and connecting it with the one played live When the normal part came in, there was a switch in sounds[,] . . . an added colour that gave an important impulse to the song.^{xvi}

Reflecting on his time as an arranger, Morricone noted that ‘even working for these staid organisations, I was driven to experiment with music from the very start’,^{xvii} and undoubtedly the opportunity to try out fresh ideas in this relatively safe environment benefitted his later ‘serious’ work.

Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza

Nuova Consonanza perhaps best exemplifies my double life. It was experimentation in absolute music but I then used it to good effect in my cinema scores.^{xviii}

Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza (GINC) was founded in Rome in 1964 by the composer Franco Evangelisti.^{xix} Taking inspiration from the Californian collective known simply as the New Music Ensemble, which founding member Larry Austin had introduced to Evangelisti, GINC followed the model of improvised

compositions, strongly influenced by concurrent practices in Western avant-garde composition pioneered by the likes of Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage, Pierre Boulez, and La Monte Young, all of whom were carving out new musical forms using aleatoric, mobile, open, and indeterminate techniques.^{xx}

A defining aspect of GINC was its choice to include only performers who were also composers, a fact often underlined by Evangelisti.^{xxi} The intention, Evangelisti said, was to subvert the ‘assumed basis of the open work (where performer becomes composer), transforming the composer into performer, through a process of permanent identification between the act of composing and the act of executing’.^{xxii} Morricone affirmed the centrality of this aspect of the GINC: ‘It was key to our creativity that we blurred the lines between composer and performer, making no distinction between the two roles’.^{xxiii}

Morricone joined GINC in 1964,^{xxiv} performing on trumpet and flute, and participating (with Evangelisti, John Heineman, Roland Kayn, Frederic Rzewski, Jerry Rosen, Mario Bertoncini, and Ivan Vandor) in the group’s eponymous 1966 debut long-play vinyl album on the RCA label. By 1968 the group had coalesced into a relatively stable lineup, with the names of Evangelisti, Bertoncini, Heineman, and Morricone (and of Walter Branchi and Egisto Macchi) ‘linked to the phase of the most expanded activity, as well as notable resonance throughout the whole world of contemporary music’.^{xxv} GINC’s influence in this sphere gave rise to the emergence of numerous improvising groups and festivals in Europe in the years 1967–71^{xxvi}; it impacted, too, on the work of later improvising ensembles such as the Evan Parker Electro-Acoustic Ensemble, Voice Crack, the Italian Instabile Orchestra, and John Zorn’s Naked City,^{xxvii} and on the late twentieth century’s ‘noise music’ phenomenon.^{xxviii}

Influenced by the Italian surrealists and treading a path parallel to that of such contemporary 1960s genres as free music and free jazz,^{xxix} the GINC emphasised ‘immediate’ improvisation as opposed to ‘ancient improvisation *based on traditional rules*’, a modern form of improvisation that ‘*erupts out of the negation of these rules*’ [in] a search for an original language’.^{xxx} Its lack of adherence to conventional structure and tonality reflects the group’s admiration of the concert music of avant-garde Italian contemporaries Giacinto Scelsi and Luigi Nono.^{xxxi} Indeed, the GINC’s 1976 album *Musica Su Schemi* includes a track titled ‘Omaggio a Giacinto Scelsi’ [Homage to Giacinto Scelsi], which slowly evolves over sixteen minutes on a B-flat drone from *pianissimo* low-register rapid pulses on piano and bass guitar into high, sustained, ear-splitting screeches on brass and winds, processed through distortion.

The abrasive and intricate sound world of the GINC was achieved through consistent and bold exploration of extended instrumental techniques, and at times it involved tape music and electronic instruments. Various mutations of speech, body percussion, mouth noises, and vocalisations – as heard to striking effect in both their 1967 and 1973 LPs, *The Private Sea of Dreams* and *Improvvisazioni a Formazioni Variate*^{xxxii} – were important recurring timbres within the group’s work. The strongly gestural language of the group’s compositions, incorporating pauses, unidentifiable micro-sounds, and sudden outbursts of noise, is in part explained by Morricone in his description of the interactions that frequently occurred:

One of the more interesting methods we employed was to create a musical conversation where one player . . . opened a conversation of sounds and another player would respond, agree or disagree in sound.^{xxxiii}

The output of the GINC at times spilled over into Morricone's soundtracks, with the group contributing material from *The Private Sea of Dreams* to the score for *Un tranquillo posto di campagna* (Elio Petri, 1968) and from their 1970 album *The Feed-Back*^{xxxiv} to the score for the thriller *Gli occhi freddi della paura* (Enzo G. Castellari, 1971). *The Feed-Back* clearly reflects the influence of contemporary popular music, with funk grooves and distorted rock guitar stylings offset by Morricone's wailing cup-mute trumpet lines and atonal blasts from Heineman's trombone. Thom Jurek describes the album's title cut as 'Stockhausen and Don Cherry meet Idris Muhammad and Melvin Sparks', and he suggests that 'Kumâlo' is a clash between 'Eastern modalism and Krautrock psych'.^{xxxv} Resampling by the current generation of DJs is testimony to this album's ongoing appeal,^{xxxvi} which Morricone himself alludes to: '*The Feed-Back* was an album that brought together avant-garde concert music, funk and jazz and apparently DJs still play it!'^{xxxvii}

The many re-releases of the GINC's recordings are further evidence of the group's ongoing relevance and influence.^{xxxviii} The group's demise in 1980 is attributed to various events, with Evangelisti's death that year commonly cited.^{xxxix} But it is Morricone's account that seems most fitting, because it reminds us that the GINC's primary activity was as a performing ensemble and speaks to their legacy of risk-taking in this regard, but also because it so beautifully closes the circle on the band's life:

We were in the middle of a performance when Antonello Neri, our pianist, stopped improvising and began playing a traditional concert recital. I started chanting 'Stop, Stop, Stop' and the others joined in but he obstinately kept playing. Thus came about the end of our agreement and our group's work in a very natural closing of an era that had served its purpose.^{xl}

And so the GINC experiment, which represented a potent cross-over between composition and performance, and between popular and 'serious' music in Morricone's praxis, came to an end.

Concert music

Am I an integrated composer? I believe my work as a composer is rather ambiguous. I have written absolute music and applied music requiring two different approaches to composition. These two composers cannot be the same.^{xli}

Morricone appears to have struggled with this binary attitude toward the two aspects of his compositional activity. Indeed, in listening to an early concert work such as his 1957 *Quattro pezzi per chitarra* it is difficult to hear any similarity at all between these starkly rendered, atonal contrapuntal lines and the effortless language of the popular music he was writing at this time. In the same year, 1957, Morricone composed a curiously titled work for twelve violins, *Music for Eleven Violins*, in which the *music* was performed by eleven violinists while the twelfth performed

notated pauses. *Music for Eleven Violins* was a nod to the not inconsiderable influence of the ‘paradoxical revolutionary’ John Cage, who in 1952 had presented the famous ‘silent piece’ that commonly goes by the title *4’33”*. Morricone wrote: ‘Silence is music just as music is a pause in silence. For me the silence within a piece is always a musical fact and a vehicle for reflection’.^{xlii}

Also in 1957, a year he described as especially ‘productive’,^{xliii} Morricone composed his first concerto, the *Concerto per orchestra*, which was inspired by and dedicated to Petrassi.^{xliiv} This would be the first of a current total of four concertos, the others being the *Second Concerto*, for flute, cello, and orchestra (1984); the *Third Concerto*, for guitar, marimba, and string orchestra (1991); and the *Fourth Concerto*, for organ, two trumpets, two trombones, and orchestra, titled ‘Hoc erat in votis’ [This was in my prayers] and composed in 1993. These large-scale works collectively represent some of Morricone’s most ambitious and interesting music, and the virtuosic and texturally dense content of the last two arguably places them within the ‘New Complexity’ genre pioneered by British composer Brian Ferneyhough and others in the second half of the last century.^{xliv}

In his third concerto, Morricone’s genius as an orchestrator is on display. The strings function as a mass plucked instrument, augmenting the timbre of the solo guitar, before lapsing into dramatic *arco* phrases that revert intermittently back into *pizzicato* lines to echo and double the guitar part. The ostinato figure heard initially in the guitar (consisting of two pairs of minor thirds) is developed across the whole orchestra as the work progresses, and Morricone manages this with economy, inventiveness, and humour. He has elucidated on his regular use of simple codes to create thematic material in his music:

Two simple musical codes I like to use are the four notes in Bach’s name B–A–C–H and the six sounds in the *Ricercare Cromatico* by Frescobaldi I use these simple patterns to create themes that resonate You can develop these four key notes in so many ways and there are still so many possibilities.^{xlvi}

Morricone’s rhythmic treatment of thematic material in the *Third Concerto* constitutes a break from the more regular rhythms he utilises to popular effect in his film scores, and it points to the greater rhythmic complexity of which this composer is capable. ‘I have always had a propensity for numbers and analysing patterns’, he wrote.^{xlvii} A mass *pizzicato* gesture across all the strings reminiscent of Iannis Xenakis^{xlviii} leads into an insistent cadenza on solo guitar that gnaws away on what sounds like a distorted fragment from Rodrigo’s *Concierto de Aranjuez*.^{xlix} The middle section contains a beautifully executed passage of textural contrast that calls to mind Morricone’s contemporary, György Ligeti, at the height of his dramatic powers: extremely high-register *pianissimo* violins hang like a canopy above a reflective dialogue between marimba and guitar that builds towards a loud, *tutti* cascade that tumbles into the lower registers. The marimba cadenza that follows contains demanding, virtuosic writing and sets up a clear return to the angular *ostinato* heard in the work’s opening passage, now shared by solo instruments and orchestra alike. Morricone puts this simple combination of notes through various rhythmic contractions and extensions before bringing the concerto to its climactic and satisfying finish.

The *Fourth Concerto* opens with no clear tonal centre as organ patterns erratically meander and dissonant brass stabs interject at seemingly irregular intervals. The slowly evolving second movement presents another confident mix of contrasting textures, with upward-swirling sustained string clusters around which the organ and brass soloists sketch rapid, quasi-conversational melodic lines that are reminiscent of Morricone's improvisational work with the GINC. These gradually overtake the sustained strings, which rise higher and higher, while across the orchestra more instruments contribute to the accumulating melodic irregularity with *glissandi*, *pizzicati*, dramatic swells, and calculated pauses that punch holes in the lines. The work ends as it begins, with a sparse layering of clarinet and violins, here fading out in (almost) unison before the double basses pluck a surprising tonic note to finish.

In both of these concertos there is none of the sweetness of Morricone's film music, with its eminently singable melodic writing and heart-wrenchingly beautiful harmonic language. For most of Morricone's fans this music would be entirely unfamiliar territory. The nascent, abstract tendencies that emerged in the miniatures for solo guitar from nearly forty years earlier are here given their full expression. These are mature orchestral works that reflect a 'serious' composer in full command of his craft.

Arriving at this level of artistry and technical mastery was not easy, and Morricone admits that between 1959 and 1966, as he focused on building his commercial career, he struggled to find time for it.¹ The drought was broken with *Requiem per un destino* (1966), originally composed as ballet music for choir and orchestra and later appropriated for the soundtrack to Vittorio De Seta's 1966 film *Un uomo a metà*. This darkly evocative work draws on avant-garde aesthetics and extended techniques to prioritise textural and timbral exploration over melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic development.

Through the late 1960s and 1970s Morricone continued to explore innovative composition for voice with such works as *Da molto lontano* (1969) for soprano and five instruments; the *Caput coctu show* (1969) for baritone and eight instruments, on a text by Pier Paolo Pasoliniⁱⁱ; *Immobile* (1978) for choir and four clarinets; *Grande violin, piccolo bambino* (1979) for children's voices, electronics, and string orchestra; and *Bambini del mondo* (1979) for eighteen children's choirs, some of which was later incorporated into Morricone's score for Adrian Lyne's 1997 film adaptation of *Lolita*.ⁱⁱⁱ Another innovative work for voices that came at the end of this period was *Tre scioperi* (1975/1988), for thirty-six children and bass drum, also composed to texts by Pasolini. It is perhaps no coincidence that the phase in which Morricone, an avowed family man, produced most of his works for young performers overlapped with the childhoods of his four children – Marco, Alessandra, Andrea, and Giovanni – all born between 1957 and 1966.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ

In the 1980s Morricone made a conscious choice to refocus his energies more fully towards his absolute music:

It was not until around 1980 that I really felt I could scale down my applied music work and dedicate myself as I wished to concert music. I started turning

down offers from directors but in fact had already stopped working for the American film industry because they paid insultingly low fees.^{liv}

Of the concert works that resulted from the intense activity that followed this decision, Morricone cites three as stand-outs. These are *Epitaffi sparsi* (1991–93), a chamber work for soprano and piano solo of ‘scathing irony’,^{lv} on texts by Sergio Miceli; *Frammenti de Eros* (1985), a cantata for soprano, piano, and orchestra, also on texts by Miceli; and *Ut* (1991), for C Trumpet, timpani, bass drum, and strings.

Ut owes its title to the first syllable of the solmisation system devised by the eleventh-century Italian monk and musical theorist Guido d’Arezzo. Hymnlike in character, *Ut* contains much of the atmospheric mood and beautifully articulated lyricism of Morricone’s film music yet runs away with these into new territory. Given that the trumpet was Morricone’s instrument, it is not surprising that the writing for trumpet is virtuosic, clear, and idiomatic; indeed, Morricone’s voice as performer comes through in the calculatedly crafted spontaneity of the trumpet gestures. A stunning interlude in which the violin and trumpet soloists engage in a slow duet punctuated by widely spaced pulses by the bass drum would serve beautifully as a backdrop to any epic movie scene; at the same time the music transports us, entirely on its own terms, to an almost mystical place that evokes the religious and historical ideology implied by the work’s title. In this passage the musical link to the title also becomes apparent, for one can clearly discern in the solo instruments’ floating melodic lines a pair of tone rows that feature six common pitches – A-sharp, C, E, F-sharp, G, A-natural – to which Morricone adds a seventh pitch as the rows alternate (D in the first case, B in the second). This underlying formal integrity gives insight into the technical processes at work in much of Morricone’s music. He referred to this rigour when reflecting on the need for a composer to develop a ‘mathematical, almost intellectual ability, to create technical coherence . . . [A] coherent structure is crucial . . . a score must be scientifically and technically correct’.^{lvi}

Cantata per l’Europa (1988), for soprano, solo recitative voices, choir, and orchestra,^{lvii} is another large-scale work based on religious themes that achieved widespread acclaim.^{lviii} Conducted by Paolo Olmi and featuring soprano Victoria Schneider and the Orchestra and Choir of the Santa Cecilia National Academy, it received its world premiere on 2 April 1990 at Rome’s Auditorio Pio. Running at a little under thirty minutes and incorporating texts written by such prominent thinkers as Benedetto Croce, Thomas Mann, Winston Churchill, Charles de Gaulle, and Victor Hugo, the *Cantata per l’Europa* aims for the same sort of grandeur that characterised Morricone’s film music at this time, evident in scores such as *The Mission* (1986).

Similarly ambitious is *Vuoto d’anima piena* [Emptiness of the Full Soul], composed for solo flute, orchestra, and choir in 2008 on texts by the contemporary Italian poet Francesco De Melis and drawing on writings of the Persian mystic poet Rumi. As is common in his concert music, Morricone here again appropriates form and aesthetics from early music. The work’s ‘Cantata mistica’ section builds from a solo flute statement into a pulsing dancelike refrain for choir, flute, percussion, and brass that carries the listener along in a torrent of primal energy; a pause acts as transition into an epic finale driven by a slowly moving chromatic melody for

massed voices that crescendos through multiple iterations, each one a semitone higher than the last. *Vuoto d'anima piena* received its world premiere on 25 August 2008 in a concert that marked the thousandth anniversary of the Basilica Cathedral of Sarsina in northern Italy, with Morricone conducting the Roma Sinfonietta and the Coro Lirico Sinfonico Romano, and with Massimo Mercelli as the flute soloist^{lix}; subsequent performances were given by the National Academy of Santa Cecilia (2010) and the Czech Symphony Orchestra (2011).

A 'difficult tune to learn'^{lx} that has had international impact through several high-profile performances is *Voci dal silenzio* [Voices from the Silence], a nearly thirty-minute programmatic work for orchestra, choir, spoken word, and tape that describes an apocalypse and its aftermath. Commissioned for the International Festival of Ravenna, it was composed in 2002 in response to the events of 9/11 in New York City, and is dedicated to all who have died as a result of terrorism and mass murder.^{lxi} The piece received its world premiere on 14 July 2002 at Ravenna's Palazzo Mauro De Andrè, conducted by Ricardo Muti,^{lxii} and its American premiere took place on 2 February 2007 at the United Nations General Assembly Hall, in a concert to celebrate the appointment of Ban Ki-Moon as the UN's General Secretary. Morricone described the New York performance as 'one of the highlights of my absolute music career'.^{lxiii} An estimated 1,600 delegates, diplomats, and UN staff members attended the closed event, and a standing ovation greeted Morricone as he walked on stage to conduct the Roma Sinfonietta and a 100-voice choir that included the Canticum Novum Singers, the New York Virtuoso Singers, and the University of Buffalo Choir.^{lxiv}

The adept handling of the huge forces in *Voci dal silenzio*, with choir and recorded voices added to already complex orchestral layers, speaks most emphatically to Morricone's mastery of orchestration, which he has stated should never be separated from the compositional process, but is integral to achieving 'the correct sound'.^{lxv} Here he uses the orchestra as a sustained background to field recordings of vocal performances from different cultural traditions that connect with the overarching ideology of 'harmony in diversity' that gives the work its moral compass. There is no sonic imitation or parody in the integration of the recorded and composed material; rather, the electronic and acoustic strands co-exist in a suspended harmonic and rhythmic dissonance until the recordings disappear around fifteen minutes into the work, overtaken by dramatically building gestures from the orchestra and choir that one reviewer postulated might 'suggest the cries of the victims'.^{lxvi} These subside into a sweet string passage that sets up a solo French horn statement of 'The Falls' theme from *The Mission*. Another fragment of 'The Falls' is performed by solo soprano in the final bars of the piece, the drone in the choir providing a stark contrast to the diatonic harmony likely familiar to many in the audience. This device, along with a solo trombone fanfare reminiscent of such funereal bugle calls as 'The Last Post' and 'Taps' that feature angular leaps, provides a lack of finality to the piece and suggests that there is still a need for resolution to this particular chapter of history. *Voci dal silenzio* has been performed on at least ten occasions since 2002 including twice at the composer's alma mater, the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia (2004, 2017), and by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 2014.

Morricone's most significant piece of 'absolute music' in recent years is his *Missa Papae Francisci* [Mass for Pope Francis], commissioned by the Society of Jesus to

celebrate the 200th anniversary of the restoration of the Jesuit Order in 2014. It was premiered at the Church of the Gesù in Rome on 10 June 2015, with Morricone conducting the Orchestra Roma Sinfonietta and the Coro Goffredo Petrassi. Morricone's account of the commissioning process is delightfully quotidian:

Every day at seven in the morning, I go to buy the newspapers in Piazza del Gesù, at the newsstand in front of the Gesù Church. One day, in 2013, I met Father Daniele Libanori, the rector of the Church of the Gesù, who asked me to write a Mass. My wife has been asking me to write a Mass for several years but I have always refused . . . Fr. Libanori's proposal was not only to write a Mass, but also to perform it for the two-hundredth anniversary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus. I composed it thinking about the occasion, the audience, the Society of Jesus. Perhaps I had never written a Mass before, despite the requests of my wife, because I needed an occasion for doing so. The idea of performing a Mass for that important occasion persuaded me.^{lxvii}

Morricone dedicated the Mass to his patient wife, Maria, and to Pope Francis, the first Jesuit Pope, to whom he went in person to present the finished score.^{lxviii} Morricone chose to avoid the 'sappy touch'^{lxix} of violins, violas, and woodwinds and instead scored the Mass for double choir and an orchestra made up of two organs, percussion, bass strings, and brass. His Mass has a traditional liturgical structure that comprises seven movements: an *Introitus*, *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Alleluia*, *Sanctus*, *Agnus Dei*, and *Finale*. Morricone's penchant for early music techniques is evident in his incorporation of antiphonal singing, with the double choir creating the effect of dialogue in the tradition developed by such sixteenth-century Venetian composers as Adrian Willaert and Giovanni Gabrieli.^{lxx}

The composer describes the *Introitus* as a 'musical invention' whose score is in the shape of a cross, with long melodies in the horn parts colliding with sporadic outbursts from the 'vertical dimension' of the whole orchestra.^{lxxi} Against these contrasting orchestral layers, each of the choristers – and perhaps members of the audience as well – says a quiet prayer.^{lxxii} The Mass proper starts with the *Kyrie*, which is an impressive call to worship that features declamatory choral writing and pulsing rhythms. The *Gloria* contains subtle dissonances scattered throughout a conventional harmonic structure reflective of traditional sacred music; it ends with high-register shouts of the word 'Gloria' first by the sopranos and then by the tenors. The call-and-response texture between female voices and French horns that opens the *Alleluia* clearly reflects the sound of Gregorian Chant, whose 'absolute monody', Morricone said, 'provide[s] the roots to so much of the Western world's music'^{lxxiii}; the dialogue then spreads to the entire ensemble, with both choirs erupting into fugal antiphony on the word 'Alleluia'. The *Sanctus* opens with a duet between the two organs before being joined by the tenors, brass, and percussion to establish melodic material, which is then taken up by the choirs and orchestra; microtonal vocal lines rise in upward pitch bends in the female voices before giving way to a joyful and celebratory diatonic passage on the word 'Sanctus' that contains hints of a classical-style Hollywood score, until Morricone unexpectedly leaves the music hanging on an unresolved chord on the minor third scale degree. The *Agnus Dei* opens with sustained dissonance across the soprano and alto parts, with responses by solo trumpet that recall the gentle duet in *Ut*; throughout the movement Morricone uses

imitative entries ‘as an expressive element, which plays and runs from the right to the left of the choir’,^{lxxiv} and the result is an evocative blurring of phrases, pitches, and timbres that sets up the final movement with all the calibrated drama characteristic of this seasoned film composer. The *Finale* begins with a quotation from *The Mission* – solo tenor singing a Latin text to the melody of the ‘Gabriel’s Oboe’ theme – before the entire ensemble erupts into a reworked rendition of the film’s main theme, with its resplendent polymodality and polyrhythmic complexity augmented by the separation of the choirs. Long melodic phrases to the left and short rhythmic echoes to the right here bring to the fore the composition’s spatial aspect. In the Mass’s closing bars Morricone gradually reduces his famous film theme to greater melodic and rhythmic simplicity, bringing all the forces together in what he calls a ‘joyful requiem’.^{lxxv}

The last work of concert music listed on Morricone’s official website,^{lxxvi} the *Mass for Pope Francis* connects all the threads of his output; as the composer explains, ‘all the history of church music I studied at the Conservatorio, the soundtrack from *The Mission* and my own recognisable blending of sounds came together in this piece’.^{lxxvii} The appearance and development of key motifs from his score for *The Mission* here is not the cynical gesture of a composer keen to capitalise on his ‘greatest hits’; rather, it represents an important confluence between his applied and his absolute music, in which the boundaries between these two worlds finally dissolve. It is clear that the music he composed for *The Mission*, which called upon all his technique and creativity, is as close to Morricone’s heart as anything he has written for the concert hall.

Conclusion

Overall . . . between my absolute music and cinema music, I would like to think that I have my own thread in the history of music, some sort of acceptance.^{lxxviii}

The strands of Morricone’s career have at times crossed and entwined. For example, the acceptance of *any* sound’s potential for musicality, which can be traced back to his fascination with the theories of John Cage^{lxxix} and Henri Pousseur,^{lxxx} is an important facet of Morricone’s entire oeuvre. Another element that remains strong in Morricone’s music, regardless of its context, is his exploration of all the colours of the human voice, in part also inspired by Cage.^{lxxxi} And there are other linkages between Morricone’s applied music and absolute music that perhaps even the composer is unaware of.

The website of Counterpoint Music, which publishes some of Morricone’s concert works, credits his involvement with the GINC, because it involved ‘research [into] a visionary language of synthesis’, with a merging of Morricone’s film and concert music.^{lxxxii} But Morricone’s absolute music – although at times it dovetails with his applied music – is, on the whole, a separate body of work that offers a rewarding listening experience for those well-versed in contemporary Western art music. For those who are not so well-versed, the absolute music is perhaps too challenging.

Since the early 2000s Morricone has engaged in intense international concert activity, conducting his own works for massed forces in huge arenas, with his recent

'60 Years of Music' tour selling more than half a million tickets.^{lxxxiii} Morricone's absolute music is notably absent from the repertoire at these events, a fact due, one can only assume, to its complexity. At the end of his working life, Morricone is currently celebrating one of the most stellar careers in the history of film music; he is justly embraced by his fans, yet the almost total exclusion of his 'concert' music from these concert events begs a redefinition of the term, or at the very least leads one to question whether film music and concert music might not be one and the same thing, with differences depending not on the music itself but only on its mode of presentation and reception. Perhaps one day the music that Morricone describes as his 'private and personal endeavour'^{lxxxiv} will assume the central place it deserves at celebrations of his legacy.

Notes

ⁱ Ennio Morricone, with Giovanni Morricone, *Life Notes* (UK: Musica e Oltre, 2016), 69.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 11.

ⁱⁱⁱ Franco Fabbri and Goffredo Plastino, 'Provisionally Popular: A Conversation with Ennio Morricone', in *Made in Italy: Studies in Popular Music*, ed. Franco Fabbri and Goffredo Plastino (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 223.

^{iv} Morricone, *Life Notes*, 224.

^v Gino Moliterno, ed., *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Italian Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 541–2.

^{vi} Sergio Miceli interviewed by David Thompson in *Ennio Morricone* (Happy Valley Films, BBC/ZDF Arte, 1995), available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tj6MWE4wZx4. Translation mine

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} Morricone, *Life Notes*, 30.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, 69.

^x *Ibid.*

^{xi} The seven GINC albums Morricone refers to in *Life Notes Are: Nuova Consonanza* (1966, RCA); *The Private Sea of Dreams* (1967, RCA); *Improvvisationen* (1968, Deutsche Grammophon); *The Feed-Back* (1970, RCA); *Improvvisazioni a Formazioni Variate/Gruppo d'Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza* (1973, General Music); *Nuova Consonanza* (1975, Cinevox); and *Musica su Schemi* (1976, Cramps Records).

^{xii} Fabbri and Plastino, 'Provisionally Popular', 224.

^{xiii} *Ibid.*

^{xiv} Morricone, *Life Notes*, 34.

^{xv} *Ibid.*, 76.

^{xvi} Fabbri and Plastino, 'Provisionally Popular', 230.

It is worth noting that 'Il Mondo' preceded the 'psychedelic' albums – for example, The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* (1966), Frank Zappa's *Freak Out!* (1966), and The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) – that were considered to be hallmarks of the new production aesthetics of 1960s popular music in the English-speaking world.

^{xvii} Morricone, *Life Notes*, 34.

^{xviii} *Ibid.*, 76.

-
- xix Daniela Tortora, ‘Storia, il Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza’, On the website of *Associazione Nuova Consonanza*, available at www.nuovaconsonanza.it/index.php?voce=19710681422&collegamento=16970047217. Translation mine.
- xx Ibid.
- xxi Ibid.
- xxii Ibid.
- xxiii Morricone, *Life Notes*, 76.
- xxiv Ibid., 75.
- xxv Tortora, ‘Storia, il Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza’, Translation mine.
- xxvi Ibid.
- xxvii Sylvie Harrison, ‘Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza, Artist Biography’, On *All Music*, available at www.allmusic.com/artist/gruppo-di-improvvisazione-nuova-consonanza-mn0001409455/biography
- xxviii Here I refer to the noise music scene that emerged from the mid-1970s through the 1990s in industrial music, punk, free jazz, glitch music, and electronica. Prominent artists in this genre include Merzbow, Fluxus, and the Boredoms.
- xxix Tortora, ‘Storia, il Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza’.
- xxx Ibid., Emphases original. Translation mine.
- xxxi Harrison, ‘Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza, Artist Biography’. The GINC’s 1976 release *Musica su Schemi* includes a track titled ‘Omaggio a Giacinto Scelsi’ (‘Homage to Giacinto Scelsi’).
- xxxii *The Private Sea of Dreams* (as Il Gruppo) (1967, RCA) and *Improvvisazioni a Formazioni Variate* (also known as *Gruppo d’Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza*) (1973, General Music).
- xxxiii Morricone, *Life Notes*, 76.
- xxxiv Along with Macchi, Heineman, Morricone, and Branchi, *The Feed-Back* (as *The Group*) (1970, RCA) featured drummer Enzo Restuccia and guitarist Bruno Battisti D’Amario.
- xxxv Thom Jurek, ‘All Music Review: Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza/Ennio Morricone, The Feed-Back’, On *All Music*, available at www.allmusic.com/album/the-feed-back-mw0002672122
- xxxvi Cut Chemist, ‘Edan’s Torture Chamber’ remix, 2005.
- xxxvii Morricone, *Life Notes*, 76.
- xxxviii GINC releases after 1980 include: *1967–1975* (1992, Edition RZ); *Azioni* (2006, Die Schachtel); *Niente* (2010, Cometa Edizioni Musicali); and *Eroina* (2011, Cometa Edizioni Musicali).
- xxxix ‘Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza/History’ (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gruppo_di_Improvvisazione_Nuova_Consonanza).
- xl Morricone, *Life Notes*, 81.
- xli Ibid., 69.
- xlii Morricone, *Life Notes*, 76.
- xliii Ibid., 70.
- xliv Ibid.
- xlv Richard Toop, ‘Four Facets of the “New Complexity”’, *Contact* 32 (1988), 4–8.
- xlvi Morricone, *Life Notes*, 24.
- xlvii Ibid., 26.
- xlviii Xenakis employs this technique in works for massed strings such as *Pithoprakta* (1955–56).

- xlix Joaquin Rodrigo, *Concierto de Aranjuez*, 1939, for guitar and orchestra.
- ¹ Morricone, *Life Notes*, 70.
- li ‘Ennio Morricone: Composer Information’, *Music Library Services*, available at http://cpmusiclibrary.ca/library_composer.php?cKey=MORENN
- lii *Chimai, The Ennio Morricone Online Community*, ‘Requiescant’, available at www.chimai.com/index.cfm?module=MUS&mode=DET&id=4383
- liii Morricone, *Life Notes*, 88.
- liv *Ibid.*, 70.
- lv ‘Ennio Morricone: Composer Information’.
- lvi Morricone, *Life Notes*, 26.
- lvii Emanuele Colombo, ‘The Miracle of Music: A Conversation with Ennio Morricone’, *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 3 (2016), 475–83.
- lviii Morricone, *Life Notes*, 81. The composer cites this as ‘perhaps my best known concert piece’ before *Voci dal Silenzio* (2001), yet there is surprisingly little documentation of it in online sources.
- lix Bob Hendriks, *Chimai*, ‘Vuoto d’anima piena’, available at www.chimai.com/mod_comment/dsp_detail.cfm?obj_cd=PRF&id=10580&com_id=2081&action=&nav=left&list_id=1&caller=main
- lx Quote extracted from the spoken word part for *Voci dal silenzio*.
- lxi Morricone, *Life Notes*, 81.
- lxii *Event Zone*, ‘Artists, Ennio Morricone’, available at www.eventzone.bg/en/artists/details/ennio-morricone-sofia-concert2002
- lxiii Morricone, *Life Notes*, 81.
- lxiv Jon Burlingame, ‘Morricone Makes U.S. Debut in NYC, Maestro scores standing ovations at United Nations, Radio City’, *Film Music Society* (6 February 2007), available at www.filmmusicsociety.org/news_events/features/2007/020607.html?isArchive=020607
- lxv Morricone, *Life Notes*, 70.
- lxvi Burlingame, ‘Morricone Makes U.S. Debut’.
- lxvii Colombo, ‘The Miracle of Music’, 478.
- lxviii *Ibid.*
- lxix *Ibid.*, 479.
- lxx *Ibid.*
- lxxi *Ibid.*, 478.
- lxxii *Ibid.*, 479.
- lxxiii Morricone, *Life Notes*, 9.
- lxxiv Colombo, ‘The Miracle of Music’, 479.
- lxxv *Ibid.*, 480.
- lxxvi Ennio Morricone, ‘The Music, Absolute Music, 2000–2015’, available at www.enniomorricone.org/the-music
- lxxvii Morricone, *Life Notes*, 81.
- lxxviii *Ibid.*, 108.
- lxxix ‘[Cage] was adamant that all real-world sounds such as buzzing fly, a revving engine, a tearing newspaper, whip cracks, whistles, animal cries and nonsensical vocals (all of which I have used) belong in the world of music’. Morricone, *Life Notes*, 76.
- lxxx Fabbri and Plastino, ‘Provisionally Popular’, 225.
- lxxxi *Ibid.*, 76.
- lxxxii ‘Ennio Morricone, Composer Information’.

^{lxxxiii} ‘Ennio Morricone’s “60 Years of Music Tour” Sells 500.000 Tickets’, *Ennio Morricone*, available at www.enniomorricone.org/ennio-morricone-60-years-of-music-tour-sells-500-000-tickets

^{lxxxiv} Morricone, *Life Notes*, 69.