

...caminando hacia el mar **a guided analysis to listening**

di Pietro Cavallotti

This piece represents the central part of *la primavera escondida* (1997–98), a cycle consisting of six compositions on a text by Pablo Neruda. The whole cycle stages a hypothetical Amazonian day, a walk through the forest leading to the ocean. Neruda's *Oda a la flor azul* (from which Belcastro draws the text of *...caminando hacia el mar*) evokes reminiscences of the coast natural life, constantly passing from landscape descriptions to the poet's interaction with the surrounding world. The dichotomy between the objective and subjective level of the text allows Belcastro to build a succession of musical events alternating recited sections to lyric sections full of expression. As to the instrumental accompaniment, descriptive sections offering a musical representation of naturalistic aspects of the text mutually take the place of more expressive vocal passages.

Similarly to the text, also the composition is formally divided into three parts: the first one (A) consisting of four recited (α) and three lyric sections (β); the second (B) of two recited and one lyric section; instead, the third part (C) is introduced by an instrumental interlude (γ) followed by three recited sections alternated to two lyric ones.

Let us now look through the peculiarities of the single sections and their correlation to the poetic text:

A α 1 (Cd: 00:00; mm. 1–7). The general atmosphere of the walk towards the sea and of nature "fragrance" at first proposed by the spoken voice ("Caminando hacia el mar...") is now recreated instrumentally with different yet similar effects: the long blown note held by the flute, the hairs of the bow rubbed by the cello, the palm hitting the tailpiece of the piano.

A β 1 (00:33; mm. 7–18). The first lyric section refers to the first change to the subjective level of the text ("Hierba a hierba / entenderé la tierra..." [grass after grass, I will understand the earth]); expressive madrigalism effects arise on the lines "step by step" (listen to the piano pattern), but particularly when describing the ocean's "línea loca" [mad line] with the shakes of the flute, the tremolos of the cello and especially the rapid descending lines of all players.

A α 2 (01:24; mm. 18–22). A long D-flat held by the cello introduces the same elements of A α 1, here resounding to comment the sudden ripple of the waves ("De pronto una ola...").

A β 2 (01:43; mm. 22–29). On the lines "Salta / el vuelo de un pájaro / desde mis pies" [The flight of a bird wings from my feet] the sudden changes of the vocal register are at first accompanied by the overtones of the cello, then intertwine a short dialogue with the flute. However, the passage to the next section is less clear than usual: even though concerning the poet's subjective level, the last line

("desde mis pies") is recited while accompanied by the cello's D-flat; this element will be essential to the following recitative.

A α 3 (02:18; mm. 29–36). The next recited section ("el suelo / lleno de hilos de oro...") is based on the incessant and rapid cello pattern, now and then took up by the flute; starting from the held D-flat, the cello repeats over and over a five note row (permuted in various ways) each time lingering over the D-flat in the different registers.

A β 3 (02:46; mm. 36–40). On the lines "diferencia infinita / de cada vegetal que me saluda" [infinite difference of all the plants greeting me], the cello pattern is interrupted by a short lyric section, in which significant melodic lines are emphasized by instrumental accompaniment.

A α 4 (03:07; mm. 40–44). In the last recited section of the first part ("a veces con un rápido...") the same cello pattern of A α 3 resounds once more.

B α 1 (03:25; mm. 44–57). At first, the A α 1 sound echoes as an introduction to the return of the initial sea theme in the text ("Andando a las espumas / del Pacífico..."). In this section, the voice goes from reciting to short vocalises on the "a" of the word "Andando". The three instruments elaborate a pattern based on the obsessive repetition of E-flat, that will prevail in all the section B (particularly, listen to the complete melodic line of the flute and to the fragments repeated by the piano).

B β 1 (04:29; mm. 57–64). The vocalise on "a" prevails, finally becoming an autonomous element: flute and cello accompany with long notes in *pianissimo* while the piano goes on repeating the B α 1 pattern.

B α 2 (05:01; mm. 64–74). The story follows on ("Las minúscolas hierbas...") with traits similar to B α 1.

C γ (05:49; mm. 75–81). The short instrumental interlude (almost a *solo* played by the flute) introduces the third part. Passing from B to C is extremely gradual: actually, the flute develops the E-flat pattern, progressively abandoning the key-note (towards D and E).

C α 1 (06:22; mm. 81–92). As in A α 1 and B β 1, the sea sonority resounds at first on the repetition of the text ("Cerca del mar, andando..."). Then, the D-flat pattern of the cello (doubled by the piano) prevails, becoming now the absolute protagonist in the recitatives of the third part.

C β 1 (07:13; mm. 92–99). The poet comes across a blue flower ("hallé una flor azul..."): therefore the flower theme (consisting of two rapid ascending patterns repeated identical on the "o" of "flor" and the "a" of "azul" also proposed by the flute) becomes the typical element of the vocal section of the third part. The piano plays a three octaves chord on F-sharp serving as a sort of pedal-note.

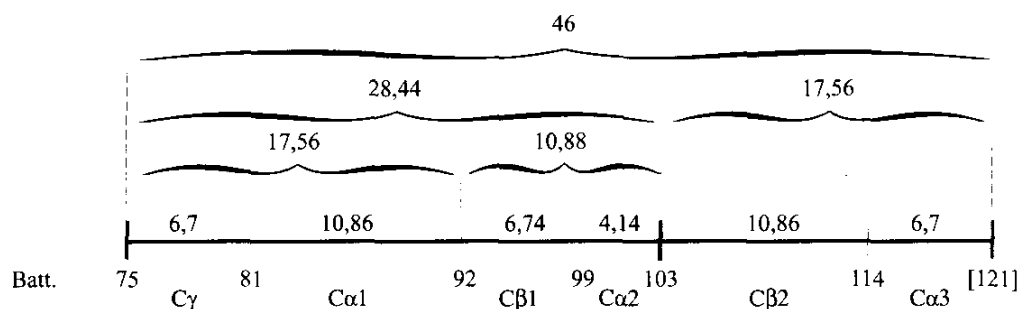
C α 2 (07:45; mm. 99–103). The recitative ("De dónde, de qué fondo...") begins again with the cello playing patterns similar to C α 1, while the flute re-echoes the flower theme.

C β 1 (08:02; mm. 103–114). The poet picks the flower ("La levanté en mis manos..."), so the music proposes again and develops the same elements of C β 1.

C α 3 (08:43; mm. 114–120). On the last lines, that are still narrative, (“como si en el combate...”), we listen again to the D-flat pattern already present in C α 1 and C α 2.

Durations – A quick survey of durations of the single sections in ...*caminando hacia el mar* shows the importance of the golden section in Belcastro’s compositional process: he often adopts this proportion, deciding in a pre-compositional stage how to fragment the piece’s entire duration into several segments. Therefore, an empty container with a rigid structure is built in advance and only later the composer “fills” it in with the sound realization of different musical events.

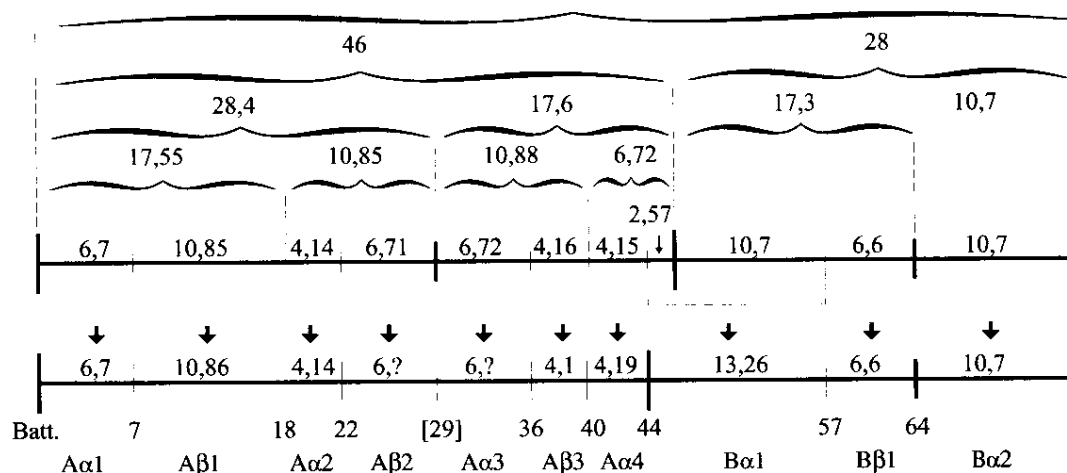
The first time, the total length of four parts consisting of 120 measures is divided (and slightly rounded off) into 74 + 46 measures. The first 74 measures include parts A and B, while the last 46 include part C. In the third part, the golden section is adopted without exceptions, apart from slight approximations due to rounding off: a first division of 46 gives a total of 20,44 + 17,56 measures; the latter is divided again in 10,86 (C β 2) + 6,7 (C α 3). The golden section affects twice the first 20,44 measures, determining durations of the four sections (C γ , C α 1, C β 1 and C α 2), both into 6,7 + 10,86 (short segment + long segment of 17,56) and 6,74 + 4,14 measures (long segment + short segment of 10,88). See below the formal table of C:



The structure of parts A and B is slightly more complex. At least when listening to the piece, apparently the (approximate) golden division of 74 measures into 46 + 28 does not seem to be literally applied: the restatement of the ‘sea sonority’ already at measure mid-44 is perceived as the beginning of a new macro-formal section. In other words, the entry of B α 1 seems slightly anticipated two and a half measures earlier, thus absorbing the last segment of A. On the contrary, exclusively as to structure, section B could start with the voice entry, that is exactly 46 measures after.

Both readings probably are correct (in the table below, I have chosen the first one) and add only a slight ambiguity to the golden articulation of parts A-B-C into 46 + 28 + 46 measures. The passage from A β 2 to

A α 3 (m. 29) is also quite fluid, because of the ambiguous position of the textual segment "desde mis pies" abovementioned. However, the golden section remains crucial in the final formal articulation of parts A and B (approximations and rounding off are so many, because it is impossible – while composing or analysing – to subdivide a measure with absolute precision. You must consider that a 0,05 margin in a common time measure is rhythmically equivalent to a semi-quaver in a quintuplet



[translation by Lisa Navach]