

# SOUNDING ARIANNA'S SORROW

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Hur låter ett ord när det formas i en emotionell vokal rörelse? Var börjar tolkningen och hur ser den inre bilden ut som uppstår i sångarens möte med notbilden? Ordet som skrevs in i ett operalibretto på 1600-talet, hur låter det idag, 350 år senare.

Frågorna stockar sig i sångarens kropp och tankar. Metodiskt leder rösten henne genom frågorna och hon upplever svar som inte alltid förklaras. Svar som kan verka orakliga men som hela tiden öppnar dörrar till nya insikter. Insikter som leder hennes gestaltande in i en labyrint av verkligheter. Genom passioner och känslor klingar sorg och klagan. Klagosången tillsammans med Vansinnesakten i de först operorna på 1600-talet lyftes till skyarna av publiken. På avstånd, genom aktioner på scen levde publiken ut sina vilda fantasier. I deras indirekta kontakt med den sörjande och vansinniga sångerskan på operascenen blev det otänkbara och icke-realistiska tydligt påträngande och verkligt. Och det var sångerskan som stod mitt emellan. På en scen som placerats strategiskt, på neutral mark, som i ett vakuum. Hon var väl införstådd med retoriska mönster och rörelser. Hon visste med största säkerhet hur hon kunde påverka och kontrollera. Men i mellanrummet där hon verkade, på scenen, där fick hon tillåtelse att gå längre än vad som var tänkbart. Hon kunde gå rakt genom alla verkligheter. Orden var just de punkter där hon tog sina avstamp. Död betydde död, och i döden mötte hon känslorna som prägnade hennes uppfattningar om just död: kyla, tomhet, flammande eld, hav av tårar, ironi, saknad osv. Hon gestaltade varje ord var och för sig. Hon hoppade bokstavligen mellan verkligheter, både fysiskt, mentalt och vokalt. Hon förväntades överraska sin publik, skrämna den, och få den att bara känna ända in i den innersta hjärteroten. Hon fick sin publik att förlora sig i det reala, i stunden då bara JAGET existerade, bortom all kontroll och allt förnuft. Hon kom att stå som symbol för det paradoxala. För det paradoxala där allt var möjligt och omöjligt.

Det är hennes röst jag söker efter i min gestaltande forskning.<sup>1</sup>

\*

1. Sounding Arianna's sorrow is a sample of artistic research in performance of 17th century opera. Here the singer's transition is reflected in 3 parts: - in a Music Research Drama (a film - featuring a singer's 'inner' images during the process of interpreting a musical score) - in a Libretto (a text following the Music Research Drama) - in a Cannocchiale (Like a pair of theater binocular is used to magnify a performance on stage, this text magnifies the thoughts and acts of the Music Research Drama. The form of using a reflecting text as a pair of binocular has been modeled on a specific volume published in 1641 named *Il Cannocchiale per la Finta Pazza*. It was published to reflect and explain the intricate story of *La Finta Pazza*, an opera composed by Francesco Saccati, performed at Teatro Novissimo in Venice, 1641)

## **A singer's research from within**

### **Libretto**

On the seashore a CHORUS of VOICES murmurs the words of Arianna/Ariane. In Italian and French. They move along the rocks following a red line painted on granite.

### **Awakening Arianna**

#### **VOICE**

Lasciatemi morire  
Lasciatemi morire  
E che volete voi  
Che mi conforte  
In cosi dura sorte,  
In cosi gran martire  
Lasciatemi morire  
Lascitemi morire

#### **MIND**

I am in between sleep and awakening.  
In between.

I am inside my house.  
Inside my frame.

There is a door separating me from the world outside.  
I will soon be on my way out.  
I will step inside a new frame.  
Another frame.

The key to my frame is in my pocket.  
It fits the lock.

I close the door behind me .  
It is closed to everyone, except to myself.

There inside is my safe and familiar space.  
Now, I am about to experience the outside and the unknown.

I walk towards the sea.  
I pass houses.

I pass boats placed in gardens,  
turned up-side-down,  
protecting the inside from wind and snow.

It is winter. And cold.

I pull the coat closer to my body  
and I throw the long black scarf around my neck.  
The wind is in my hair.  
I walk fast .

WHERE IS HE?

Is he gone?  
Has he left me behind?

I stretch my arm ...  
As if trying to bring him back.

It cannot be ...  
No, ...oh no !  
If he is gone, let me go as well

Don't leave me here alone, please  
Oh, let me die

**Let me die**

Let me die.

Am I still sleeping?

Where am I?

On a shore in the cold and windy north...  
Like her I search the horizon for him  
who isn't any longer with me.  
He who promised me happiness and joy forever and ever.

I left my safe shores for him  
and now I am stranded on a foreign island.

No, this is not me,  
it is another woman,

standing on a shore,  
left behind.

She calls for death, and I don't.  
I don't understand the wish to die,  
so how can she be me?

Where am I?  
On a shore in the cold and windy north...

I have come back to my island.  
I am finding my own roots  
and my happiness.

She is the one I remember I was.  
Sailing round the world,  
Happy when beside him,  
but without roots in the soil.  
She stands on a shore in the sun.  
I stand here in the ice.

Her voice cries over the moving sea;  
mine is fighting through the frosty air.

The sound of her voice is so direct.  
Right in my face.  
So intense.  
Love, hate, despise and death is in her voice and movements  
all at the same time.

Now I am her.  
Now I am the word I pronounce.  
Now I am the ornament springing on my own vocal chords.

Now...

I am the silent pause in between the words and the sounds.

There is no time to think.  
Only being.  
Arianna is all at once.  
As soon as sound comes out of her being,  
she is inside her frame of action.

Inside herself.  
And when I am with her,  
we are one.

## **VOICE**

La**SCIAAAAA**Atemi morire

LASSSCCIATE**MIIIII** morire

Echivoletevoi chemiconfoooorte

In cosi DUUUUUUUrasorte

In cosi **GRAAAAAANMARTIIIIIII**re

la**SCIAAAAAAAA**temi morire

las**SCIAteMIIIII**

Moriiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiire

moriiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiire

## **Abandoned Ariane**

### **MIND**

I see another woman.  
A third woman.  
She looks as if she talks to the rocks.  
She stands on one,  
but somehow she looks as if she is afraid  
of stepping too hard.

Now and then her voice cuts through the air,  
But never in agony.  
She is so full of grace.  
But her arms and hands are tense behind her back.  
Not daring to go too far.  
Afraid of what might happen if...

She walks on a line  
high above in the sky.  
One step beside the line,  
and she will fall and die.

She talks to the other.  
She talks to the rock.  
Leaving herself and her emotions behind.  
Trying to hide behind her beauty.  
Balancing between pure and vulgar.  
Between art and nature,  
Between real and unreal.  
I am myself inside her voice.  
Balancing not to fall on the rock.  
It is so slippery, covered in green seaweed.  
In her shoes I don't dare to move,

What about if...  
... I go too far.

I wait .... and I try to take a step.

I hold my breath...  
And I let go, but not too much...  
Because I might fall,...  
I might....

fall.....

## **VOICE**

Rochers vous etes sourds  
Vous n'avez rien de tendre  
Et sans vous ebranler  
Vous m'ecoutez icy  
L'Ingrat dont je me plain  
est un rochers aussy,  
Mais helas! il s'en fuit  
pour ne my pas entendre

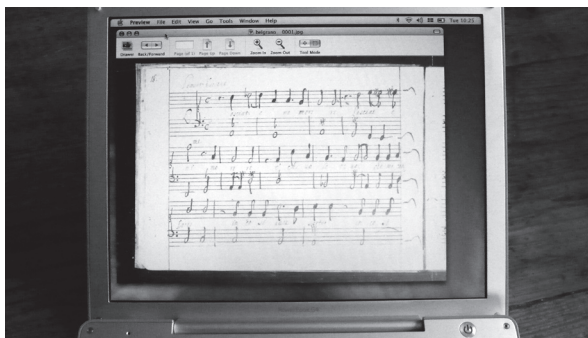
Ariannas shoes are left behind...

Her voice is gone.

Silence remains.

## 'Il Cannochiale'

The first thing she heard was voices. They came when she opened the scores, or rather when she started to read the printed copies of the two 17th-century manuscripts of Arianna's lament. One of them, the famous Lamento d'Arianna by Italian composer Claudio Monteverdi; the other less known, Plainte d'Ariane, by the French composer and singer Michel Lambert.<sup>2</sup> At first the situation seemed really absurd, when the Italian manuscript appeared in a file on her computer one day. A message arrived from Biblioteca Centrale Firenze with a link to the file.<sup>13</sup> The score could be downloaded for 3 days, but of course it had arrived in the trash mailbox so the 3 days had already passed when she realized her mistake. It had to be sent a second time from Florence. This time things worked out well. The score was finally in her hands.



The voices made her think about voices of sirens. They pulled her deeper and deeper into the emotions of Arianna. The voices formed a line and she was hooked on this line like a fish. Arianna's thread and voice pulled her into a deep, deep unknown ocean.

As a cluster of voices, teasing her to imagine the passions behind the words and the sounds, they also seemed to be brought by winds of the sea. They told her the story of poor Arianna who stood there on a rocky shore, crying and calling for death. The voices brought her the sound of a lament.

She started to search for everything she could about sirens and voices.

*"As the myth of the Sirens teaches us, song is heard as naturally feminine, just as speech is naturally masculine. Destined to substantiate themselves in the semantic, men's voices tend to disappear in the mute labor of the mind, or thought. By modulating themselves in song, on the other hand, women's voices come to show their authentic substance- namely, the passionate rhythms of the body from which the voice flows. In this sense the woman who sings is always a Siren, or a creature of pleasure, extraneous to the domestic order of the daughter and wife. The female singing voice cannot be domesticated; it disturbs the system of reason by leading elsewhere. Potentially lethal, it pushes pleasure to its limits of what is bearable."*<sup>3</sup>

In Venice the female voice on stage was honored and glorified. Like in Paris. But the Pope feared female emotions and banned women from stages in Rome. What did he really fear in the female voice? The female bodily flow, the sinful, the emotive, the seductive, or what? Would the female voices turn the world upside down and disrupt the power of the church? Or would the tearful singing voices touch what shouldn't be touched. A mysterious forbidden touch?

Again she listened to the voices, searching to separate them from one another. She needed to hear them one at a time, in order to understand each sound and each passion. Also she wanted to know what the two cultural styles shared and how they differed in expression of passions.

She started to taste Arianna's words of the Italian version. At first only speaking, then slowly making her own melodic line. She recorded, listens over and over, and searched for what Cavarero spoke of as 'the

2. Document requested from Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Firenze: B.R. 238 "Lamento d'Arianna": pp. 18 - 35 (M. 12302)

3. Cavarero, Adriana *For more than one voice. Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, Stanford University, Stanford California 2005, p.118

authentic substance’.

lasciAAAAAAAAAtemi.....

The vowel ‘AAAAA’ formed a dissonance. Second time sounded, it climbed upwards in the voice. Up in a higher tessitura.

morire...

DIE. Her voice returned down towards the lower register. Dying.

It was all about herself. Only herself wanting to die. Only SHE was on her mind.

Sounds connect to images. Images of death and cold, that spilled over inside her being. Always images.

*“Performance is the Arena of Activity that Allows Humans to Practice the Display and Reception of Emotional States in a Protected ‘Framed’ Environment”.*<sup>4</sup>

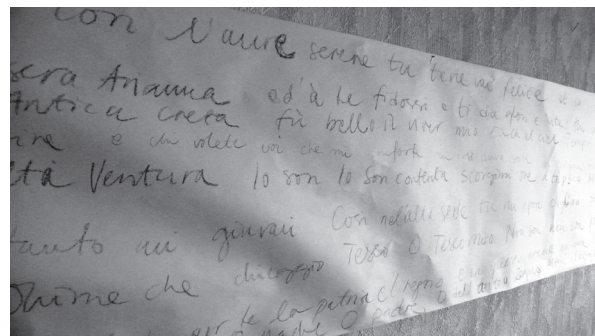
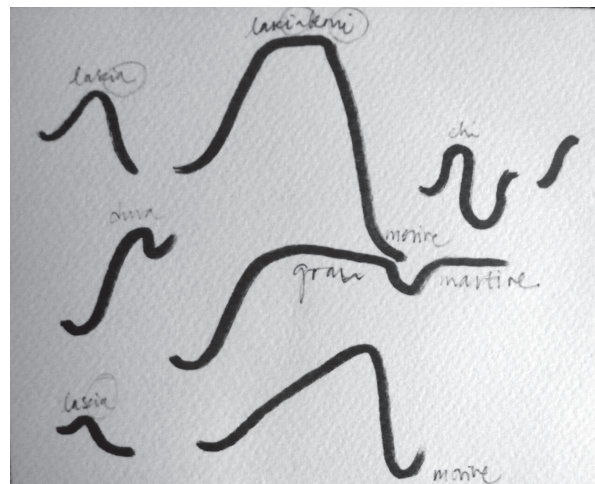
In her search for the sound of Arianna, she used the image of a woman on an island. This would mean both herself as well as Arianna. The performing frame, addressed by Beeman, made her realize that she could in fact construct a performing research frame by assembling two separated timeframes, two islands, two different women and a set of emotions. Like an audience, entering a theatre performance, mirrors themselves in the acts on stage, she set out to mirror herself in the acts and emotions of Arianna in a physical performance experiment on her own island.

She lived on an island, just like Arianna. She saw the rocks everyday. She was surrounded by rocks. Sometimes even human rocks, indifferent to strong emotions and expressions, shadowed by the religious traditions so deeply rooted all along the coast.

4. Beeman, William O. *The Performance Hypothesis. Practicing Emotions in Protected Frames*, In: *The Emotions. A Cultural Reader*, Ed. Helena Wulff, Berg, Oxford, New York, 2007, p.

She walked out on the rocks of the island, pretending she was walking with Arianna. It was a meeting between her own self and the self of Arianna.

It was a meeting between her own self, and the self of Arianna. Throughout the project she was always carefully locking the door behind her self, before setting off. Her own safe environment was not to be touched by anybody else, but herself.



Before leaving her home, she had been drawing the words of Arianna on the walls in her study. She had been following the waves of the melody on paper. The movement of the arm when drawing helped her to feel the motion of the music even more physical in the body. Tasting, seeing, hearing, touching and absorbing the motion of sound was in her focus.





Her walk towards the sea was short. She carried cameras, red paint, her music and an Ipod with a recording-device, which would never collect the best sound, but easy, to work with for this specific purpose.



In the spring of 2009 she had been to Paris organising a voice seminar. She had also decided to visit Versailles and to walk through the whole palace and it's gardens. In the gardens she found the statue of Latona, *La Fontaine de Latone*, by André Le Nôtre (1613-1700). This statue came to her mind when she stood there on the rocky shore. Latona's arm had been stretched out as if calling for someone. This woman became Arianna in her memory. A woman calling with her arms.

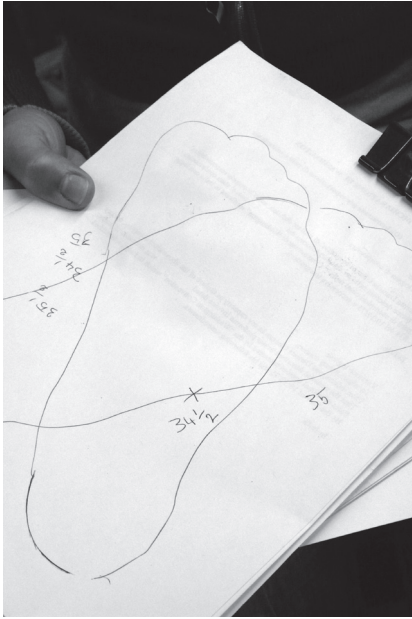


Another statue that came to signify a rock in her memory, was the equestrian statue of Louix XIV, next to the entrance of the Louvre. By the Pyramide.

He looked so strong and yet so distanced on his horse. Standing below him made her feel as if he saw her but didn't want to listen. Rochers vous etes sourds sounded in her head. A rock that would not care for love or show any feeling for her.

Again and again she drew the words in her notebook, and played with the thoughts of the rock and the man, the ones she couldn't trust.

When she stood there on the edge of the water a boat left the harbour, and she saw it getting closer to the horizon. Just at the right moment. She smiled to herself. He had left, and he didn't know that someone was looking for him. That someone was watching and that she stood there watching and singing at the same time. A girl from the island stood there crying for him, like the fishermen wives and women had done for years and years. Longing for their beloved.



Then there was the shoe.

When she left the house, she had been wearing her jogging shoes. It was the image of her own modern time. She used to run. It made her feel stronger. It made her forget about breathing. It made her spine grow long and wide. In her rug sack she carried her golden shoes, specially made for her feet in Venice. Hand made like they used to be in the 17th century.

Venice had been very rainy and wet the day she went for her first appointment to the shoemaker Daniela Ghezzi. Her boots and socks had been wet right through, and she felt a little embarrassed.

Daniela measured her feet. Next step was to find the right model. Searching in archives was a difficult task since women's feet rarely were shown on portraits. Always covered by long dresses. Finally they found the right one, and a draft was made in brown paper. It would all be splendid, made in a soft golden calflather, which she had noticed on one of the shelves in the Daniela's workshop.

The shoes had to be made by hand and then sent to Sweden by post. Again, the strange mix of time and reality became evident when the yellow Italian postal

package arrived at the petrol station on her island. Her 17th century shoes had travelled far to meet Arianna on a rocky shore in the North.



On the website for for this issue of ArtMonitor you can see the film *Sounding Arianna's Sorrow*. [www.konst.gu.se/artmonitor](http://www.konst.gu.se/artmonitor)