

Luigi Dallapiccola's Sketch for *Ulisse*

Wayne Shirley

Ulisse, an opera in a prologue and two acts, is the only full-length opera of Luigi Dallapiccola. It was preceded by two one-act pieces, *Volo di Notte* (1940) and *Il Prigioniero* (1950); by *Job*, a "sacra rappresentazione" in one act (1950); and by an edition of Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* (1941-1942). Like Monteverdi's opera, *Ulisse* is based on the *Odyssey* (Dallapiccola was annoyed during his work on the opera by frequent statements that the opera was to be "based on James Joyce's *Ulysses*," a work he was known to admire). Unlike Monteverdi's work, Dallapiccola's opera draws on traditions, beginning with Dante, which see Ulysses's quest as not ending with his homecoming to Ithaca. The work received its premiere on September 29, 1968, by the Deutsche Oper Berlin under the direction of Loren Maazel. Annabelle Bernard sang the dual roles of Calypso--whose music is sketched in the Moldenhauer manuscript--and Penelope.

The Moldenhauer manuscript is a sketch for the opening scene. In fact, it is the sketch for the opening words of the opera: the start of Calypso's monologue, which forms the first scene of the Prologue. Calypso speaks in apostrophe to the departed Ulysses.

Son soli, un'altra volta, il tuo cuore ed il mare.
Desolata ti piange Calypso, la Dea senz'amore.
Ti rivelasti a me, mormorando in profondo sopore:
"Guardare, meravigliarsi, e tornar a guardare."
Compresi. Era menzogna la nostalgia del figlio, della patria,
del vecchio padre, della tua sposa...

Once again you are alone, your heart and the sea.
Desolate, Calypso, the goddess without love, weeps for you.
You revealed yourself to me, murmuring in deep sleep:
"To look, to marvel, and to look again."
I understand: it was all a lie,
Your longing for your son, for your homeland,
For your old father, for your wife...

Calypso

Son de-4, a. u. ad-ku ud-5, il ha an-2 e il

De. u. l. h. k.

al mir che amico
Robert Hartmann,
Zürich agosto '11

Arnold Schoenberg

München, 27/1/1910 -
Bremen, 3/2/1910.

The verbal text of the monologue is identical in the sketch to that of the final version; the musical text of the sketch differs, sometimes profoundly, from that of the opera as it was published. Sketch and opera are closest together on the first page of the sketch, which is reproduced here; by the final page, which contains the setting of the original of the last three lines above, sketch and opera represent essentially two quite different approaches to the same set of words.

Calypso's monologue, sketch and score, begins (through the words "tornar a guardare"--"to look again") by presenting the basic tone row in its four main forms: original, retrograde (starting with "desolata," final measure of the facsimile), retrograde inversion (starting with "Ti rivelasti"--"You revealed yourself", and inversion (starting with "Guardare"--"To look".) This kind of exposition of the row in its four principal forms--the Grand Row Tune¹--occurs at the beginning of many large-scale serial works: one can almost depend on it at the start of a late Schoenberg serial piece.

The vocal line of the first four measures in the sketch--first sentence of the text, exposition of the original form of the row--is the closest to the final score at any given spot. Pitches and the octaves in which they appear are identical to those in the published score: though the rhythms have been changed, the general rhythmic profile is similar.

The general profile of the vocal part in the opera through the words "tornar a guardare"--that is, through the end of the Grand Row Tune--continues to show similarities, in rhythm and general melodic profile, to the voice part of the sketch. But the row-forms are at transposition levels different from those in the sketch--a change which itself has caused several octave shifts in order to keep the voice within a good singing range--and the rhythmic changes are more considerable than in the opening four measures. The changes in pitch level of the row all seem to have been done for the purpose of getting the voice in a more graceful range. In particular, Dallapiccola wants the phrase "Guardare, meravigliarsi, e tornar a guardare" to be at a pitch higher than in the sketch. This is one of the key phrases in the opera--Calypso repeats it towards the end of her monologue, and Ulysses sings it at a critical moment in the final scene--and Dallapiccola wants it, at its first appearance, to lie somewhat higher than the pleasant midrange of the voice at which it appears in the sketch.

The accompaniment to the voice is much changed in the final score, yet its basic pitch content (duly transposed) and shape are already present in the sketch. In particular, the two most distinctive textures are established: a set of static six-note chords in elaborate slowing-down rhythm (on page 3 of the sketch; thus not visible in the facsimile) and the complex single- and double-note texture immediately after the words "il mare" (bottom of page 1). This latter texture, which occurs often in the opera, seems to represent the undifferentiated flux of the tranquil sea. This fact is more evident in this sketch than in the final score, where its appearances are slightly more sophisticated in texture: a sketch can sometimes reveal the composer's intentions more clearly than the final work.

The last page of the sketch corresponds to the final version only in Calypso's words; the music is completely rewritten. In the sketch Calypso begins her new text immediately after the static six-note chords in elaborate slowing-down rhythm. In the opera these lines are preceded by the first appearance of a new motif. It will be associated with the word "nessuno"--"nobody." In the *Odyssey* "nobody" is the reply which Odysseus gives when the Cyclops asks him for his name. In Dallapiccola's opera it serves as a symbol of Ulysses's quest for a meaning to his adventures: has he really become "nobody"? This motif will be extremely important in Acts I and II of *Ulisse*; it is essential that it appear as well in the Prologue.

Dallapiccola thus adds an important element which is not present in the sketch. He also alters the emphasis of Calypso's outburst. As set in the sketch, the key word is "Compresi"--"I understand." The emphasis is on the fact of realizing, not what she realizes, which is what is in the final version: "It was a lie." Lies, all lies--as Calypso cries at the departed Ulysses--are all the longing for his home and family which seem to motivate Ulysses through the remainder of the opera until the final scene. We need this passionate cry at the opening to remind us that beneath the outer action of the opera is an inner action, a searching for the truths beneath the adventures.

¹ "Grand Row Tune" is my own term, a nontechnical phrase I have found useful. (A "Row Tune"-nonGrand-is a melody presenting one full version of the row and one only.)