

**Towards a Dialogical Musical Polyphony: Contributions from
Solo Singing Performance / *Por uma polifonia musical dialógica:
contribuições da performance vocal solo***

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ABSTRACT

We retrieve in this paper Bakhtin's definition of polyphony to, firstly, seek its roots in music and then demonstrate how the literary meaning of the term can contribute to the study of contemporary concert music in new understandings of its polyphonic dimension. To this end, in addition to Bakhtin's Circle writings, we reference academic literature on the concept, both in the areas of literary theory and musicology. For this conceptual expansion, we propose three polyphonic strategies applied to the solo vocal repertoire: 1) the multiplicity of texts, 2) the multiplicity of roles, and 3) the multiplicity of actions. Through this path, the article results not only in the densification of the components that form the concept of polyphony, but also in a performance approach capable of being applied in musical practices.

KEYWORDS: Polyphony; Music; Singing; Musical performance; Contemporary music

RESUMO

Retomamos neste trabalho a definição de polifonia em Bakhtin para, primeiramente, buscar suas raízes na música e, em seguida, demonstrar de que formas a acepção literária do termo pode contribuir para o estudo da música de concerto escrita desde o século XX em novas compreensões de sua dimensão polifônica. Para tanto, além de escritos de Bakhtin e dos demais autores do Círculo, nos referenciamos na literatura acadêmica acerca do conceito, tanto das áreas de teoria literária quanto de musicologia. Propomos para esta expansão conceitual três estratégias polifônicas aplicadas ao repertório vocal solo: 1) a multiplicidade de textos, 2) a multiplicidade de papéis, e 3) a multiplicidade de ações. Por meio desse percurso, o resultado é não apenas o adensamento dos componentes que formam o conceito de polifonia, como também uma abordagem de performance apta a ser aplicada nas práticas musicais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Polifonia; Música; Canto; Performance musical; Música contemporânea

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Introduction: Polyphony between Music and Literature

Polyphony is undoubtedly one of the foundational concepts in Bakhtinian thought (Bezerra, 2005, p. 192). From the formation of the novel to its apex in Dostoevsky, Bakhtin considers this an essential attribute, one that not only distinguishes the genre from others but also integrates it as a formative institute of national languages, unfolding into more specific concepts such as heteroglossia (*raznoréchie*) or dialogism itself (Bakhtin, 1981).¹

It is known that the origin of the term ‘polyphony’ comes from music, specifically from the Medieval practice of overlapping simultaneous voices without a pre-established hierarchy, which became a fundamental configuration of Western music itself. Many efforts have been made to construct a genealogy of the concept (Roman, 1992; Benson, 2003; Gomes, Teixeira, 2023), but as our article aims to reconsider musical polyphony in light of Bakhtinian propositions, we will highlight essential aspects of polyphony in music that were understood by Bakhtin in his formulation, but that sometimes remain unnoticed by literary theory.

It is worth remembering that the notion of polyphony enters Bakhtin’s reading of Dostoevsky through the critique of Vitali Komaróvitch, who was the first to establish the analogy between the multiplicity of voices in the novel and the musical configuration (Grillo, 2021, p. 277). However, Bakhtin questions Komaróvitch’s reading of *The Adolescent* as polyphonic, when, in fact, it still resorts to an abstract ideal unity, seeking a hierarchizing thread that provides one—and only one—meaning to the texture of voices, while “the essence of polyphony lies precisely in the fact that the voices remain independent and, as such, are combined in a unity of a higher order than in homophony” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 21).²

This deep understanding of musical polyphony led Bakhtin not only to consider a polyphonic potential in Dostoevsky’s poetics but to understand it as its distinctive

¹ BAKHTIN, Mikhail Mikhailovich. *The Epic and the Novel: Towards a Methodology for the Study of the Novel*. In: BAKHTIN, Mikhail Mikhailovich. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Edited by Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

² BAKHTIN, Mikhail Mikhailovich. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Edited and Translated by Caryl Emerson. Introduction by Wayne C. Booth. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

attribute: “the polyphonic novel is dialogic through and through” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 40).³ Such a proposition is so central that, in responding to A. V. Lunatcharski’s criticism of the first version of the 1929 book, where he states that polyphony is an attribute already found in Shakespeare, Bakhtin agrees that this multiplicity of voices is indeed an aspect proper to the novelistic style and drama, but that it was only fully actualized in Dostoevsky, as in Shakespeare and others, the characters’ worldviews are still subject to a plot or a moral. Polyphony, Bakhtin insists, implies actual independence: “Dostoevsky [...] creates not voiceless slaves (as does Zeus), but *free* people, capable of standing *alongside* their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6).⁴

Although it is often proposed that the concept of polyphony was set aside in the development of Bakhtinian thought in favor of a broader notion of dialogism (Pires, Tamanini-Adames, 2010, pp. 70-71; Benson, 2003, p. 295), we propose that, like musical polyphony, it was, on the contrary, absorbed and developed to the point of becoming the very canvas on which the artist paints multiple points of escape, that is, constituting a framework that defines all other inherent relationships in the work, just as counterpoint came to operate within Western musical theory (Vasconcelos, 2021).

Thus, we aim to direct the concept of polyphony back to music. And just as Bakhtin saw in the underground man’s consciousness a polyphony of voices that were not actually spoken but resonated in his understanding of himself (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 51),⁵ through Bakhtinian polyphony we will explore how the multiplicity of voices that forms polyphony can be found even in music conceived for a single voice. Through the three strategies addressed, we will add other components to the concept, hoping to contribute to the deepening of the definition of polyphony in both literary and musicological studies, exemplifying its application through excerpts from concert music written since the 20th century. Finally, an important methodological note: just as enunciation (*viskázivanie*) assumes a central role in Bakhtinian dialogism as the performance of discourse, our analyses, as well as the entire discussion, aim not only at theoretical discussion but especially its materialization in musical performance, the *raison d’être* of this research.

³ For reference, see footnote 4.

⁴ For reference, see footnote 4.

⁵ For reference, see footnote 4.

1 Polyphony of Multiple Texts

Polyphony in music is a practice conceived at the end of the Middle Ages through the development of *organum*, which contrasted with the *cantus firmus* of the music made until then in the sacred context. According to the Harvard Dictionary of Music, polyphony is the:

Music that combines several simultaneous voice-parts of individual design, in contrast to monophonic music, which consist of a single melody, or homophonic music, which combines several voice-parts of similar, rhythmically identical design (Apel, 1974, p. 687).

But for Bakhtin to use this concept, it would not be sufficient to reference simultaneous vocal parts, but rather to reflect on their individual characteristics: in contrast to homophony and parallel organum, in polyphony, the vocal lines are independent. From the independence of voices, which occur simultaneously, Bakhtin saw a similar kind of polyphony when analyzing Dostoevsky's works, arriving at what he called the polyphonic novel:

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6).⁶

It is from Bakhtin's synthesis of this musical concept that the possibility of polyphonic creation with only one voice arises. After all, when we read a novel, the only physical voice—if we consider subvocalization—is the voice of the reader.

In the medieval origins of polyphony, it was closely linked to another practice known as polytextuality, especially in the motet genre from the 13th century onward. Polytextuality reached its peak in 15th-century motets, which could contain texts in different languages and from different sources, usually overlaying vernacular lines sung

⁶ For reference, see footnote 4.

over a *cantus firmus* in Latin. This practice is clearly connected to the prehistory of the novel, as Bakhtin points out in his proto-history (Bakhtin, 198).⁷ Despite the straightforward definition of this linguistic-musical phenomenon, both its realization and the social function of its practice during that period remain unknown. Even today, scholars wonder whether early listeners could indeed understand the meanings of the words, or whether it was even the intent of its practitioners that the texts be comprehensible. If not, what would be the purpose of the intricate texture involved in the motet's structure (Clark, Leach, 2020, p. 97). This complexity reached a remarkable level, as the authors report:

In other genres, such as the monophonic chanson, one expects a single, coherent thread in the dénouement of the narrative or lyric expression (however, see below for polytextual chansons). But in a motet composer-poets could, for example, juxtapose hypocrites against the honest, holy Mary against the rustic Marion; a knight who seduces versus one who does not (Clark, Leach, 2020, p. 97).

Such juxtapositions, Butterfield (1993) adds, seem to articulate a conscious discord, shifting between the sacred and the secular with carnivalesque fluidity, thus challenging an entire prevailing order. As an example, the author mentions a motet from the Bamberg manuscript, which overlays two French texts on a Latin tenor, singing the word *nobis*. The French texts are crafted in such a way that they share rhymes and metrical structures, even though these structures are not always realized simultaneously. The text contrasts clearer references to human passions with pleas for divine intervention, exemplifying the ambiguous nature with which such pieces play. Finally, it is worth noting that polytextuality, recognized for its presence in medieval motets, also occurred on a smaller scale in secular songs (Clark, Leach, 2020, p. 101). In these cases, the juxtaposition of poems had an antiphonal character, establishing dialogues or divergent viewpoints on the same event, including romantic disputes or other forms of debate (Leach, 2010).

In polytextual work, there are several layers competing for performance. First, there is the issue of the multiplicity of texts and, consequently, of expressive intents and

⁷ For reference, see footnote 3.

interpretative demands particular to each discursive source. This can occur through different texts, resembling the medieval motet. It can also arise from implicit texts, as suggested by the concept of intertextuality. However, we consider in this dimension those discourses with explicit dialogism—that is, those that intentionally juxtapose or superimpose texts from different origins while keeping them intact and distinct from one another. Nonetheless, such complex textures pose difficult interpretative questions: in what ways will the performer differentiate the voices in the text? How, among them, will they make space for their own voice? What makes the performer an interpreter, and not merely an executor of discursive structures?

As an example of a polytextual composition to illustrate interpretative decision-making, we can refer to the piece *Duas distâncias* [Two Distances],⁸ written by the São Paulo composer Silvio Ferraz in 2007, based on two different texts: *Os livros o carpete* [The Books, the Carpet], by Annita Costa Malufe, and *Ondas do mar de Vigo* [Waves of the Sea of Vigo], by Martin Codax. Annita Malufe was born in São Paulo in 1975, while Martin Codax lived somewhere on the Iberian Peninsula in the mid-12th century. Thus, the polytextuality in this composition is explicit. It is a piece for female voice and two guitars, and its score provides some performance instructions:

⁸ The performance of the piece by these authors is available in:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-s2KS44i5Pk&t=567s>

Figure 1 – Instructions for the performance of the piece *Duas distâncias*,⁹ by Silvio Ferraz

indicações para realização

a cantora deve evitar toda e qualquer forma de dramatização da leitura.

a parte vocal segue uma matriz baseada em blocos que tem o valor de uma semínima, acentuando apenas ligeiramente a primeira sílaba e cada bloco.

a realização da peça tem seu melhor ambiente se ligeiramente amplificados voz e instrumentos e tratados com pequeno reverb de aprox. 150 ms, imaginando-se o colorido de uma sala de médio porte.

nas partes cantadas a cantora deve também evitar o canto de tradição lírica e tomar por referências as formas de cantar camponesas e populares. A linha principal, que inicia a peça é retirada da lírica trovadoresca de Martin Codax, do séc.XII (ondas do mar de vigo).

Following Nicholas Wolterstorff's (1980) ontology of art and considering that the execution of these instructions written by the composer are part of the essential properties of this piece, failing to follow them would result in an incorrect occurrence of the work. Annita Malufe's text is a chaotic tangle of many images: books, mold, piles of books, clutter, pollution, noise, and the city center. All of this culminates in an intriguing scene, perhaps even a psychoanalytic one. Despite all the chaos, what seems to bother the speaker is "the insoluble question I barely knew how to formulate." The recitation should be whispered, as fast as the performer can manage, which seems to align perfectly with the situation described in the poem.

The external chaos does not seem greater than the internal one, as at some point, the lyrical self cannot identify their own feelings. Not their feelings toward someone else, but their feelings *of* someone else. It doesn't seem that this person was in the same place as the lyrical self. This might have been literally indicated in the phrase, "tanta coisa preenchia o espaço entre a minha pele e a tua" [so many things filled the space between my skin and yours]. The part that makes us think the character has internalized this other person comes in the following passage:

⁹ In Portuguese: indications for performance

the female singer must avoid any and all forms of dramatization of the reading.

the vocal part follows a block-based matrix that has the value of a quarter note, only slightly accentuating the first syllable and each block.

The performance of the piece has its best ambience if the voice and instruments are slightly amplified and treated with a small reverb of approximately 150 ms, imagining the color of a medium-sized room.

In the sung parts, the singer must also avoid traditional lyrical singing and take as references the forms of peasant and popular singing. The main line, which begins the piece, is taken from the troubadour lyrics of Martin Codax, from the 12th century (Waves of the Sea of Vigo).

(Ferraz, 2007)

so much held back our breath
that I should make myself lucid and wait
a bench the urge to go to the bathroom the lukewarm coffee in the flask
the scene of a life in which books age before bodies
I couldn't lament my presence nor that of the kraft paper rolls the collection of papers with
crumpled edges
the metal files
there had to be something for my eyes to wander over my eyes
(I'm not sure if it was yours I was seeking
or if I was seeking to escape)
to let my eyes roam over the poster of a play from the seventies the poster of a Spanish bullfight
the menu of an Italian restaurant in a medieval village
how to escape these minimal monuments of a life
what would this waiting be
your eyes turned to the back of your head and my question reverberating between the walls
between the mold of the walls
my question stuck to the hot and suffocating humidity of midday in the city center
my question that didn't reach you that didn't reach your inward-turned eyes that couldn't reach
the acrobatics of your eyes and stayed fixed in the soot of buses in the noises that mingled with
words with our words
our voices that were only smoke and confusion some small thread to hold us there to keep us
there even if only momentarily between those shelves crammed with books boxes cardboard
acrylic objects wood games that aren't even made anymore
(and I don't even know if it was you who was there
behind my breath)¹⁰

The first sentence of this passage starts by mentioning our breath and ends by stating, “and I don’t even know if it was you behind my breath.” The lyrical self also confuses their eyes with the other’s eyes, as we notice in the first parenthesis that appears in the passage. The chaos seems to stem from the character’s anxiety and restlessness, which worsens the entire external scenario. This seems to be a messy room, with mold –

¹⁰ Original in Portuguese: “tanta coisa prendia nossa respiração/ que eu devia me fazer lúcida e aguardar/ um banco a vontade de ir ao banheiro o café morno da garrafa/ o cenário de uma vida em que os livros envelhecem antes dos corpos/ eu não podia lamentar minha presença nem a dos papéis craft enrolados a coleção de papéis com as pontas amassadas/ os arquivos de metal/ era preciso ter algo por onde passear os olhos os meus olhos/ (não sei se eram os teus que eu buscava/ ou se buscava fugir)/ passear os olhos no cartaz de uma peça da década de setenta o pôster de uma tourada espanhola o cardápio de um restaurante italiano em um vilarejo medieval/ como fugir destes monumentos mínimos de uma vida/ qual seria esta espera/ teus olhos voltados para trás da cabeça e a minha pergunta reverberando entre as paredes entre o mofo das paredes/ a minha pergunta grudada na umidade quente e abafada de um meio dia no centro da cidade/ a minha pergunta que não chegava até você que não chegava em teus olhos voltados para dentro que não alcançava a acrobacia dos teus olhos e ficava pregada na fuligem dos ônibus nos ruídos que se misturavam com as palavras com as nossas palavras/ nossas vozes que eram só fumaça e confusão algum pequeno fio que nos mantivesse ali que nos prendesse mesmo que momentaneamente entre aquelas estantes abarrotadas de livros caixas papelões objetos de acrílico de madeira jogos que já nem se fabricam mais/ (e eu nem sei se era você que estava ali/ por trás da minha respiração)”

possibly caused by cigarette smoke and the pollution of the city center – probably an office. Books, a shelf, papers, metal cabinet.

Perhaps the presence of the other was merely a memory? The excerpt, “some small thread that kept us there, that held us even if only momentarily,” seems to suggest something like this. If it was, it seemed a very vivid one, where the eyes and their acrobatic movements were no longer their own, and their breath was shared. In the end, there is a lack of presence, of question, of answer.

Ondas do mar de Vigo, by Martin Codax, is a lyrical troubadour song about a girl who begs the sea for help in finding her beloved and prays to God that he returns soon. It is a song divided into four stanzas of symmetrical structure, all ending with the refrain, “may God will that he comes soon!”.

The texts seem very distant, but in the context of the music, they draw closer: Annita Malufe’s lyrical self, amidst the chaos, also cannot find her someone – at times, not even herself. Silvio Ferraz’s piece seems to take a rollercoaster ride between reveries and reality, where Codax holds the reveries, and Annita the chaos, in two juxtaposed

Example 1 – Excerpt from *Duas distâncias*, by Silvio Ferraz, where the sung notes of Martin Codax’s song are followed by the whispered poem of Annita Costa Malufe

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Duas distâncias' by Silvio Ferraz. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is a vocal line, featuring a melody with triplets and slurs, accompanied by lyrics from Martin Codax's song: "os livros o carpete a pilha de livros no chão a es- tante abarrotada de livros e espaço sem lugar para res-". The lower staff is a piano accompaniment, characterized by complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and slurs, and dynamic markings such as 'mf' (mezzo-forte) and 'f' (forte). The score is written in a handwritten style, with various musical notations like beams, slurs, and articulation marks.

Fonte: Ferraz, 2007, p. 2

The text by Codax is sung at the beginning of the piece; Annita’s text follows, initially whispered, then gradually gaining space in sung form, alongside long vowels and

boca chiusa.¹¹ Annita Malufe's sung text is consistently accompanied by dissonant intervals, staccatos,¹² interspersed with pauses and significant expressive contrasts. The *boca chiusa* section appears almost as a lament – as written in the score. The piece presents significant technical challenges for the singer for several reasons: rapid and abrupt transitions between text and spoken voice; whispered high notes that deviate from a lyrical sound; fast and uninterrupted speech, requiring a more detailed study of breath control in the piece; dissonant intervals with little or no auditory reference from the instruments. For the singer, the most challenging aspect of the performance is delivering the reading without dramatization, without rendering it lifeless or dull. In this work, non-expression is itself a form of expressiveness and demonstrates an assessment of the situation. Non-dramatization is not required in the sung parts. Thus, we constantly alternate between a sung section, with technical difficulties, somewhat effusive, and a read section that should not be dramatized.

Through this discussion, we preliminarily conclude that solo vocal performance based on politextuality is possible on the premise that the performer, like the author, has an active voice and responsively participates in the construction of the performance, both during its creation and its execution. Finally, we suggest that the historical study of how musical polyphony utilized politextuality points to pathways for the construction of expressiveness, even in cases where the medium consists of a single voice. Moreover, exploring such possibilities promotes the development of the performer's technical and dramatic abilities, preparing them for contexts where the music must navigate swift shifts in structures and affects, a skill applicable to vocal performance as a whole, including in its multiple multimodal texts (Brait, 2011).

2 Polyphony of Multiple Roles

For the following polyphonic category, we will discuss the concept of polyphony through some components, particularly the multiplicity of voices in theater and collective

¹¹ The Italian word can be literally translated as “closed mouth” and refers to the technique of producing vocal sound without opening the lips, resembling, in the case of this piece, a murmuring sound.

¹² Short and articulated notes of the others.

assemblage in Deleuze and Guattari. The general idea of this topic is that everyone possesses various voices within themselves (Malufe, 2012, p. 195). And this would be no different in musical performance.

Despite Bakhtin's mentioned distinction between polyphony and the multiplicity of voices in drama, it is worth recalling that in Greek Tragedy performances, there was an acting dynamic in which only three actors played all the roles in the play (Damen, 1989). Thus, by observing theater not from the perspective of script composition but of role performance, we see that the actors were responsible for more than one role, giving voice to more than one character in the same play; furthermore, a single actor could portray two characters who were antagonistic to each other. Damen (1989) also points out that the actors wore costumes and masks. In a context where there were three male actors of similar weight and height, they were differentiated by their voices. This was because the plays were presented in festivals that awarded prizes for the best actor, making identification necessary.

Similarly, in German Romantic Lieder,¹³ there was a poetic form where dialogues would occur between two or more characters, as is clear in the song *Der Erlkönig* [The Elf King], composed in 1815 by Franz Schubert after Goethe's poem, with the three characters and the narrator being sung by a single person (Boyd, 2016). In other words, the practice and understanding that a human being contains more than one voice has been present in the arts for centuries.

This pervasive presence of a polyphonic dimension in aesthetic activity leads us to consider how it might be present in general discursivity. It is in this sense that Deleuze and Guattari cite Bakhtin precisely to formulate their language postulates:

“I swear” is not the same when said in the family, at school, in a love affair, in a secret society, or in court: it is not the same thing, and neither is it the same statement; it is not the same bodily situation, and neither is it the same incorporeal transformation (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987, p. 82).¹⁴

¹³ We refer to the artistic genre of songs written by composers based on pre-existing poems, which became central to German Romanticism, as seen in the numerous compositions by Franz Schubert and Hugo Wolf set to poems by Goethe.

¹⁴ DELEUZE, Gilles; GUATTARI, Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translation and Foreword by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

In the occurrence of musical performance, the context for the creation of affective meaning is the world constructed by the composer. The performer, as a kind of enunciatee, enacts their affective understanding. However, the performer is simultaneously both enunciatee and enunciator. Thus, the audience also constructs meaning based on the performer's execution. This idea of subjectivity aligns with Bakhtin's thoughts on enunciator, enunciatee, and his theory of language from a dialogic perspective (Oliveira, 2011, p. 166). For Bakhtin, "subjects are socio-subjective entities; this means they have an individual consciousness, but this individuality is essentially social—formed and operated only in society" (Araújo, 2004, p. 2365).¹⁵ Through this idea, we dissociate the individuality of the subject, who carries not only their own words but also the words of others. As Bakhtin defines:

The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. He either agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on. And the listener adopts this responsive attitude for the entire duration of the process of listening and understanding, from the very beginning—sometimes literally from the speaker's first word. Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive, although the degree of this activity varies extremely. Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 68).¹⁶

Thus, by performing the act of listening to the speaker, the listener responsively engages in the construction of meaning within the speaker's own speech. Both act actively, and neither is complete in itself; each is, at the same time, all. It is precisely through the idea of doing something by saying something and that a discourse carries a multiplicity of voices within itself that the concept of such polyphony of roles arises, not only dramatically but also socially.

¹⁵ Original in Portuguese: "os sujeitos são entidades sócio-subjetivas; isso significa que eles têm uma consciência individual, porém, essa individualidade é essencialmente social – formada e operada apenas em sociedade."

¹⁶ BAKHTIN, Mikhail Mikhailovitch. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

Returning to musical polyphony in solo vocal music, let us first clarify that it occurs as an essential property of the work: the roles indeed exist, occur simultaneously, and, even if one has temporary prominence, none holds greater hierarchical importance than another. It is the texture of roles that forms the musical discourse. In the multiplicity of roles, various characters are present in the piece, leading the listener to different scenarios, all concentrated within a single person enunciating the discourse. There is no discursive break in terms of writing; on the contrary, there is fluidity in the text. Beyond the multiplicity of lyrical “selves,” there is also a multiplicity of lyrical “others,” changing the expression’s meaning according to the addressee to whom the voice is directed.

When performing a solo vocal piece that involves a multiplicity of roles, the performer absorbs and becomes all the voices of the discourse. This occurs, for example, in the song *Barbarasong* [Barbara’s Song], written by Bertolt Brecht and set to music by Kurt Weill, which premiered in 1928 as part of *The Threepenny Opera*.¹⁷ The lyrics narrate the story of Polly, the opera’s protagonist, and her relationship with potential suitors. At first, the protagonist blends her discourse with everything she has been taught: a good girl should find a good man, with possessions, who treats her well; and, even if she finds him, she should hold back and say “no.”

Once I believed, when I was still innocent,
and that I was once, as were you.
Perhaps someone would one day come to me,
and then I would know what to do.
And if he has money, and if he is nice,
and his collar is clean,
and if he knows how to treat a lady,
then I say to him: “No.”
Then one keeps his head up,
and one remains always so.
Surely the moon shines the whole night,
surely the boat is fastened on the bank,
but nothing can be further.
Yes, one not only lies down,
one must be cold and heartless.
Yes, so much could happen,
ah, there is only: No!¹⁸

¹⁷ A recording of the first author’s performance is available in: https://youtu.be/KmN1CSf_IZ0?si=Q-Hx-O77pkHXOhh4&t=216

¹⁸ Translation into English by Jennifer Peterson available in: <https://operamission.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/181.pdf> . Original text: Einst glaubte ich, als ich noch unschuldig war, / und das war ich einst grad so wie du, / vielleicht kommt auch zu mir einmal einer, / und dann muß ich wissen, was ich tu. / Und wenn er Geld hat, und wenn er nett ist, / und sein Kragen ist auch werktags rein, / und wenn er

There are several interesting points in the discourse. In the phrase *and I was once as innocent as you*, she breaks the “fourth wall,” sharing her role as the narrator of the piece with someone who could be identified with the audience. With each description of the good qualities of a love affair, the character mentions instructions given to her by a third person, stating that for each situation, there would be an appropriate resolution. Another point is the last four sentences, which start with “yes, ...” followed by a statement. The fact that they begin with “yes” gives the impression that she is answering a question that was not asked in the text, which could either communicate with the audience or be yet another reproduction of the “rules” imposed on her.

The first man who came was a man from Kent,
who was as a man should be.
The second had three ships in his port,
and the third was crazy about me.
And when they had money, were nice,
and their collars clean,
and when they knew how to treat a lady,
I said to them: “No.”
I kept my head up
and I remained always so.
Surely the moon shines the whole night,
surely the boat is fastened on the bank,
but nothing can be further.
Yes, one not only lies down,
one must be cold and heartless.
Yes, so much could happen,
ah, there is only: No!¹⁹

In the second moment, there is the narration of situations that were so rehearsed: three suitors arrived, all good men, with means, and crazy about her. But apparently, the greater issue is “remaining available.” And just as she learned, as indicated in the first

weiß, was sich bei einer Dame schickt, / dann sage, dann sage, dann sage ich ihm “Nein!” Da behält man seinen Kopf oben,/ und man bleibt ganz allgemein./ Sicher scheint der Mond die ganze Nacht,/ sicher wird das Boot am Ufer losgemacht,/ ja, aber weiter kann nichts sein./ Ja, da kann man sic/ doch nicht nur hinlegen,/ ja, da muß man kalt und herzlos sein./ Ja, da könnte so viel geschehen,/ ach, da gibt’s überhaupt nur: Nein.

¹⁹ Translated by Jennifer Peterson. Original text: Der erste, der kam, war ein Mann aus Kent,/ der war, wie ein Mann sein soll./ Der zweite hatte drei Schiffe im Hafen,/ und der dritte war nach mir toll./ Und als sie Geld hatten,/ und als sie nett waren,/ und ihr Kragen war auch werktags rein,/ und als sie wußten, was sich bei einer Dame schickt,/ da sagte, da sagte, da sagte ich ihnen “Nein.”/ Da behielt ich meinen Kopf oben,/ und ich blieb ganz allgemein./ Sicher schien der Mond die ganze Nacht,/ sicher ward das Boot am Ufer losgemacht,/ ja, aber weiter konnte nichts sein. / Ja, da kann man sich doch nicht nur hinlegen,/ ja, da muß’ ich kalt und herzlos sein./ Ja, da könnte doch viel geschehen,/ aber da gibt’s überhaupt nur: Nein.

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verse with the line “I would have to say to him: no,” she did so, as shown in the line “I said to them: no.”

The phrase “Surely, the boat was securely anchored on the shore” metaphorically indicates things that didn’t happen and the inertia she intended to maintain, even if reluctantly, as shown by the phrase “But one cannot go on like this.” What corroborates this thought is the change in these phrases in the third verse of the song, as the text follows a logical construction, all with 17 lines and similar phrases that slowly change.

However one blue day, one came and didn’t ask for me.
And he hung his hat on the nail in my room,
and I didn’t know what to do any more.
And when he had no money, was not nice,
and his collar was not clean, even on Sundays,
and when he didn’t know how to treat a lady,
to him I didn’t say: “No.”
There I didn’t keep my head up,
I didn’t remain always so.
Ah, the moon shines the whole night,
the boat came loose from the bank,
and it can’t be at all any other way.
Yes, one must simply lie down,
yes, then one cannot be cold and heartless.
Ah, so much must happen,
yes, there is not at all a No!²⁰

In the third moment, Penny simply stopped following the customs that had been passed down to her: she found a man who was not a good person, who had no money, no possessions, and not even good manners. Penny not only surrendered herself to this man but also married him. There is a break in the discourse, which now seems to belong solely to the protagonist and her choices. Penny appears satisfied, as the phrase “Oh, the moon shone all night long” replaces the two previous ones, “Certainly the moon will shine/shone all night long,” giving, this time, the sense that she truly lived that night to

²⁰ Translated by Jennifer Peterson. Original text: Jedoch eines Tages, und der Tag war blau,/ kam einer, der mich nicht bat,/ und er hängte seinen Hut an den Nagel in meiner Kammer,/ und ich wußte nicht was ich tat./ Und als er kein Geld hatte, / und als er nicht nett war,/ und sein Kragen war auch am Sonntag nicht rein,/ und als er nicht wußte, was sich bei einer Dame schickt,/ zu ihm sagte, zu ihm sagte, zu ihm sagte ich nicht “Nein.”/ Da behielt ich meinen Kopf nicht oben,/ und ich blieb nicht allgemein./ Ach, es schien der Mond die ganze Nacht,/ und es ward das Boot am Ufer festgemacht,/ und es konnte gar nicht/ anders sein!/ Ja, da muß man sich doch einfach hinlegen,/ ja, da kann man doch nicht kalt und herzlos sein./ Ach, da mußte soviel geschehen,/ ja da gab’s überhaupt kein Nein.

affirm whether the moon shone or not; the phrase “And it couldn’t be any other way” also indicates that this was her choice.

In this song, the performer interprets not only Penny’s lines but also the lines that occur through her. Furthermore, we can consider that the performer will portray two Pennies, each at a different moment in her life, with distinct actions and thoughts. In this way, we demonstrate that the polyphony of multiple roles can be regarded as a normative category of the musical work for a single sung voice, going beyond the *stricto sensu* polyphony we know historically. In addition to Bakhtin, the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari help us understand the dimension of collective assemblage present in a discourse.

3 Polyphony of Multiple Actions

To address this polyphonic category, we will refer since the beginning to the musical work that first manifested its occurrence explicitly and consciously, *Sequenza III*, for solo voice, written in 1966 by the Italian composer Luciano Berio (1925-2003). Berio himself in the notes accompanying the recording of the piece mentioned the proposal of “polyphony of actions”:

The title *Sequenza* [...] refers solely to the fact that the piece is based mainly on sequences of harmonic materials and types of instrumental actions: particularly in *Sequenza II* for solo harp and *Sequenza IV* for piano, one could speak of a *polyphony of actions* (Berio, 1969, cited in Cardassi, 2006, p. 47, our emphasis).

Berio is discussing the series of 14 pieces titled *Sequenza*, conceived for solo instrument—and solo voice in the case of the third piece—from 1958 until his death in 2003, when he was revising *Sequenza XIV*, for cello (Ferraz, Teixeira, 2015). To extrapolate the conventional concept of polyphony, Berio used as a model the simulated polyphony employed by various composers, such as J. S. Bach, which functions “to create an impression of simultaneity of different individual voices (which would be chained according to the rules of voice leading in the basso continuo) where there is, effectively,

only one voice in actual action” (Penha, Ferraz, 2017, p. 15).²¹ However, in Berio’s context, the impression of simultaneity utilizes not only the sonic parameter but also any textural, physical, or dynamic parameters that the instrument allows. According to Cardassi (2006, p. 47), in monodic instruments, this polyphony occurs through inviting elements that imply a polyphonic aura through listening. Thus, in both the physical-technical aspect of both melodic and harmonic instruments, Berio was already able to transcend the traditional concept of polyphony.

It is essential to point out that Berio composed his *Sequenze* for specific performers, “taking into account their technical, artistic, intellectual, and expressive potentials” (Penha, Ferraz, 2017, pp. 3-4).²² *Sequenza III*, our object of study for this polyphonic perspective, was composed for Cathy Berberian, the composer’s wife at the time, considering her vast technical and vocal experimentation capabilities, including a markedly dramatic stage presence. Berio thus presents his project for the piece:

The voice carries always an excess of connotations, whatever it is doing. From the grossest of noises to the most delicate of singing, the voice always means something, always refers beyond itself and creates a huge range of associations. In *Sequenza III* I tried to assimilate many aspects of everyday vocal life, including trivial ones, without losing intermediate levels or indeed normal singing. In order to control such a wide range of vocal behaviour, I felt I had to break up the text in an apparently devastating way, so as to be able to recuperate fragments from it on different expressive planes, and to reshape them into units that were not discursive but musical. The text had to be homogeneous, in order to lend itself to a project that consisted essentially of exorcising the excessive connotations and composing them into musical units. This is the “modular” text written by Markus Kutter for *Sequenza III*.

Give me a few words for a woman
to sing a truth allowing us
to build a house without worrying before night comes

In *Sequenza III* the emphasis is given to the sound symbolism of vocal and sometimes visual gestures, with their accompanying “shadows of meaning,” and the associations and conflicts suggested by them. For this reason *Sequenza III* can also be considered as a dramatic essay whose story, so to speak, is the relationship between the soloist and her

²¹ Original in Portuguese: “ao criar uma impressão de simultaneidade de diferentes vozes individuais (que se encadeariam segundo as regras de condução de vozes no baixo contínuo) onde há, efetivamente, apenas uma voz em ação atual.”

²² Original in Portuguese: “levando em consideração seus potenciais técnicos, artísticos, intelectuais e expressivos.”

own voice. *Sequenza III* was written in 1965 for Cathy Berberian (Berio, 1965).

Sequenza III by Luciano Berio consists of a piece of music written for female voice based on a modular text by Markus Kutter. It is modular because its construction of meaning does not depend on a rigid linearity. It can be read through combinations of blocks of words:

Chart 1 – Kutter’s Modular Text.

give me	a few words	for a woman
to sing	a truth	allowing us
to build a house	without worrying	before night comes

Source: Edwards, 2004, p. 22

In the table, the sensation of blocks makes more sense, as they can be read in all directions. However, the text is not modulated solely through blocks: Berio also fragmented it into syllables and phonemes. In fact, the first measure of the piece consists of a murmuring andante of the following syllables: to, co (comes), us, for, be (before). These are syllables from random parts of the text that should be repeated quickly, with the voice murmured and whispered. Given that they are meant to be spoken quickly, the denotative meaning of the syllables or words disappears, leaving only the voice. The consonant “t” is pronounced from a small plosive between the tongue and the teeth; the “c” is formed from the friction between the roof of the mouth and the tongue, while the vowel “u” is formed at the back of the mouth. The consonants “f” and “b” are formed with the lips. There is linearity in the path of the pronounced consonants and vowels—which move from the middle to the back and end at the outer part of the mouth—making the rapid speech somewhat ergonomic.

So far, we see that one of the first aspects to be analyzed in a song, that is, the text, is approached in a radically different way in this piece. There is a text, but it is not intelligible throughout the piece. What matters for the construction of meaning in the piece is its phonetics, which leads Berio to use the International Phonetic Alphabet for notation. All people from all countries should follow a similar phonetic system. If the text

were the primary concern, the phoneme would lose meaning since, even in a predetermined language, foreign people would read it with an accent.

Patti Edwards brings some interesting analytical aspects in her article, considering the “mad scene” (*Scena della pazzia*) as a compositional genre of the piece (Edwards, 2004, p. 15). The mad scene was commonly used in the Baroque period and occurred when the protagonist went mad for some reason. Vocally, it was characterized by a break in operatic musical language, where singers had to sing erratically (Edwards, 2004, p. 16). In the Baroque period, it would make sense to consider Berio’s entire piece as a mad scene; however, in this case, the singer did not become mad but arrived mad on stage. While the essence of a mad scene would be the break between the normality and abnormality of a relevant character—protagonist, hero—through the portrayal of madness, *Sequenza* deconstructs the very identity of the enunciator through the multiplicity of actions performed by her. In this sense, Berio presumes polyphony not only of vocal actions but also of corporeal actions. That is, the bodily action has a single origin in the vocal gesture. If it were the other way around, the performer would seek affection in the body, not in the voice. Thus, the bodily gesture is a consequence of the vocal gesture.

The dramatic intention comes from Berio’s own instructions, which outline the emotions the singer must work with at the moment, resulting in what Penha and Ferraz (2017) call “polyphony of affects.” Edwards (2004, p. 29) provides an extensive list of emotions indicated by the score, including some of the following: anxious, apprehensive, bewildered, calm, shy, distant, dreamy, tense, ecstatic, dizzy, impassive, desperate, melancholic, witty. It is important to keep in mind that all these emotions must be formed, primarily, in vocal intention. Edwards (2004) also presents a possible textual linearity based on words that are notated with high sounds or sung. Following this idea, Kutter’s text would be structured as follows:

Chart 2 – Edwards’s Formal Scheme

60’’	a woman
1’50’’	give a few words for a woman
3’50’’	to sing
4’20’’	a truth
6’10’’	to build a
6’20’’	a few words before
6’35’’	to sing before night
8’15’’	allowing before night comes
8’35’’	to sing

Source: Edwards, 2004, p. 30.

This is an interesting way to construct and interpret the text, which can indeed be a pathway for performance, where the singer chooses to define her performance through this textual pathway. However, considering the polyphonic potential of the piece, this wouldn’t make sense, as the idea is for polyphony to be present in all parameters. Regarding the modular text, it also wouldn’t make much sense, since the intention of its structure is to construct meaning through various montages, with no one path being more correct than another. Additionally, the focus would shift from the vocal gesture to textual intention.

Another aspect brought up by Edwards (2004) is the development of performance that revolves around the various laughs indicated in the score. In his official note about the piece, Berio makes it explicit that *Sequenza III* was written for Cathy Berberian. But as Penha and Ferraz (2017, p. 8) mention, the piece was not composed for her, but about her. The singer practiced a technique she dubbed “domestic clowning,” which consisted of the vocal imitation of various types of human and non-human sounds, significantly increasing her vocal emission capacity. The singer built her vocal repertoire over many years and enchanted some people with her daily practice—among them, John Cage, who made her his muse and interpreter for the work *Aria*. Cathy was not only Berio’s muse for *Sequenza III*; she was compositional material for the piece.

Cathy Berberian’s peculiar practice of vocal experimentation earned her the definition of what she called “new vocality,” which refers to expanded vocal techniques²³

²³ Extended technique is the term used in contemporary musical practices to describe forms of execution that deviate from the traditional methods typically learned by instrumentalists and singers.

that deviate from *bel canto*.²⁴ The main question of the process is the “singer’s ability to use the voice in all aspects of the vocal process; a process that must be integrated as flexibly as the lines and expressions of a face” (Berberian, 1966, p. 47, cited in Penha, Ferraz, 2017, p. 13).²⁵ The new vocality fits perfectly into the idea of vocal gesture, where the performative and dramatic raw material of the singer is essentially the voice. Here are some of the instructions for performing *Sequenza III*:

The performer (a singer, an actor or both) appears on stage already muttering as though pursuing an off-stage thought. She stops muttering when the applause of the public is subsiding; she resumes after a short silence (at about the 11” of the score). The vocal actions must be timed with reference to the 10” divisions of each page.

Although the borderline between speaking and singing voice will often be blurred in actual performance, the vocal actions written on one line (a) are “spoken” while those written on three or five lines are “sung.” On three lines, only relative register positions are given (b); dotted lines connect notes of exactly the same pitch (c). On five lines (d) precise intervals are given, but their pitch is not absolute: each sequence of intervals (between “spoken” sections) can be transposed to fit the vocal range of the performer; dotted lines indicate that the change of vocal colors on the same pitch must occur smoothly and without accents (e).

The text is written in different ways:

- 1) Sounds or groups of sounds phonetically notated: [a], [ka], [u], [i], [o], [ø], [ait], [be], [e], [], etc.
- 2) Sounds or groups of sounds are pronounced in context: /gi/ as in give, /wo/ as in woman, /tho/ as in without, /co/ as in comes, etc.
- 3) Words conventionally written and uttered: “give me a few words,” etc.

Sounds and words lined up in parentheses as must be repeated quickly in a random and slightly discontinuous way.

Groups of sounds and words in parenthesis as (to me...), (be/lo/...), (/co/ta/...) etc. must be repeated quickly in a regular way. At 15” of the score, for instance, (to me...) is equivalent to: to me to me to; at 30”, ([e] [a]...) [a] is equivalent to [e][a][e][a][e][a]; at 1’ the group (/ta/[ka]be...) must be repeated as many times as possible for about 2” (Berio, 1966).

²⁴ The Italian term can be literally translated as “beautiful singing,” and it refers to an aesthetic standard that guided operatic singing technique since the late 19th century, emphasizing vocal projection and sound volume.

²⁵ In Portuguese: “habilidade do cantor usar a voz em todos os aspectos do processo vocal; um processo que deve ser integrado tão flexivelmente quanto as linhas e expressões de um rosto.”

Reaching this point, it is already possible to assume that, just as the material of *Sequenza III* is the *vocal gesture*, the material of this polyphonic approach is the same. The polyphony of sounds and actions does not require text as the primary structure, as seen in the approaches of polytextuality and multiple roles, since we conclude that only the voice is necessary for the production of *sound* and *gesture*.

At this point, the reference from the Circle can be revisited to understand the current modality of polyphony. Just as sound and gesture are the material of the polyphony of actions, intonation and gesture are what form the “voice” in its dialogic sense, primarily in what Vološinov (1973, p. 156)²⁶ calls the “phonic embodiment of reported speech displayed by the author’s context.” Vološinov defines some initial aspects of this analysis:

The absolute of acting out we understand to be not only a change of expressive intonation – a change equally possible within the confines of a single voice, a single consciousness – but also a change of voice in terms of the whole set of features individualizing that voice, a change of persona (“mask”) in terms of a whole set of individualizing traits of facial expression and gesticulation, and, finally, the complete self-consistency of his voice and persona throughout the entire acting out of the role. After all, into that self-enclosed, individual world there can no longer be any infusion or spillover of the author’s intonations (Vološinov, 1973, pp. 156-157).²⁷

Here, Vološinov clearly defines that the dialogic openness of discourse implies a listening that always reconfigures the discourse of others with its own expressive capacities. Every listener is a performer. Thus, we note that the primacy of sound and gesture over words plays a fundamental role in an effectively dialogic polyphony. In another text, when discussing the formation of language as word, Vološinov analyzes among its constituent elements the function of intonation, which “always lies on the border of the verbal and the non-verbal, the spoken and the non-spoken” (Vološinov/Bakhtin, 1983, p. 14).²⁸ This understanding not only sheds light on the expressive effect of a piece like *Sequenza III*, but also complements another formative

²⁶ VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka e I. R. Titunik. New York: Seminar Press, 1973.

²⁷ For reference, see footnote 28.

²⁸ VOLOŠINOV, V.N [M.M. BAKHTIN]. Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry. In: SHUKMAN, Ann (Ed.). *Bakhtin Schoolpapers*. Oxford: RPT Publications, 1983.

element: “and was not the word itself originally linguistic gesture, a component of a complex body gesture?” (Vološinov, 1983, p. 16).²⁹ Thus, understanding polyphony as a multiplicity of actions responds to Vološinov’s own epistemological project as a musician, in that “it is precisely this objectively sociological aspect of intonation and gesticulation [...] which should interest theoreticians of the arts concerned, since in it resides also the aesthetic-creative forces of these phenomena which create and organize artistic form” (Vološinov, 1983, p. 16).³⁰

This project takes on even more defined lines when Bakhtin, in addressing the constitution of character, notes that:

The verbal work of art is created from outside each one of its heroes, and, in reading, we must follow the heroes from outside, not from within. Yet it is precisely in the case of verbal creation (and in the case of music even more so, of course) that the purely “expressive” interpretation of the exterior appears to be especially seductive and convincing, inasmuch as the author/ beholder’s situatedness outside the hero lacks here the spatial distinctness it has in the visual arts [...] the words image, as it were, an already finished spatial given, and what is not evident is the creation of the spatial form from outside through lines and colors, that is, the action of constituting and producing the form from outside through a movement of the hand and of the whole body that conquers the merely imitative movement-gesture (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 96).³¹

We see here that the expressive potential of vocal actions in constituting a type of polyphony resides in the expressive origin of the word itself. It is a pure manifestation of expressive energy in its most instinctive form of materializing into sound and gesture. As Bakhtin understood when discussing poetry:

Each word not only denotes an object, not only evokes an image, not simply sounds, but also expresses an emotive-volitional reaction to the denoted object, which is expressed through the word’s pronunciation in its intonation (Bakhtin, 2021, p. 54).³²

²⁹ See footnote 30.

³⁰ See footnote 30.

³¹ BAKHTIN, Mikhail Mikhailovitch. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Translated and notes by Vadim Liapunov. Supplement translated by Kenneth Brostrom. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

³² From the translation in Portuguese: “cada palavra denota não só um objeto, não evoca só uma imagem, não simplesmente soa, mas também exprime alguma reação emotivo-volitiva em relação ao objeto denotado, que através da própria pronúncia da palavra é expressa na sua entonação.”

Thus, we note that, just as in the two previous modalities, polyphony as a multiplicity of actions is also present in the structure of dialogic polyphony, manifesting itself in both literary and musical discourse, including in music for a single voice. Furthermore, it emphasizes an aspect of verbal expressiveness that has received little attention from literary critics, especially regarding the novel, but can traverse all linguistic phenomena, including the most mundane conversation and the simplest song.

Final Remarks

From the three modalities of polyphony found through the performance of recent repertoire for solo voice, we conclude that Bakhtin's formulation regarding literary polyphony offers significant contributions to the discipline from which the concept originated. More than analytical criteria, it provides creative pathways that can be harnessed in both composition and musical interpretation.

The first modality, polyphony of multiple texts, points to the polytextual root of medieval polyphony and illuminates the genesis of later concepts such as intertextuality. It also indicates the expressive potential that the juxtaposition of texts within the same discourse possesses, leading to important interpretative questions.

Through the multiplicity of roles, we could discuss Bakhtin's distinction between literary polyphony and various dramatic characters, demonstrating how, from Greek Tragedy to German Romanticism and into contemporary times, it is in the performance of discourse that we find its vividly polyphonic potential. This modality also raises a significant question about human identity and its expression, demonstrating through the concept of collective assemblage in Deleuze and Guattari how meaning is closely linked to the multiple social and affective bonds between the speaker and their contexts of enunciation.

Finally, the third modality of polyphony, through multiple actions, retrieves two important constitutive elements of the word in its dialogic sense, namely sound and gesture. By delving into the composition and performance process of Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III*, we observe that this type of polyphony not only integrates a creative project

but is also capable of guiding decision-making in the construction of an interpretation, which is especially necessary in a piece of such complexity.

In each of the modalities, we presented objects of analysis that could be explored in sufficient depth to prove the validity and relevance of this expanded concept of polyphony for music. It would also be possible to add examples from other contemporary repertoire pieces, such as *Got Lost*, written by composer Helmut Lachenmann for soprano and piano based on a text by Nietzsche, a poem by Fernando Pessoa, and a note found by the composer in an elevator, presenting another case of polytextuality, in this case with three distinct languages (German, Portuguese, and English) and with a complex polyphony of actions constructed from the vocal potential identified by the composer in each of the texts. We could also refer to the writing of Georges Aperghis, who, by adding a dramaturgical character to music for solo voice, explores the multiplicity of roles on the part of the interpreter. Finally, we could also turn to numerous songs from the popular repertoire that widely utilize these three polyphonic resources, reinforcing the importance and relevance of this study.

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Statement of Author's Contribution

We declare that the article was developed with equal contribution by Juliana Araújo Gomes and William Teixeira. The collaborative efforts of the authors in this article follow the prescribed criteria for authorship, from conception and elaboration to data acquisition, analysis, and interpretation. Both authors are responsible for all aspects of the work in ensuring the accuracy and integrity of any part of the work.

Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso [*Bakhtiniana*. Journal of Discourse Studies] to Open Science, the journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review I

The text presents a discussion on the concept of polyphony, both in its musical conceptions and its application in Bakhtinian theory. Supported by various authors, including theoretical contributions from Deleuze and Guattari, the conception of polyphony as a multiplicity of voices is expanded to: 1) the multiplicity of texts, 2) the multiplicity of roles, and 3) the multiplicity of actions. The discussion is accompanied by examples of various vocal pieces and their performances, from motets to German Romantic Lieder, or even excerpts from *The Threepenny Opera*. However, its main focus of analysis is on contemporary classical music (concert music) featuring a solo female voice: the piece *Duas distâncias* by Silvio

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Ferraz (2007) and *Sequenza III* by Luciano Berio (1965). We acknowledge that contemporary classical music has a somewhat restricted audience, as it breaks with metric and tonal standards and even with the usual use of the voice in lyrical or popular singing. Thus, at first glance, the proposal of the article may seem overly specialized. However, based on the discussion of the vocal and performative demands of the two selected vocal pieces for study, the conception of polyphony as a plurality of voices, texts, roles, and actions is developed, exponentially expanding Bakhtin's dialogic conception. In this sense, the discussion presented is of interest not only to the field of music but also to scholars of Bakhtinian theories, making it possible to envision the applicability of this approach for analyzing other artistic productions—literary or musical. Therefore, the contribution of the text to the journal's editorial scope deserves to be explicitly stated from the title, suggesting alternatives such as: *For a Dialogic Musical Polyphony: Reflections from the Contemporary Solo Vocal Repertoire*. Or variants: instead of “reflections,” it could be “discussions,” “contributions,” etc. Or: *From Polyphony in Bakhtin to a Dialogic Musical Polyphony: Reflections from Contemporary Vocal Music*. If the suggestion is accepted, the abstract needs to be reworked in the same direction. Other recommendations:

1. Since it is a journal in the field of Linguistics and Literature, several terms common in the musical field deserve an explanatory note: *bel canto*, expanded technique, *boca chiusa*, etc.
2. Considering the potential multiplicity of readers, include in parentheses the translation of titles in foreign languages of the songs or musical pieces.
3. I suggest avoiding the use of the term “bias” in the sense of perspective, approach, focus, etc., since traditionally, in research, bias is the translation of “bias.” If a research has a bias, it means it is biased, problematic, or not rigorous. “Bias” is used in various moments of the text but could be replaced by other terms without compromising understanding.
4. According to ABNT (Brazilian Association of Technical Standards), omissions in direct quotes should be indicated with brackets: [...]
5. The reference list needs a thorough review, following the reference formatting standards specified by ABNT and available on the journal's website, especially concerning journal articles: do not use “pp,” “Vol,” or “No.” Adjust. APPROVED WITH SUGGESTIONS [Revised]

Maura Lucia Fernandes Penna – Universidade Federal da Paraíba, Centro de Comunicação Turismo e Artes, João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brazil; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7331-2812>; maurapenna@gmail.com

Reviewed on June 21, 2024.

Review II

The article is relevant for applying Bakhtinian philosophical assumptions to the field of musical analysis, greatly contributing to Brazilian academic production. However, the

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article needs some revisions regarding ABNT technical standards, such as the overall formatting of the text considering spacing between topics, spacing between words, standardization of font size in citations, alphabetical order of authors in the bibliography, and spelling of foreign words. APPROVED WITH RESTRICTIONS [Revised]

Antonio Celso Ribeiro – Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, Centro de Artes da UFES, Vitória, Espírito Santo, Brazil; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7368-0241>; antoniocelsoribeiro@gmail.com

Reviewed on July 13, 2024.

Review III

After the necessary revision and acceptance of the suggestions made by this reviewer and his colleague, I consider the article ready for publication. However, I recommend checking the link for the second video (of the performance of an excerpt from *The Threepenny Opera*) on the YouTube channel. The link seems broken or corrupted.

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Reviewed on August 29, 2024.

Review IV

I consider that the corrected version of the text, incorporating the suggestions from the review, is adequate. I therefore recommend the publication of the text.

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Reviewed on September 08, 2024.

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