Ignazio Macchiarella

Multipart Singing in Sardinia

Exclusive and Inclusive Practices

European Voices: Audiovisuals 3

European Voices: Audiovisuals
Number 3

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Series editor: Ardian Ahmedaja

Ignazio Macchiarella

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Ardian Ahmedaja

Foreword of the series editor

The third issue of the EVA series, which is devoted to multipart singing traditions in Sardinia, is special for several reasons. First of all, because these are among the most vividly multipart singing practices in Europe today and have been the subject of research for a long time, as can be discerned from the rich body of references cited in this book. In such a situation one might think that everything has already been said about these traditions and their makers. This book and the audiovisuals included in its explorations show that the contrary is the case. The new perspectives on the inner life of the music-making processes which it offers bring many new aspects to light. One of the greatest advantages are views into each moment of the performance from the perspectives of the music makers and experienced listeners (such as "The need for a good start", "Modular mechanisms", etc.).
In this way the reader and the listener learn to grasp this music from the inside: "Sardinian multipart singing is not a repertory of pieces to be reproduced, a corpus of defined tracks, but *potential* for making music which is continually being implemented in an ever-renewing way" (p. 35-36).

The focus on exclusive and inclusive practices provides new understandings, also about aspects which have been taken for granted until now in the research. Exclusive practices "are mastered solely by specialist groups of performers" and require "selective, extended, and specialized training through apprenticeships" (p. 14) and thus account for a good part of the explorations in the book. Examining them and the actions of the music makers leads to new understandings and unexpected results. An example hereto are the "distinctions drawn between the sacred and the profane" in the research.

Macchiarella states that "the exclusive multipart singing in Sardinia serves to highlight the problematic nature of this distinction. Rather than there being two separate or opposing realms, as is crudely assumed, the performance practices in question suggest that the notions are actually two aspects of a single collective musical experience. Having fun is part of devotion, an integral part of the meanings of cultic action" (p. 45-46).

Exploring inclusive singing practices, their rules, performers' roles (primary, secondary, complementary, etc) and performance schemes, Macchiarella emphasizes that "this is not *spontaneous* music making, since some groups (at the very least) deliberately create and shape their sounds during rehearsals. This is particularly relevant in the cases of performance encompassed in religious contexts, where each group aims to find a distinct amalgamation of voices and attributes special meaning and symbolic value to their sounds" (p. 60).

Multifaceted analyses carried out in the diachronic and synchronic perspectives scrutinize other issues taken for granted until now in the research. One of them is the question of so- called "chordal multipart singing", as multipart music practices in Sardinia are often viewed. This is based on understandings which are affected by worldviews and the terminology of Western art music (p. 16-20) which consider the term "chord" to be a synonym for "triad". Macchiarella's analysis not only shows that this view does not match with the understandings of the music makers, but also that "the chord is not an 'invention' of art music. It originated in complex phenomena connected to the acquisition of oral polyphonic mechanisms by professional musicians around the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries" (p. 21).

Part of the explanations in this publication are also practices of multipart singing traditions in Sardinia which are less well-known in international research. The "poetry duels and the *cantu a mutetu* of the campidanese area" (p. 53) might be mentioned here as examples of this.

The overall picture of exclusive and inclusive multipart singing practices in Sardinia as well as in-depth insights into their features presented in this

publication are carried out by a researcher who has moved the centre of his life to a Sardinian village to become a member of the community. This is a very important condition for Macchiarella's research, as he has emphasized on several occasions. In this way, the results of the close cooperation with the music makers presented in this publication also highlight a remarkable research model.

***

At the end of these introductory lines, I would like to thank Ignazio Macchiarella for accepting the invitation to publish this book in the EVA series as a contribution which will be followed by another one in the near future. Each issue of the EVA series is a joint project between the Department for Folk Music Research and Ethnomusicology (IVE) of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (MDW) and the institutions the authors are affiliated with. In this case our partners have been the Department of Humanities, Languages and Cultural Heritage of the University of Cagliari and Labimus (Interdisciplinary Laboratory on Music) based on the same institution as well as members of the *TeDiMuS project (Digital Technologies and Multipart singing in Sardinia) financed by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (more on p. 7)*. I am very grateful for their generous support, which made the realization of this publication possible, as well as to Ignazio Macchiarella for guiding the entire publication process.

Finally, I would like to thank the former and the current directors of the Department for Folk Music Research and Ethnomusicology (IVE) of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (MDW), Ursula Hemetek and Marko Kölbl, for their support of the project and the preparation of this publication.

Ignazio Macchiarella

Multipart Singing in Sardinia: Exclusive and Inclusive Practices

This book is a first, partial, contribution on multipart singing in Sardinia to the seminal EVA (European Voices Audiovisual) series, which is directed by Ardian Ahmedaja. The book was scheduled for publication in 2020/2021, but the events of the Covid pandemic forced a postponement, as well as a redefinition of the original project due to transformations in some practices and the time taken to readjust after the terrible two-year period of silence.

The book is not exhaustive in its purposes but tries to highlight the main elements of complexity in the phenomenon through assembly of an anthology of audiovideo materials with Q.R.code technology. Each of these materials takes up themes discussed in the text.

The anthology was produced as part of the TeDiMuS (Digital Technologies and Multipart Singing in Sardinia) project, funded by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia. The work was carried out with the support of Labimus (Interdisciplinary Laboratory on Music of the Department of Humanities, Languages and Cultural Heritage of the University of Cagliari), drawing on the author's 30 years of research experience on the subject.

The materials were filmed/recorded at different times and in different contexts. They include excerpts from historical collections from the second half of the twentieth century, while some videos were made by Marco Lutzu and Diego Pani, as part of TeDiMuS. Other clips were made by ISRE (Higher Regional Institute of Ethnography Nuoro), which I wish to thank for its support. The work of assembling the materials was conducted by Andrea Lotta, whom I also thank.
My gratitude is due to Marco Lutzu for supervising the anthology, and Gigi (Luigi) Oliva for his comments on the text.

Of course, the work owes greatly to the contribution of many local actors. This long list of people to acknowledge includes countless singers and experienced listeners who offered me their time and much expertise. My sincere and deep thanks go to all of them.

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Orally transmitted multipart musics could be characterized as involving coordinated collective behaviors aimed at reaching predicted, identified, and recognized musical outcomes. These outcomes are previously imagined and idealized, and subsequently evaluated and debated, by performers and listeners from a particular community. Building from this description, the concept of *multipart music* serves as the basis for the theoretical-methodological structure of this book. The notion is a functional tool for the analysis and interpretation of musical behaviors occurring as women and men play/sing together in a coordinated manner (Ahmedaja 2008).[1]

Together with the focus on the *contents* of music performance (i.e. what is sung or played), the book takes up scholarly interest in the *manner* of music making (how performance unfolds, when and where). The main thrust is to understand the music's functions and its meanings: why a musical performance comes to be as it is and, more generally, what music is and what it means within people's lives.
To approach these broad topics is to focus on what individuals do when they sing/play together in organized ways, within the transience of the performance (as they embark on an adventure whose outcome is always impossible to predict).

In fact, according to this way of thinking, oral multipart musics are not "abstract sequences" of notes or chords, but interactions among personalized sounds; during the performance, every singer/player *is the sound* she/he produces. The music making gives individuals extraordinary opportunity to manifest themselves.

Rooted in a dialogical approach, the book stems from research experience that, over more than twenty years, has indeed been increasingly oriented toward consciously dialogical methodologies. This means research built on deep negotiation between scholar and local actors, who together are meant to reach an understanding that is shared as much as possible – a systematic collaboration oriented towards achieving negotiated dialogues between the scholar's point of view and the local music makers' awareness (Macchiarella 2019: 50).

1 See www.multipartmusic.eu

Multipart singing in Sardinia

It is not easy dealing with multipart singing in Sardinia. The phenomenon is vast and variable in both musical structures and in the meanings of which these structures are part. It is music making that is truly alive. In small villages and large urban centers, many Sardinians (of all the ages, socio-economic conditions, etc.), manifest, shape, and act out their cultural identities. It is activity through which they decide who they are and how they think of the world around them. Sometimes these people also travel the world performing their own musical expressions to foreign audiences who bring any number of cultural perspectives to the mix.

Many patterns and repertories have been identified, but the literature and discography provide uneven coverage of them. Nonetheless, the abundance and musical diversity of the available material (mostly audio—video recordings) reveals a phenomenon so complex that is impossible to give an exhaustive description, as regards both the musical structures and their associated cultural meanings and values.

Any attempt to reduce the practices to a limited number of musical patterns would be merely to betray its richness. Academic research in the area started in the early 2000s,[2] and it remains far from exhaustive, not least since there are some areas of the island who practices still require basic documentation work. At the same time, like any traditional music practice, those in Sardinia are continuously in transformation in their sound products and related meanings.

A more productive way to approach multipart singing is to highlight two general performance principles (Macchiarella 2016):

– On one hand, there is multipart singing that adopts *inclusive patterns*. These are patterns that offer possibility for anyone interested to participate, on the basis of a restricted set of rules, so that the number and organization of the participant is not previously determined;

2 In Sardinia, ethnomusicology work began in 2001 with the creation of a position at the University of Cagliari. Previously, some sporadic attempts had been made by the Sardinian Ethnographic Institute in Nuoro. Research was also carried out by scholars working independently; see below.

– On the other hand, there is multipart singing based on ***exclusive patterns***. These patterns are mastered only by selected specialist groups, made up of a predetermined number of performers who are available to work (usually very hard) to determine more elaborate and complex musical outcomes and related meanings.

This is not a rigid dichotomy, not least because any form of musical expression (including those that might be considered technically most straightforward) still requires certain (low profile) know-how – pure spontaneity does not exist in any music making (Cook 2014). And there also (a few) cases of interactions in performance between inclusive and exclusive patterns (as will be explained below). The distinction, however, does make a useful contribution to the interpretation of the quality and articulation of different multipart performances.

Every form of multipart music expression is, in fact, based on collectively negotiated music behavior. What one *can* do and what one actually *does* during a performance both result from mechanisms of musical exclusivity/inclusivity based on one's individual openness to collaborate with others, to allow the closeness of others, to share a certain time and a certain space, and so on.

Bosa

Exclusive Multipart Singing

In Sardinia, the interweaving of individual musical actions gives rise to patterns of *exclusive multipart singing*. These patterns are well known and appreciated on the island and by the wider public of fans of this so-called "traditional" music. They are mastered solely by specialist groups of performers, as a rule made up of male members. These groups require selective, extended, and specialized training through apprenticeships. Members build peculiar skills and learn to observe social rules shared through local knowledge and customs; a good voice and mastery of technical skills alone are not sufficient for someone to be accepted as member of a group of singers.

The presence of these exclusive practices is limited to a few villages mostly in the north-central area of Sardinia. It is not a circumscribed area, and the practices are not homogeneously spread around the territory. Indeed, the situation in geographically close villages is often very different.

Furthermore, evidence and memories (plus some audio sources) often demonstrate the presence of exclusive practices in villages where they do not exist today. On the contrary, nowadays there are exclusive practices in villages where their presence has not been noted in the past. In fact, the diffusion of the phenomenon is rather controversial and conflicting ideas circulate around the issue.[3]

Although the local actors themselves use themselves the word coro (choir) to refer to their music ensembles, the quartets (or quintets) of performers do not constitute a small choir as understood in other contexts. This is not so much due to the absence of an external reference, such as a conductor, who guides the functioning of the musical ensemble. Rather, it is mainly for the absence of a harmonic sense, according to the meaning of this phrase prevalent in art music. According to Pietro

3 In the wake of requests from UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage program (Seeger 2015), the Institute of Higher Regional Institute of Ethnography Nuoro (ISRE) is attempting to regulate the spread through special inventory questionnaires. The issue, however, remains controversial since these are oral tradition practices (see https://a-tenore.org/en/index.html).

Sassu (1988: 125), «In Sardinia singing "in chorus" (in the sense of several performers for each part) makes almost no sense. The term "choir," which sometimes is adopted, always indicates a certain number of soloists».[4]

Overall, the practices documented in Sardinia have several traits that are peculiar to this context, and there are even certain *unique* aspects. At the same time, there are noticeable relationships with multipart singing performed across the sea on the Islands of Corsica and Sicily, and in continental Europe (Macchiarella 2008).

Usually, Sardinian practices are represented by the so-called *multipart singing by chording* pattern. This consists of typically four (and sometimes five) simultaneous voice emissions, each one performed by only one singer. The voices create an overlapping sound that can roughly be interpreted as a succession of complete chords with a doubled key pitch (fundamental note).[5] Actually, though, this sound overlapping is distinct from the concept of the chord in Western art music. It represents a peculiar sonority requiring very complex methods of production, and it affords an inherent wide space for creativity. The one-to-one relationship between vocal emission and individual singers is a peculiar aspect that is of crucial relevance to understand the singing practice.

Singers are trained musicians within the domain of a specific traditional music culture. Within this, they make music in two ways: first by producing multipart coordinated vocal emissions, and second by talking about what they do, elaborating ideas about musical structures, aesthetics, contexts and meanings of performance, the histories of their repertories, and so on. These discussions are indeed highly elaborated, often featuring extensive use of metaphor, allegories and figures, idiolect phrases, etc. But there is nothing of the "objectification" of the musical grammar that is the norm in other musical contexts. Sardinian multipart singing mechanisms

4 In Sardegna il cantare "in coro" (nel senso di più esecutori per ciascuna parte) era quasi un nonsenso. Il termine "coro", talvolta adottato, indica sempre e comunque una somma di solisti»

5 As will be discussed below, there are exceptions such as performances with three or five voices, and performance with vocal parts reinforced by two or more singers in unison. These are isolated exceptions which are not taken into account extensively here.

go beyond a mere listening process; it is not a “concert music” neither a “corpus of songs” but a lively music-making process shared across several local communities.

Bortigali

Chordal multipart singing?

Four performers to four parts is, in Western art music, a highly representative musical configuration, one often associated with the string quartet. The latter is a distinguished and elaborate ensemble which, in many aspects, carries an emblematic value in the music academy. To make music in a group of four requires a great effort from the musicians. They must have secure technical skills, since the single parts are evident to the listener (and it is not possible to hide as it is in large polyphonic ensembles). In parallel, the musicians must be able to recognize the sound emitted by the other three, and to position themselves well in relation.
It is a matter of knowing exactly what they themselves are playing, when and where, while demonstrating understanding and patience towards others.

This means that everyone must collaborate in group practice and take responsibility, being ready to share common ideas, ambitions, and interpretations.
Such attitudes can be also identified within four-part/four-voice configurations in orally transmitted practices. The major difference is the absence of part writing. In numerous contexts around the world, there are complex practices with the shared character of interaction between four soloists. This character is clearly evident in some of Sardinia's exclusive music making.

Within ethnomusicological literature, Sardinian exclusive multipart music is categorized as so-called "chording polyphony" (*polifonia ad accordo*), pointing to expression («a tre o quattro parti in movimento accordale [in three or four parts in chording movement] » (Agamennone 1996: 242). This typology privileges «simultaneous relationships where the parts, seen as "vertical," are analyzable in terms of chords» (Zemp et al. 1996: 124).

In studies on orally transmitted multipart singing, it is believed that the chordal polyphony is an infrequent mode of expression (Zemp et al. 1996). This polyphony would seem to identify and characterize some circumscribed areas, determining «vere e proprie isole polifoniche fortemente connotate [real polyphonic islands with strong connotations]» (Agamemnone 1996: 242).

In the tradition of Italian studies, some "islands of chord song" have been identified in large areas of Sardinia, in Corsica, in some areas of Sicily, and in certain locations in the southern regions (Agamemnone 1996; Leydi 1992).
Another well-known "chordal" area has been found in the Genoese area, in the form of the so-called *Trallalero* (Balma-D'Angiolini 2018) and in the Maremma (Tuscany) with the *Bei-Bei* (Agamennone 1996).

Elsewhere, well-known chordal areas have been identified in the region of Svanezia, Georgia, about which there is talk of "'floating' agreement practices"

(Zemp et al. 2006: 21).[6] According to the International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony (IRCTP), chording polyphony «can be distinguished by the presence of relatively stable harmonic verticals, chords. In its purest form, chordal polyphony is present in many contemporary European singing traditions (such as those in the Alps, the Balkans, and parts of Western and Eastern Europe) and in regions outside of Europe particularly affected by late European singing traditions (like some parts of Africa and particularly Polynesia)».[7]

In light of these observations, Joseph Jordania connects chordal polyphony with homophony, arguing that the former is a type of polyphony in which the parts move in a constant progression of chords (Jordania 2006: 29).[8] Chordal polyphony mostly (but not always) develops in a slow or medium tempo. All of the parts follow the same rhythm, and the overall sound is very full. Subtypes of chordal polyphony might be distinguished according to the harmonic language employed, either based on (a) Chords with a triadic structure, or (b) Chords with non-triadic structure. Chordal polyphony often uses drones in different parts (Jordania 2006: 29).

From a different point of view, according to a French working group headed by Simha Arom in the 1990s, the presence of chordal-type combinations can be considered a form of "music on staff" – that is, "One or more notes held that form the basis of one or more melodies that develop simultaneously above it." (Arom et al. 2005:1069). More specifically, this is a form of "multiple drone," with constituent notes that are performed "simultaneously, as is the case for instrumental music

6 The definition of "floating chords" in the context of the polyphony of Svanezia is not unanimously accepted. It is not mentioned, for example, in the voice Georgia for the Research Centre for European Multipart Music

7 The definition is obtained from the caption of the geographical map presented in the IRCTP portal under the heading "Chordal polyphony" (http://polyphony.ge/en/home-2/ - Last accessed 11 April 2019). It is not the appropriate place to go into the merits of the definition, which in many respects is questionable as starting from the idea of chordal polyphony in the Alps is an idea that is not reflected in literature (Haid 2006), nor is it evident upon listening; further discussion of this issue is best left to another occasion.

8 Actually, the concept of homophony (literally "the same voice") has no clear boundaries and mainly refers to the notion of harmony implicit in the relationship between solo melody and recurring accompaniment in the sphere of popular music. In the case of oral tradition practices, it is too reductionist and deterministic a notion; it presupposes the existence of a sequence of chords placed on the crucial notes of a melodic passage in the form of obligatory chords that are considered extensions of the monody, or as a way wider to hear and play a single melody. As will be seen below, the melody/accompaniment relationship does not necessarily imply harmonic relationships in the sense of Western art music. For an interpretation of homophony in the multipart music approach, see Macchiarella 2016: 22-23.

with Scottish bagpipes [...] or Indian sruti box and, for vocal music, with Sardinian polyphones, with reference to Lortat-Jacob 1993" (Arom et al. 2005: 1070).

The use of the staff is not itself a polyphonic procedure and this term is defined only by extension (Arom et al. 2005: 1068). In the same essay, the group again brings the practices of Sardinia into the discussion, this time with reference to another CD, that edited by Bernard Lortat-Jacob in 1992. They argue for including Sardinian practices in a category of music displaying "strict homorhythm," where homorhythm is defined as a «procedure whereby all the parts have the same rhythmic imprint, regardless of the relationships between their melodic lines» (Arom et al. 2005: 1071).

Yet another perspective appears in an entry of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* entitled "Non-Western – Polyphony." This contribution reinforces the idea that "polyphonic islands" are spread unevenly around the Mediterranean area, and that these are considered attestations of archaicity with aesthetics far from those of art music. Beneath the surface are conceptions that «can be either horizontal or vertical or both», and it is asserted that some cases reveal a "chordal basis" (although examples are not given). In this context:

> More recently developed styles reflect the influence of "Western" harmonic functions with the 3rd and 5th as the most common intervals. While most song types retain the same tonal centre throughout, others include characteristic modulations (see Sardinia). (Grove 2001, *sub voce*)

The entry "Sardegna" in *Grove* distinguishes between «a *Tenore* song» and «sacred polyphony», arguing that the former kind «creates a very dense and characteristic harmonic texture in the aesthetic of the *tenore*, the common chord is modulated and explored in all the different components of its timbre» (Grove 2001*: sub voce*). In sacred polyphony, on the other hand, «the voices have a different quality of timbre and the harmonic system is much more developed, featuring

chromaticism's, the play of unprepared modulations and elements of counterpoint» (Grove 2001*: sub voce*).

These are just some of the many statements on the subject that could be quoted. But it is already evident that, despite widespread interest in the topic, existing work on chordal practices lack adequate overall consideration. Inventory definitions of the kind picked out above cannot but offer approximate representations; for instance, anything more than brief attention would obliterate any impression in a listener's mind that a double staff is present, just as careful listening excludes any impression of harmonic modulations. These inventory definitions are also conditioned by the "extension of the technical terminology of art music." An important example is the term "homorhythm" which, when it is used in the literal sense taught in conservatories, is of little relevance for rhythmic analysis of singing with several voices in Sardinia.

Similar approximations are also found in specialist literature. Potter-Sorrell (2012: 282-283), for example, deals with the *cantu a tenore* (strangely translated as "singing in ensemble") and claims that its phonation is «consciously different from the harmony singer, often sounding more like those of the North African coasts» and that «the use of nonsense syllables combined with reinforced harmonics may have originated in the calls Sardinian shepherds used in the mountains to round their flocks». This is a gratuitous statement, one that is absolutely false and whose basis and origin are not clear (see below).

Historical traces

Above all, the basic misunderstanding concerns the term "chord," usually understood as a synonym for "triad" and therefore immediately connected with the harmonic/chordal logic of so-called "art music." This is a musical logic considered a "relatively recent invention" and one specific to the "classical music" of Western socio-economic elites, something inseparable from the use of writing and therefore

far from the sphere of "tradition." In this wake, the chord is foreign to "authentic oral tradition" and something "imported" or in any case largely influenced by «European style harmonies» (Jordania 2006: 141).

But as so much literature has clearly shown, the chord is not an "invention" of art music. It originated in complex phenomena connected to the acquisition of oral polyphonic mechanisms by professional musicians around the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. From this point, there developed the phenomenon of the *falsobordone* (Bradshaw 1978; Macchiarella 1995), which had particular importance in the post-Council of Trent liturgical (and paraliturgical) polyphony up to the mid-seventeenth century (Kendrick 2014). The latter was also prominent in repertoires of entertainment music of the early sixteenth century (especially in types such as villanelle, villanesche, frottole), and in elaborate repertoires such as madrigals, as well as in the affirmation of the harmonic tonality of the early seventeenth-century operatic recitative style (Bettley 1976).

These acquisition phenomena testify, if nothing else, to a centuries-old and widespread presence of chordal-type procedures prior to and outside of the scope of art music. These procedures are very little known because they circulated orally and therefore it would not make sense to look for an original dating (Jeffery 1992). According to various scholars (for example Canguilhem, 2015; Fiorentino 2009; Viret 2013), today's orally transmitted chordal singing practices (including, above all, those of Sardinia) should be considered continuations of the techniques of five hundred or more years ago; their study, therefore, can suggest valuable information on the performance methods and improvisation processes of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century repertoires mentioned above. This question, as mentioned at the beginning, goes far beyond the objectives of this work and engaging with it in depth must be postponed to a future work (already in progress).

As far as direct historical accounts of performance practices are concerned, only a few fragmentary records are found, within travel chronicles and in other sources written from the sixteenth century onwards. The first author to devote specific

attention to Sardinian multipart singing, however, is the Sardinian abbot Matteo Madau (1733-1800), author of the interesting volume *Le armonie de' sardi* published in Cagliari in 1787. According to Madau:

> «Nel capo di *Logodoro [i sardi] cantano i loro versi con consonanza di più voci, dai Greci Polydia chiamata, ed è artifiziosa unione di voci, altre gravi, altre acute, tra di loro compostamente accordate, e in quattro parti distribuite, soprano, alto, tenore, basso, opposte l'una contro l'altra con esatta misura di tempo [...] tal'è la detta manier di cantare nel detto capo della Sardegna, e nel sentir il concerto di soavi, nette, e armoniche modulazioni di voci tra loro accordate in questo canto, sembra che si senta un pieno contrappunto di musica.*[9] (Madau 1987: 25).

A significant treatment of multipart singing is found in a volume by Sicilian musician Nicolò Oneto (1800-1872), a chapel master in Cagliari and someone very interested in the oral tradition practices of the island. Oneto in particular reveals a specific focus on four-voice singing, which according to him, is a result of

> «una felicissima disposizione che eglino [i popoli sardi] hanno per beneficio della natura alla musica, tanto nel genere melodico, che nell›armonico [...] quando il *tenore* detto la voce intona il motivo della canzone o d'altro, tosto le altre voci dette *tripli* e *tipiri* che corrisponde ad un *tenore* autentico quasi contraltino, il contra, che corrisponde al secondo tenore ed il basso, di colpo senza veruna discordanza si mettono a cantare contemporaneamente al primo, per cui fanno delle armonie, e questi degli accordi di somma difficoltà come quelli di scendere e salire di grado diatonico le armonie perfette. Ora se questa gente idiota senza alcuna istruzione canta non solo melodicamente ma ancora armonicamente intonando accordi difficili con precisione, che altro si può e si dee dedurne, se non la loro naturale disposizione per la musica?» (Oneto 1841: 46 e *sg.*)[10]

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9 "In the cape of Logodoro, [the Sardinians] sing their verses with consonance between several voices, called Polydia by the Greeks, and it is an artificial union of voices, some grave, some acute, composed in tune with each other, and distributed in four parts, soprano, alto, tenor, bass, opposed one against the other with exact measure of tempo [. ...] such is the said manner of singing in the said cape of Sardinia, and in hearing the concert of sweet, clear, and harmonic modulations of voices tuned among themselves in this song, one seems to hear a full counterpoint of music.

10 "a most felicitous disposition that [the Sardinian people] have for the benefit of nature to music, both in the melodic genre, and in the harmonic [...] when the tenor called "the voice" intones the tune of the song or of something else, as soon as the other voices called "tripli" and "tipiri" which corresponds to an authentic almost contraltino tenor, "the contra," which corresponds to the second tenor and the bass, suddenly without any discordance, they set themselves to sing at the same time as the first, whereby they make harmonies, and these of the chords of supreme difficulty like those of descending and ascending the perfect harmonies in diatonic degree. Now if these idiotic people without any instruction sing not only melodically but also harmonically intoning difficult chords with precision, what

Historical evidence of great interest can subsequently be found in the writings of the Sardinian musicologist Giulio Fara (1880-1849). In several passages of his essays, he offers careful descriptions, sometimes enriched by transcriptions, of the performance practices of singing in several voices. These practices, on the whole, seem similar to those in use today. In an essay on the origins of polyphony in the West (Fara 1926), he refers to polyphonic chants intended for the accompaniment of paraliturgies, the earliest direct testimony to this performance scenario, presenting a direct link to the *falsobordone*.

> Un colto musicista però mi scriveva a proposito dei canti a più voci del Sassarese, da lui ben conosciuti essendo del posto: 'probabilmente la parte superiore, il *cantus a mezza bosi* è una cantilena orientale importata nelle diverse incursioni di questi popoli, Mori, Saracini, o Spagnuoli, in Sardegna. Col sorgere della polifonia avvenne anche l'importazione di questa e quindi l'accompagnamento in falso bordone – più o meno corretto – della cantilena già da secoli conosciuta ed in uso fra le popolazioni sarde. Anche recentemente, nelle nostre processioni di Settimana Santa, si eseguiva il Miserere con una musica che somiglia moltissimo ad una Lamentazione di Palestrina, *Popule meus*. E i cantori sono sempre contadini o facchini o artigiani che non conoscono neppure l'esistenza di un'arte musicale. Eseguiscono così a memoria ciò che udirono e si tramandò da una generazione all'altra. (Fara 1926).[11]

An articulate distinction between multivoice singing practices within religious versus secular contexts is proposed by Sardinian philologist Giuseppe Senes (1851-1920) in a long article in one of the most important musicological journals of the early twentieth century, the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* (Senes 1900). This scholar openly argues that the repertoire of sacred music is "assai più ricco di quella della

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else can and should be deduced from this, if not their natural disposition for music?" (Oneto 1841: 46ff.).

11 "A wise musician, however, wrote to me about the multipart songs of the Sassari area, which he knew well, since he lived in this area: 'probably the upper part, the cantus a mezza bosi, is an oriental chant imported in the various incursions of these peoples, Moors, Saracens, or Spaniards, into Sardinia. With the rise of polyphony also came the importation of this, and thus the accompaniment in false bordone – more or less correct – of the chant already known and in use among the Sardinian peoples for centuries. Even recently, in our Holy Week processions, the Miserere was performed to music that closely resembles a Lamentation by Palestrina, Popule meus. And the singers are always peasants or porters or artisans who do not even know the existence of a musical art. They thus perform from memory what they heard and which was handed down from one generation to the next" (Fara 1926).

profana [far richer than that of secular music]" and that it can be established "come regola generale e canone fondamentale" che il «canto sacro è sempre a quattro voci**»** [that sacred song is always in four voices].

> «Si entra nella chiesuola del più meschino villaggio di questa regione e si ode un'armonia semplice, ma che rapisce, giacché per istinto, ognuno dei cantanti, e spesso sono tutti gli astanti, la maggior parte analfabeti, adatta la sua voce alla parte che sa fare meglio producendo accordi sempre graditissimi per quanto siano pochi. Alla pochezza di questi accordi si supplisce colla bontà delle voci» (Senes 1900: 279)[12]

Another important Sardinian musicologist was Gavino Gabriel (1881-1980), who was among the first in Italy to use instruments for recording oral tradition music (as well as the founder and, for a few years, the director of the State Record Library in Rome). In 1932, Gabriel was the author of the first recordings of the four/five-part polyphony known as *Tasja* della Gallura in short films called phono-photographs (Lutzu 2018). According to Gabriel:

> «Due tipi si notano rapidamente nei corali sardi: quello *ritmico*, "su concóldu" o concordo, usato specialmente nella Baronia e nelle Barbàgie, e quello *polifònico*, "la tasgia" o "taja" (j francese) della Gallura, e "'ru gòru", il coro, del Logudoro sassarese. … le voci sono quattro o cinque: *grossu* (bassu), *contra* (contra-tenorem, quinta), *tinori* o *bóci* (ottava, tenore che intona), *trippi* (triplum, decima) e *falsittu* (falsum, falsetto, quindicesima) come nel falso bordone prefiammingo» (Gabriel 1923:1 3-20).[13]

12 "One enters the little church of the meanest village in this region and hears a simple harmony, but one that enraptures, since by instinct, each of the singers, and often all the bystanders, most of them illiterate, adapts his voice to the part he knows best, producing chords that are always most welcome however few they are. The paucity of these chords is made up for by the goodness of the voices" (Senes 1900: 279).

13 "Two types are quickly noticeable in Sardinian chorales: the rhythmic one, 'su concóldu' or concordo, used especially in Baronia and Barbàgie, and the polyphonic one, 'la tasgia' or 'taja' (j French) of Gallura, and "ru gòru', the choir from Sassarese Logudoro. ... there are four or five voices: grossu (bassu), contra (contra-tenorem, fifth), tinori or bóci (octava, intoning tenor), trippi (triplum, tenth) and falsittu (falsum, falsetto, fifteenth) as in the pre-Flemish falsobordone" (Gabriel 1923: 13-20).

Bortigali

The first recordings of traditional polyphonies date back to July 1929. These were part of a planned series entitled Sardinian Choirs of Barbagia, which consisted of ten tracks (five 78rpm discs) performed by a group of young singers from Dorgali and was recorded by the British label Edison Bell. (Deplano 2007). The series was supposed to house other records but was soon discontinued without any known reason.

After World War II, a scientific ethnomusicology emerged in Italy as well, with the Centro Nazionale di Studi Sulla Musica Popolare (CNSMP) founded in 1948 in Rome, its sound archive serving as its focal point. Research on multipart singing in Sardinia took a special place among the first research activities. Key contributors included the founder of CNSMP himself, Giorgio Nataletti; Diego Carpitella, founder of Italian ethnomusicology at La Sapienza University of Rome; and Pietro Sassu, a Sardinian scholar and student of Carpitella's. At the same time, other important studies were being carried out by the French scholar Bernard Lortat-Ja-

cob at Laboratoire d'ethnomusicologie, Musée de l'homme, Paris. More will be said about these works below.

Since 2001, ethnomusicological research has also been carried out at the University of Cagliari. Through Labimus, there has been a systematic process of research and analysis on various multivoice expressions but also on other manifestations of music making on the island, setting up the dialogical perspective of this scholarship (Macchiarella 2019).

Recent events

According to testimonies from many elderly people, in the recent past, almost all of the male population of any village (and some of the female population) expressed themselves and communicated through exclusive multipart singing to some degree or other. Knowing how to sing was a widespread skill. During the twenty-year fascist period, however, traditional multipart singing often received strong opposition.

Despite this, many witnesses to the period after WWII point to a remarkable spread of exclusive practices and high peaks of performance quality in several villages. In each, traditional musical activity orbited around the names of great performers recognized as *maestros* by the community. This is the case for Matteo Peru and Salvatore Stangoni in Aggius (Lutzu 2017), Giuseppe Munari (Nazarinu), Peppino Marotto, Michele Patteri (Pilosu ASO 2018), Vittorio Mura, Giomaria and Giovann'Angelo Marzeddu in Santu Lussurgiu (Macchiarella 2009); the "coru de sos ricos e coru de sos poveros" ("the choir of the rich and the choir of the poor," meaning quartets of local elites such as landowners and lawyers which took part in Holy Week processions) (Oliva 2017); Totoni (Antonio) Loche and Antonio Pischedda in Cuglieri; Italo Soro and Nino Tedde in Bortigali (Macchiarella-Pilosu-ASE 2015), Titino Brotzu and Antoni Tugulu in Castelsardo (Lortat-Jacob 1998), and so on.

Other testimonies, however, point to a crisis phase arising in the 1960s. This is blamed on the influences of modernity and new musical models arriving with the mass media (and with the Second Vatican Council, with regard to religious practic-

es). In various municipalities, the number of singers progressively decreased until, in some, active practitioners almost completely disappeared – in, for example, the cases of Irgoli (Macchiarella 2011) and Bortigali (Macchiarella, Pilosu ASE 2015).

The same period also saw the development of what Diego Carpitella has called "market folklore," with the emergence of "'singing cooperatives' that set out to preserve oral musical heritage, to use it for festivals, rides, ceremonies, competitions, etc." (Carpitella 1973: 13). These new emergences were connected to the development on the island of the tourist industry, which has 1962 as a symbolic date as this was the year of the establishment of the Costa Smeralda Consortium (Lutzu 2020). In this context, the practice of Tenor singing above all received a great impulse that would gradually lead to a phase of revival for exclusive multipart practices. Thus, the *Tenore* clearly had a crucial relevance for new processes of local identity construction (Macchiarella 2023), and this would form the background for the practice's subsequent proclamation in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage program (Macchiarella 2013).

With regard to religious practices, an important year was 1985, when a study group led by Roberto Leydi was formed at the University of Bologna. This group paid particular attention to Sardinian practices and organized a meeting in 1991 in Santu Lussurgiu for scholars and traditional singers. The meeting gave important impulse to the revival of performance in various villages (Sassu-Mele 1993). In the same small town, in 2014, the Hymnos Foundation for the study and practice of confraternal multipart singing performance was established.[14]

Nowadays, multipart singing, both religious and non-religious exclusive patterns, is performed as part of the social life of each village, and it carries real and deeply shared meanings and values. Both in daily and festive contexts, singing-in-four is widely performed in several different scenarios. At the same time, several quartets of Sardinian singers regularly take their performances to the concert stage in other island villages, in Italy more widely, and elsewhere.

14 http://www.hymnos.sardegna.it/

Problematic interpretations

Returning to exclusive patterns today, it must be noted that Sardinia multipart singing-in-four falls quite far from reflecting the harmonic logic of "art music." Local actors do not perceive and consider the overlapping of the sounds in terms of the intervals/degrees that underpin them. The musical expression is not conceived of as chords (or blocks of sounds/triads) that sound one after another and that follow the rules of the tonal or other codified systems existing in academic discourse. Chords are not the goal of the performance but they do assure a basic sonority for this very complex music making, including by affording wide space for creativity.

Attempts at harmony-based analysis usually offer representations that fall far short of capturing the actual manner in which sound emissions intertwine (for instance Lubej 1993: 40; Gabriel 1923). Above all, it makes little sense to think in terms of modulations (in the full sense of the term in art music) because these cannot exist in this context (see below). Transcriptions made by other scholars represent the lowest sound lines in rigid homorhythm on a single staff, reinforcing the questionable idea of the presence of a "drone staff." This way of thinking certainly reflects the scholar's musical training founded on a vertical logic – that is, the form of superimposition of sound layers with continuity over time. But Sardinian traditional multipart singing does not constitute a "form of choral singing" in the common sense of this expression, referring to the result of the actions of a group of singers with two or more voices assigned to a vocal line.

My long listening experience, combined with an equally long conversation with some of my dearest singer friends, has led me in recent years to think carefully about how best to overcome this perspective. Through the process, it has become clear to me precisely how far Sardinian multipart singing lies from the harmonic logic of art music. The superimpositions of sounds are not perceived and considered by local actors with reference to the intervals that constitute them, nor is the musical expression conceived of in chords/blocks of sounds/triads that follow one

another, juxtaposing or combining according to the rules of the tonal system or any other system. Furthermore, in the Sardinian language there is no counterpart of the word "chord."[15]

Lacking harmonic logics

The idea that there may exist logics of performance beyond that of tonal harmony (or choral music in general) has been understood differently since the first ethnomusicological studies on the island. As early as in the 1950s, Diego Carpitella assumed the existence of

> «un microsistema etnico-musicale sardo (che) (…) comporta anche una organica indifferenziazione del repertorio, nel senso che le stesse strutture sono valide per le aninne, per i mutos, per i cantus a mortu (…) In questo sistema rientrano anche i canti per voce maschile e altre tre voci, nella forma tipica del *tenore* (…) (Carpitella 1973: 100).[16]

It is worth emphasizing the reference to "male voice and three other voices" and this will be taken up below. Carpitella's statement concerns the exclusive practice of Orgosolo. He states that the inhabitants of the village «(as, on the other hand, in almost all of Barbagia) usually meet as four singers who begin a poetic-musical dialogue (...) (in) a declamato-sillabico "rubato". » (Carpitella, in Cagnetta 2002: 112-113).[17]

Dealing with this *dialogo poetico-musicale*, and describing the interval relationships between the notes, Carpitella observes that the sounds are in an approximate harmonic relationship (third and fifth; fourth and sixth), so much so that there are

15 The term corfo (stroke) concerns the rhythmic scansion of the dance accompaniment; it is not a translation of "chord" (Macchiarella 2023).

16 "A Sardinian ethnic-musical microsystem (which) (...) also involves an organic non-differentiation of the repertoire, in the sense that the same structures are valid for the aninne [lullabies], for the mutos [solo singing], for the cantus a mortu [moans]. This system also includes songs for male voice and three other voices, in the typical form of the tenor […]" (Carpitella 1973: 100).

17 «sogliono (come, d'altronde, in quasi tutta la Barbagia) riunirsi abitualmente in quattro cantori che iniziano un dialogo poetico-musicale (…) (in) un declamato-sillabico 'rubato'» (Carpitella, in Cagnetta 2002: 112-113).

often second "collisions" that produce a continuous character of contrast and harsh angularity (Carpitella, in Cagnetta 2002: 113).

The strength of orality

Actually, speaking of "genres" in oral traditional musics is always improper. In this case, there is not a clear and certain distinction between religious performances and non-religious ones in their lyrics, contexts, music structures, and so on. This commonly drawn distinction is fictitious and is confuted by the analysis of the real music practices. As will become clear, in Sardinia there are different singing mechanisms rooted in a shared and common chordal thought.

These practices are lively activities that mobilize large groups of local actors of all generations, levels of schooling, and social/economic classes. They equally include shepherds, workers, peasants, attorneys, teachers, company employees, and so on.[18] They also give life to intensive music productions that are mainly addressed to both the performers and the village's listeners.[19] It is collective music making in which a complex social game dictates the assignment of roles. This translates into an "art of being together," since to perform them means to listen to others and to be heard by them, without a conductor telling everyone what to do (Lortat-Jacob 2011). As is well known, and summarized by Anthony Seeger (2004:65), each performance re-creates, re-establishes, or alters the significance of singing and of the persons, times, places, and audiences involved.

Performances of singing-in-four include a highly iconic feature within what Bernard Lortat-Jacob calls «la force de l'oralité musicale».[20] Actually, in the life of the village, multipart singing by chording is a genuine living musical expression.

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18 As many multipart singers say, this kind of music practice cancels out any difference in social demographics in the act of performance (Macchiarella 2017)

19 From time to time only, some of these musicians hold concerts outside of their villages, elsewhere in Italy or in the rest of the world (Macchiarella 2008, Pilosu 2012).

20 Cf. www.lortajablog.free.fr

It is not simply an expression of past heritage (or of its survival) but a contemporary form of communication. The specifics of local situations demonstrate how practices are often the center point of an intense collective action of local (micro-)identity construction. This is one of the keys to interpreting the profound sense of vitality and admirable musical paraliturgical vitality of oral tradition found in Italy and elsewhere.

A real bipartition

Based on analytical listening with all forms of exclusive multipart singing practice, a basic bipolarization can be traced in the different patterns heard:

a) One is the multipart pattern of *a solo* voice interacting with three vocal parts arranged in syllabic formulas. Often called *sa boghe* (literally the voice), the lead voice provides the tune, rhythm, tempo, speed, performance length, articulation, and tonal shifting. It is also the only voice that articulates the lyrics.
The other three voices are usually called (from highest to lowest): *sa mesa boghe* (the "half voice," which occupies a range about a third above the *boghe*), *sa contra* (the *contra*, about a fourth below the *boghe*), and *su bassu* (the bass, about an octave below the *boghe*).[21]
Typically, these voices are arranged to form a root-position chord, which they render by rhythmically varying their emissions. They sing stereotyped successions of nonsense syllables (*bim-bam- birambambo*; *mba-ué-mba*; *lallara-lillara*; *bom-bom-mboro*), although this feature also varies from village to village. This practice is particularly characterized by the special vocal sound techniques in the different parts. In particular, the two lowest voices, *contra* and *bassu*, adopt a peculiar guttural timbre created by the distinctive use of the resonance of the oral and nasal cavity. The *boghe*, on the other hand, usually adopts a tense and resonant voice, often nasalized, while the *me-*

21 The naming of the parts changes depending on how they are used in different villages.

sa-boghe also has a very forced voice (even more so than the *boghe*), one that normally is nasalized and very nimble.

b) The second kind of multipart pattern is that resulting from movement in all four of the parts, building from the starting point of an initial chord in root position. These movements include parallelisms and oblique passages (but seldom contrary ones); they are not always homorhythmic and they determine different forms of sound overlapping, none of which evince a harmonic logic. Usually, the movements end with a return to the initial chord. All the parts sing the text, and the sound emission shows a specific "chest voice" timbre (Lortat-Jacob 1998; Macchiarella 2009).

Usually the first musical pattern (1+3-voices) is identified with the term *cantu a tenore*, while the other (4-voices) is called *cantu a cuncordu*. The terminological distinction, however, is very rough, and there are multiple exceptions. But it makes sense to use it for convenience for the moment (Macchiarella 2021). [22]

The two musical patterns are indeed not dichotomous; there is no precise border between the two poles. Actually, the descriptions above represent the extremes of a cluster of variants forming a continuum of different local performance structures. They are the basis for the flourishing of different local practices, each of which has its own characteristic elements. In each individual village, one can find executive patterns that tend toward one or the other or both poles. Individual singers and quartets specialize in one of the two patterns, but there is no shortage of cases of performers who can adequately practice both types.

22 Actually, it is a rough definition that can cause confusion, as some variants of the 1+3-voice model are locally called a *cuncordu*, while some 4-voice singing patterns are called *a tenore*. This issue is not elaborated on here, but Macchiarella-Pilosu 2011 provides, inter alia, a comparative table of all local denominations of Sardinian multipart singing and their meanings.

Performance Unities

In both patterns, the temporal unfolding of performances can be subdivided into macro-units, clearly delimited by long rests. These units correspond to significant sections of the sung verbal text (a verse, a couplet, an octave, and so on, depending on the case). Normally every unit begins with a solo incipit (called *sa pesada*, the start). This may have different durations and internal articulations, and it is always sung by a single one of the quartet voices. Within the 1+3 pattern, this task is always entrusted to the second lowest voice, the *boghe*. In the other pattern, the performance may be started by the *boghe* or by the *bassu* (this is mostly in the case of liturgical or para-liturgical singing).

This material for starting a performance can vary from being composed of cells made of a few repeated sounds to being formed of relatively melodic passages of a

Orgosolo

few minutes' duration, as a rule in free rhythm and with extensive use of microtones. Within the a *Tenore* pattern especially, these beginnings are very elaborate, characterizing the style of the lead voice. They always end on a pivot pitch called *su puntu* (the point), which is chosen by the soloist who performs it.

In *su puntu*, the other three voices enter, simultaneously or sequentially. As such, the four voices overlap in the form of a chord, almost always in root position 5/8 (the exceptions concern only the 4-voice model which can be in 3/5 position or 4/6 position).

These overlaps can be held or repeated multiple times. As a rule, each section starts and ends with the same overlapping chord sound (but there are exceptions, for instance in Cuglieri – see Oliva 2017; Macchiarella 2015). Once the expected overlap is reached, the four voices move independently of each other within a narrow range of possibilities. In the 1+3-voice model, the solo and the three voices in concert alternate several times; this way of singing is called a *s'isterrida.* In the 4-voice pattern, after entering the *su puntu,* all voices are mobile for a variable amount of time until they converge on a new stopping point, normally a restatement of the overlap of voices at the beginning.

Nowadays, performances within each village social life have real and deep-shared meanings and values. In both daily and festive contexts, singing-in-four is widely performed within differentiated frames.

The cadence of the first performance unit is usually edited well and emphasized clearly. Similarly, great care is taken over the incipit of the executive units following the first one, and the intonation of *su puntu* can be modified (raised or lowered), should the soloist feel the need to do so.

The need for a good start

As is usually the case in any practice of orally transmitted orally multipart singing, in singing-in-four in Sardinia, the beginning of the vocalizing is always realized

by one of the four singers. This is a crucial phase for the musical performance, both in setting up the quality of the combination of sounds and, in a symbolic sense, because it is the start of the collective dialogue. The individual singer sets the pitch for the rest of the singing; carrying out this task badly can compromise the success of the performance.

The *puntu* does not have a pre-determined pitch, and the singer responsible must be effective in finding a comfortable level for everyone (especially for the highest and lowest voices). The singer seeks *unu puntu giusto* (a correct point) but does not rely on the help of expedients such as a diapason to locate it. Instead, he must be sensitive to the fact that a different key is needed depending on who is singing and then find a fitting pitch by ear. This pitch must not only be comfortable for all four individuals but allow them to realize their potential. Of course, there are strategies for adjusting the *su puntu* pitch during performance. These can be enacted directly by the *boghe* if he becomes aware of inaccuracies in intonation, or it can be suggested through small gestures or glances from any of the other three voices.[23]

Modular mechanisms

As is frequently the case in orally transmitted musics, multipart singing practices are built on a concept of "open form," since they are based on a sort of shared canvas that offers space for individual variation. These variations are not a matter of pure invention, or "musical fancy" (an ambiguous expression that is applied romantically to oral transmitted musics around the world), since they require there to be effective relationships between human beings. Through the production of sound variations, the performance mechanism of variability creates particular channels of communication both among the performers themselves, and between the performers and local listeners who are able to understand them (Macchiarella 2012).

23 To avoid the risk of bad intonation during in-context performances, the solo singer often uses the diapason; inaccurate singing would be embarrassing given the solemnity of paraliturgical rituals (Macchiarella 2017).

This confirms that Sardinian multipart singing is not a repertory of pieces to be reproduced, a corpus of defined tracks, but *potential* for making music which is realised in an a way which is constantly re-inventing itself.

In general, in the 4-voice pattern *cantu a cuncordu*, every instance of "musical unity" begins with a long incipit (called a *pesada*) sung by one voice, the *boghe* or the *bassu*. This soloist incipit ends with a precise *puntu*, where the other parts enter, producing an overlapping in the form of a chord, often in 5/8/10 position or sometimes in 3/5/8. This chord is held or reiterated. Then, contingent on the structure of the unit, the parts move differently within very narrow ranges (these melodic movements are called *ziratas*). Depending on the case, one, two, three, or all four parts move, producing overlaps that are not strictly planned in advance. After a certain period of time, the parts stop by landing on a chord, often the same chord as the initial one. These phases can therefore be represented as a "stop and go" process, summarized as follows:

Figure

Beginning "a solo" voice	**Chord overlapping (stop)**	**Movements of the parts (go)**	**Final Chord overlapping (stop)**	**Long rest**
pesada	held and/or repeated	*ziradas*	Usually held (sometimes repeated)	

At the beginning and end of the unity, the two *stop* sections unfold in a way that is in line with musical expectations: the overlapping part is prescribed, with no "surprises" (although it can vary in chronological length and in details concerning the amalgamation of voices and other things). The central *go* section is unpredictable to a large degree and can be more or less long and surprising. During this section, coordinated actions and combined emissions occur among the singers; each singer listens to the others to learn how to deal with them – that is, learning to understand how to combine his vocal emission with those of others, according to both previous experiences and current intentions in the specific circumstances of

the performance. This all adds up to creative participation in a collective process, one that represents the quality of interpersonal relationships

In the other pattern (1+3 voices), *cantu a tenore*, there is a wide range of possible combinations of the basic musical units, with procedures varying from village to village – and inside a single village. The basis is the intertwining of the soloist (*boghe*) and the other three voices, with moments of alternation and others of full overlap.

Thus, from a formal point of view, any performance of exclusive multipart music can be interpreted as a juxtaposition of modules, i.e. combinations of musical materials associated with single lines of a text or smaller segments of a line of text.

Each performance has different sequences by which modules are combined and/or through which single modules are repeated, leading to different performance lengths. This combinatory mechanism is negotiated in the moment by the four singers according to elaborate and implicit rules that vary between *cantu a cuncordu* and *cantu a tenore*.

As a result, one knows when and how a performance will begin but never how long it will be and how it will be articulated.

Specialist singers

As a metaphor for the agency of group members, certain aspects of performers' (and local listeners') understanding of musical organization could be thought of as common ways "to think of the world and life." Such thought patterns "may have an indirect psychological influence in simply making the music of one's culture sound 'natural', in other words, somehow fitting with the general conceptual framework with which one is familiar" (Patel 2008: 326).

The singers are highly trained musicians within a local specific music cultural domain that has its own grammar, logic, shared meanings, and aesthetic ideals. Typically, they are relatively similar in their level of musical competence and technical capabilities, as well as in their capability to discuss and debate musical perfor-

mance. In fact, one can say they make music in two ways: a) they produce multipart coordinated vocal sounds; and b) they talk about what they do, elaborating ideas about musical structures, aesthetics, contexts of performance, histories of their repertories, and so on. Often during performance, the singers stand still, facing each other in a loose circle. This is a typical arrangement for the 4-voice model, especially in the context of religious rituals and paraliturgical settings. Arrangement in a circle, in fact, promotes musical coordination and the possibility of "eye play," which can be beneficial for the outcomes of the performance while reinforcing the resonance of the overlapping.

Often the *bassu* is placed in front of the *boghe* with the contra on the left (although there are other cases with different arrangements of the four parts). During the performance, the singers stand still.

oghe

contra *cuntraltu*

bassu

It is equally possible to define a standard physical arrangement for the 1+3-voice subdivision. Here, the solo voice is detached and positioned to the side of the small group of three voices, who stand side by side, close enough to be touching, in a sort of semicircle.

Mesa oghe

Boghe Bassu

Contra

There is also no shortage of relaxed situations where performers are seated and/or arranged in no particular order in a space. In some cases (in Cuglieri, Galtellì, Bosa and elsewhere), during paraliturgical processions, the singers sing as they walk, placing themselves in a row behind a religious symbol.

Orgosolo

Variety in lyrics

As far as the texts sung are concerned, there exists a certain variety. In the 1+3-voice pattern, texts taken from literature written in Sardinian from the nineteenth century to the present day are most prevalent. These texts are rhymed, with a predominance of endecasyllables. The themes most frequently dealt with are of an amorous nature, or they may speak of political or social themes in Sardinia, including current issues such as youth unemployment and emigration, or the depopulation of inland areas. There is also no lack of texts on religious themes. This type of text characterizes the 4-voice pattern, with a predominance of Latin texts to support paraliturgical rituals, especially the Miserere and Stabat Mater. In many villages, the Latin parts of the Ordinary and other chants are provided for specific processions or other ritual events. There are also secular texts, often with

love themes. These texts are sung according to specific performance models similar (if not identical) to those for the singing of religious texts, which is certainly an important reflection of the religious/profane relationship.

On the other hand, oral improvised poetry plays an important role in the 1+3-voice pattern. It does so by being based on a ritualized duel called *gala* (or *gara*), which usually features two or three poets who alternately present an octave of endecasyllables on themes proposed by the committee organizing the gala. Each poet sings (this is the verb used by the poets themselves) their octave to their own rhythmic-melodic pattern. Between one verse or couplet and the next, the poet has the possibility of requesting, by means of small musical devices (melodic descents or short ornaments), the intervention of the trio (*bassu*, *contra*, and *mesa boghe*), who play a few *corfos*, while longer sequences of *corfos* also follow the end of each octave.

Four individualities

As collective acts, multipart music could be interpreted as representation of interdependent identities. So, in respect of their structural rules, the sound results of every oral multipart performance depend on the individualities at play; it is not a matter of pure "musical inventiveness," but it is above all a matter of concrete relationships among human beings.

Thus, within the frame of multipart music, how Sardinian singers think of a single part is inextricable from the real person who realizes it. This person must be an educated man able to carry out the task in an appropriate manner, by behaving in such a way that the other members of the group regard to be, at the very least, in keeping with their shared musical knowledge. Their concept of multipart singing is not about representations of abstract and immaterial combinations of sounds (melodic lines, polyphonic parts, chords, and so on) in an ideal projected setting. Instead, multipart singing is embodied in the meeting of individual men. So, for

instance, the *bassu* is what Giovanni (or Antonio, or Luigi) does when he does the *bassu*. This statement is not a tautology, but an explanation of music as interaction among human beings (Macchiarella 2017).

Being an orally transmitted practice, similar elements may have different attributions on different occasions; there is not "an official truth" because there is no such thing as musical pieces or objects. Likewise, there are not authors in the common sense of the word (a sense which is radically distant from the sphere of orally transmitted music).

Within the villages where the tradition lives, hundreds of singers and different performative traditions coexist, giving life to what may be called "distinct sound groups." Sharing the same "rules of the game" (performance patterns), each group has its sets of *isterridas* and *ziradas* and related speeches, its attribution of paternity and a pantheon of great "old singers," and so on. There are correspondences among the performance traditions of sound groups, but a single *pesada*, for instance, may be attributed to different singers.

Each voice also has a specific timbre of its own. In any given village, there is a standard for each voice that is varied and customized by the individual singers. Beyond the specific features of every local practice, orally transmitted multipart singing is very important and meaningful music behavior. Far from representing merely heritage of the past, it is current music making that satisfies the needs among groups of humans to elaborate collectively shared representations, continuously constructing different levels of identity.

The quintain

In performance, the four voices search for the highest possible level of amalgamation, and this creates the phenomenon of *quintina* (the quintain), the emergence of the first overtone (see Lortat-Jacob 1998, D'Angiolini 2018; Van Tongeren 2022).

This sound is specifically sought as evidence of a good-quality sound mixture (even though the singers may not know the underlying conditions of the physical phenomenon). It is called "sa chinta" (the fifth) or "la voce degli angeli" (the voice of the angels).

In the Gallura area in northern Sardinia, an actual fifth high voice is added; it is called *tripli*, and it enters in the cadenzas, doubling the fundamental an octave higher (Lutzu 2015). Several testimonies from some villages (Ghilarza, Lula) indicate the presence of a fifth voice in cadenza even in tenor singing (the 1+3-voice pattern).

The importance of listening

Listening to music is a form of making music. Often, evidence of this fact found in music's social dimensions can easily be overlooked. Far from being a passive process of mental reception, listening to music involves cognitive structures combined into a process of execution – the execution of reception, identification, and evaluation of sound sequences through one's body. This is what led John Blacking to go as far as saying that «listening to music is a kind of performance» (Blacking 1995: 231).

As such, listening always has been and will continue to be a basic skill at the core of the musical experience. It is a direct route into music making.

While listening carefully to music is the prerequisite for any kind of music making, this prerequisite acquires a particular relevance in the case of Sardinia's multipart music, given that it involves a complex unitary sound image, always something more than the sum of its individual sound emissions. Within a multipart music performance group, every singer/musician has the sensation of being at the very center of the music, when music is understood as a resonant experience. One has to be amenable to listening to others in order to manage how one joins and fits in with the combination of emissions.

In fact, performing Sardinian multipart music needs particular listening skills; each performer must simultaneously listen to his own emission and to that of the singers around him, in order to judge the suitability of both his sound production

and the collective performance. Inside a performing group, there exists a complex transmitter-receiver situation with many directional sound sources. The situation is dominated by airborne sounds and there is also a component of bone-conducted sounds. Among other things, the processes of interaction and the combination of sounds are perceived in a way distinct from how they are understood by those on the outside (see studies from the Laboratory Labimus in Macchiarella 2023). Listening capabilities are culturally learned behaviors which develop in connection, to a greater or lesser extent, to the specifics of different performance practices. All in all, they involve complex processes of recognizing "familiar sounds," which become focal points for performers (and competent audiences) to experience an impression of "belonging together."

Bosa

Performance scenarios

In contemporary Sardinia, performances within the social life of each village carry real and deeply shared meanings and values. Both in daily and festive contexts,

exclusive multipart singing-in-four is widely performed within differentiated frames.

Two main performance scenarios may be singled out: on the one hand, multipart singing by chording is a form of music making within the social and religious life of a village; on the other hand, multipart singing by chording is an element in the Sardinian media sphere and concert arena.

The two scenarios are not mutually impervious. In a way that resembles code switching, many singers display an almost dual musical attitude; they make music in the village scenario with other non- or semi-professional singers and then, when the situation changes, they transform themselves into professional singers on the stage. Only a few semi-professional singers do not feel at ease in the first scenario, staying away from village performing contexts.

It is worth underlining that the former scenario is more greatly affected by the strategies of oral communication characterizing the interpersonal interactions among the singers, against a backdrop formed of competent listeners who are often also potential singers. The concert stage scenario is a sort of *mise-en-scene* of sound elaboration that is developed within specific meetings (usually called rehearsals) before the performance. Besides, among the situations where singing-in-four occurs most often are friendly meetings, those occurring within the so-called *spuntini* ("snacks," which, in spite of the name, are convivial meetings to eat and drink in company, lasting for several hours with a large number of courses), or during meetings of associations, folk dance groups, hunting companies, or sports associations. In several villages, there is the culture of "de sos magasinos," private cellars in which men meet almost every evening after work to share handmade wine, food, and especially singing. In some villages, the lay confraternity provides an outstanding executive scenario.

The diffusion practices in villages

Speech acts have always been of great importance in the processes constituting the transmission of practices. They form the backbone of what is usually called *traju* (or *traggiu*, *moda* etc.). These terms point to a polysemic concept, one that is related

to the establishment of the sense of specificity for a local musical practice. It involves both formal technical aspects and those concerning manners, contexts, meanings, and performative values (Macchiarella 2021).

In some villages (like Bitti, Orgosolo, Orune, Seneghe, Castelsardo, Santu Lussurgiu, Orosei etc.), the number of singers is rather high. On average, there are hundreds of people out of a few thousand inhabitants, including people of all ages and social conditions. In these villages, singing-in-four is, in many ways, at the center of community life, acting as an artistic expression that condenses shared values.

In other villages (like Bonnanaro, Silanus, Benetutti etc.), the quantity of singers is less high, often numbering a few dozen. In all of the latter cases, although they are not especially numerous, singers are always very active within community life and multipart singing remains present and alive on various occasions. Some groups of singers function as cultural focal points within the community, organizing events of all kinds. Four-part singing is almost always a key element of these events, becoming virtually a soundtrack to the activity.

However, there are villages in which the singing-in-four has gone through undeniably difficult times. Here, the number of singers has gone down, with old singers having not been replaced by new one, and there are generational gaps. In some villages (Gavoi, Tresnuraghes, Posada, Onifai, Loculi), only a few families cultivate a passion for singing-in-four, and they account for almost all this activity found in the village. In other villages, there are groups of friends who keep the tradition alive through personal commitment. On the whole, traditional singing seems to be even more widespread than 20-25 years ago; it is practiced by a large number of men, whether young, middle-aged, or old, and coming from all social classes

Religious settings

Musical practices and related discourse, in Sardinia just as elsewhere, are generally influenced by distinctions drawn between the sacred and the profane. But the exclusive multipart singing in Sardinia serves to highlight the problematic nature of this distinc-

tion. Rather than there being two separate or opposing realms, as is crudely assumed, the performance practices in question suggest that the notions are actually two aspects of a single collective musical experience. Having fun is part of devotion, an integral part of the meanings of cultic action: "fun does not turn its back on the ritual; on the contrary, it gives it reason to exist and qualifies it" (Lortat Jacob 1998: 166).

Leaving aside some inextricable links between certain ritual actions and specific sound productions (for example, in the religious field, the Miserere for the paraliturgia de l'iscravamentu, the representation of the deposition of Jesus), songs and music usually connoted as religious can also be performed in supposedly secular contexts, and vice versa. Almost all singers do not hesitate to identify and illustrate elements of musical commonality between what is usually sung within religious contexts and outside of them. And many are able to disentangle themselves in both musical contexts, both as performers and as competent listeners (a role that is very important and that has definite implications for musical practice itself). Indeed, there are a number of singers who are active in both scenarios, dividing their time between participation in a choral formation within a confraternity and in an external singing group. In some villages, the singing-in-four occurs in the paraliturgies especially during Holy Week, or in liturgical and/or devotional contexts.

Seneghe

Magasinu: a privileged meeting place

For many Sardinians, *su magasinu* (the cellar located on the underground or ground floor of a private house) is a space of everyday life linked to evening gatherings with family and friends. It is mostly associated with the end of the working day, especially during the autumn and winter period. A male space by definition (although women are not formally excluded), the cellars can host different musical performances of more or less planned and organized natures.

In some situations, however, the practice of orally transmitted music appears to be the central reason for a cellar gathering, the source of performative actions shared collectively during the period of time spent there. This is especially the case for multipart singing practices normally performed by four singers, which in *su magasinu* find a performance scenario par excellence.

In the context of this musical practice, the cellar is an intermediate space between the public sphere and the family home environment. It is one not linked to precise calendrical dates; singers can meet to sing in the same *magasinu* for several nights in a row, or they may not attend there musically for weeks or months. Normally, each owner – a passionate singing enthusiast, but not necessarily a singer – is committed to encouraging performance in his own *magasinu*, putting in calls to singers and making the place as welcoming as possible through offers of wine and homemade treats. In this way, the cellar is designated as a special musical space/time characterized by the quality of the association between the participants (singers and listeners), by the nature and intensity of interpersonal relations emerging through and around the musical practice.

This space/time usually attracts among the wider public, with more being paid to singing in public contexts. In the social geography of many Sardinian villages, however, certain private cellars are renowned for being the meeting places of singing groups (*cumpanzias de cantu*), and they become the terrain for the continuity of the musical practice – also affecting, ultimately, what it is done in public.

Su magasinu gives rise not only to the singing but also to the speaking about singing, the technical aspects of the performance, aesthetics, and the performative occasions within the social life of the village. Discussions concern what is being done at the time, or they retrace memories of other special contexts for performance; they recall particular events or behavior associated with, or significant for, the performance practice, and so on. As already noted, these speech acts are of great consequence in the processes of transmission for the practice, constituting the backbone of what is usually called *traju*.

When a song is about to start, the chatting ends instantly. The *magasinu* is also the place and the time for careful, deep listening; only in this way can singers and enthusiasts understand and discuss the *traju*. When the performance ends, listeners might express their appreciation by throwing out remarks such as "*bene*" (good) or "*va bene*" (it was good). It is also possible that the performance is interrupted, or that it becomes the subject of controversial evaluation or similar reactions.

Obviously, the cellar is a place for drinking wine, but always in moderation. It is well known that drinking any more than this compromises the performance and listening skills of singers, and that it can lead to unsuitable behaviors such as a lack of respect shown to participants or the cellar owner. Respect is thought of as a cornerstone of a good musical evening inside the cellar.

Although they are considered spontaneous, the musical behaviors seen on a *magasinu* night show recurrent features. Usually, it is the singer of the lead part who is expected to lead the *cumpanzia de cantu* that starts the performance, inviting the other three to join him, often by singing a *pesada* that they all consider easy and of an introductory character. The order of the *pesadas*, however, is never fixed, nor is the make-up of different quartets heard over the course of an evening. Often those who have just sung leave space for someone else, openly inviting specific individuals to take his place. At other times, singers who take more of a "protagonist" role in the social occasion intervene to put in place different combinations of voices, inviting individuals to the performance and trying to give to everyone the opportunity

to perform at least once during the evening. Thus, one or more members – if not all four – change throughout the various intonations of the songs; the continuous alternation of singers is, in fact, one of the characteristic aspects of *magasinu* evenings. This alternation also points to an ongoing experimentation occurring in the local *traju*. Vocal nuances and colors are juxtaposed through different combinations of voices established within the pre-planned performance structure, resulting in the creation of new harmonies from the time spent together.

Rassegne (festivals)

In addition to traditional performances, in which the multipart singing is part of larger and more articulated musical programs, a particular type of concert has recently developed. Here, the tenor and/or *cuncordu* are the motif and center of the musical practice. These festival gatherings are called Rassegne.

There are many motives (or sometimes pretexts) for this type of musical happening: connection with special events of tourist appeal, commemoration of a deceased cantor, fundraising for a charitable purpose, and so on.

Each of these events can last two and a half hours or more and is usually hosted by an official presenter, often a professional from a television or radio station. The presenter introduces the groups, who then take turns on the stage to present their region of origin. They typically focus on musical aspects, the types of performance they will offer, the origins of the texts sung, the ritual scenarios (in the case of *cuncordu* performances), and various elements relating to language, customs, cuisine, etc.

These festivals, therefore, constitute privileged settings for musical encounters, ones in which cultural differences between villages are declared and related local identities (*modas* or *traju*) are represented. These representations concern the spheres of both the religious and the secular, which evidently are not considered antithetical. Beyond the music making, festivals are also situations where groups come together to develop collaborations, joint initiatives, or other connections.

Spreading the new

In contrast to most of what has been discussed so far, multipart singing is also an element in the Sardinian media sphere and concert arena. This represents a "new phase" that transforms the singing into a musical object performed by semi-professional singers for the entertainment of the largest undifferentiated audiences possible in this context. This phase has emerged in the last three or four decades as a result of concerts on stage; it initially found strong impulse through the international "world music" vogue – particularly after 1994 when Peter Gabriel "discovered" the Tenores di Bitti (and when a CD was released by Real World Records).[24]

Singers donning traditional costumes perform on festival stages in their villages or around the island, or even further afield having been invited by Sardinian emigrant circles or through the world music circuit. These organized groups often behave like any professional or semi-professional musical group, rehearsing, practicing, and adapting their singing to the stage context, with its timing restrictions, stage requirements, and the constraints and opportunities afforded by amplification.

Dozens of new permanent quartets have been born in various villages, most of them offering standardized versions of the local repertories. These groups resemble pop music ones in many respects. The individual quartets take on their own distinctive denomination, a kind of stage name. Often it is a toponym (*Tenore Monte Corrasi* di Oliena, *Sopramonte* di Orgosolo); the name of an important figure in the history of the village (*Tenore Mialinu Pira*[25], from Bitti), of a confraternity (*Su cuncordu 'e su Rosariu* di Santu Lussurgiu) and so on. Nothing is left to improvisation; they take care of even the smallest details in their concerts, from the length of single musical pieces (no more 3-4 minutes), their costumes, introductions to the songs, their physical arrangement on stage, and so on.

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24 Tenores di Bitti. S'amore e mama, Real World Records, LC 2098- Sardinia, 1996.
25 Michelangelo (Mialinu) Pira (1928-1980) was an anthropologist.

Almost all of these groups record and sell CDs containing only performance patterns from their own village, and some are active on social media. They have their own websites (sometimes with blogs and fanzines) and are present on Spotify and other streaming platforms. Some quartets have collaborated (and still collaborate) with artists from the academic world (including through presence at the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music (Bandinu Deplano Montis 2000) and in concerts around the world in collaboration with the Classical Ensemble (Cappella musicale di San Petronio, Bologna), with international jazz musicians (such as Ornett Colemann, Lester Bowie, Paolo Fresu, Ernst Reijseger), and Italian popular music stars (including Elio e le Storie Tese, Francesco Guccini, Angelo Branduardi and others). Some of the quartets have also appeared on highly popular national television shows, watched by millions of viewers both on RAI and Mediaset ("Quelli che il calcio", "Affari tuoi", "Italia's go Talent").

Cuglieri

Amalgam and other issues to develop

Generally speaking, the exclusive Sardinia multipart singings can be interpreted as "paradoxical practices" aiming to merge into one collective "blended voice" various single vocal emissions maintaining their recognizable individuality.
In fact, they include complex games of both individual and collective personalization, since, on one hand, groups endeavour to elaborate peculiar "blending voices", trying to create sort of "aural identity" of their own; on the other hand, performers aim to altogether personalize their emissions, *signing* their participation to the collective actions by means of specific interpretative elements (including vocal nuances). During the performance, through conscious and minutely controlled vocal emissions, the unique musical personalities of the performers interact in this dual direction, and the quality of the performance is the quality of the temporary interaction between the singers.

One can assume that in Sardinia the increasing exposure to listening to music broadcasted by radio and television has had a relevant influence on the great care accorded today to the accuracy of chordal intonation, given that in the oldest recordings (dating back to around the 1960s) the combinations of the vocal parts show overlappings which do not seem to pay much attention to the precision of the chords (see Macchiarella 2005). The progressive development of concert opportunities outside the villages (and also often outside the region or the island) must in itself have been relevant for today's concern about the placement of the singers, their postures, the groups' proxemics and other elements of performance behaviors which are very different than the images of relaxed singers that one can gather from "older" photos and illustrations.

While even the recently growing familiarity with the microphone might have had effects on vocal emission in terms of the control of intensity, mutual adjustment of volumes and so on. Elements like these are crucial for today's multipart singing practiced, but their analysis is constrained by the insufficiency of information in diachronic perspective.

An exclusive and peculiar duet

A special pattern in two exclusive non-parallel parts is linked with the poetry-duels and the *cantu a mutetu* of the campidanese area, in the South of the island, around Cagliari (Bravi 2010). It is a specialized male bi-vocal practice (one voice for each part) characterized by particular vocal timbres including guttural effects in the lowest part. The two voices are called, from the highest to the lowest, *contra* and *basciu* (bass) – but often the two voices are called *sa contra* (the contra). Both of the voices sing nonsense syllables (such as «booo iii laaa booo**»**) in accompaniment to elaborate monodic performances by improvising poets. Specifically, the two voices punctuate the conclusion of each poet's improvised interventions. This pattern of accompaniment is evocative of that of northern Sardinian improvised poetry, although this has a three-voiced (a 1+2-voices) pattern where voice 1 is the poet who takes on a role corresponding to the *boghe*.

Today, the *basciu e contra* chant is exclusively employed in poetic improvisation contests and not in other performance contexts. It is developed on a non-tempered scale in which the third and sixth degrees are midway between the minor and major modes. The vocal range falls within that of about a sixth, and there are florid progressions and non-parallel part movements (Zedda 2012). At a specific point in a performance, *su basciu* sings a fixed note, a kind of bordone on the tonal center of the reference scale. *Sa contra*, on the other hand, starts on the closing note of the poetic interventions and, after a few melodic improvisations, settles on the fifth degree of the scale.

Inclusive singing patterns

In general, inclusive singing mechanisms offer the widest opportunity for participation to anyone interested. As they follow just a few limited rules, there are very few barriers limiting who can immediately join the performance.

On the whole, such expressions are most common at religious festivals occurring throughout the year within events of a devotional nature. While lacking the complexity of overlapping sounds found in the exclusive patterns, inclusive expressions nonetheless present a considerable variety of performance patterns, including male, female, or mixed responsorial or antiphonal forms. Again, each village has its own performance pattern and there are considerable differences even between neighboring villages. It is on these differences that identity narratives of great importance in the social life of contemporary Sardinians are constructed.

Rules

Making music together usually requires a mutual coordination of musical behaviors. Different individual actions "add up" to an overall group action. In performance, each participant has his or her own role and must interact with other roles based on shared rules. Depending on different musical scenarios and local practices, not all roles in a collective performance are equally important.

In fact, there are essential or primary roles, secondary or complementary roles, non-essential or secondary roles, and so on. Interactions between the roles can be seen as symbolically representative of aspects of common cognitive models inherent to social life, and these are experienced and lived in each performance. The different forms of relevance of these roles can thus be interpreted as a projection of the organizational patterns of the society that expresses them, following John Blacking's idea of music «understood as expressions of cognitive processes that may be observed to operate in the formation of other structures» (Blacking 1986: 24).

The presence of a preeminent role within a collective music pattern might itself imply a relationship of supremacy/subordination. Often these are patterns in which the leading role is articulated by a solo voice who ends up being the fulcrum of the entire overlapping sound.

At the same time, the basic principles of these performances require interpretation with reference to ideas from beyond the field of multipart music studies.
All participants make the same vocal gestures, so there is not the same basic idea of interaction/negotiation among individuals as shapes the exclusive practices. But this is only theoretical; in reality, the issue is much more complex than is usually presented. Moreover, important cases are revealed by studying specific examples within the infinite set of musical practices that emerge from these performance patterns (Macchiarella 2016). The presence of one or more personalities who assume (or are delegated to assume) a central, leading role in the performance is a recurring element.

Orgosolo

Singing together

A very common performance pattern is collective singing to achieve (or to try to achieve) the same sound emission across participants. This might be called polyphonic music and it can be performed by any number of singers. The minimum requirement for polyphonic music is the presence of at least two people who produce consciously coordinated sequences of sounds in unison, on the basis of common rules.

Seemingly simple, this pattern can give life to a virtually unlimited variety of musical expressions, performance contexts, conveyed meanings, on so on. Such a pattern is usually something particularly inclusive; it is capable of fostering an extremely high level of collective participation through a minimal level of individual commitment. For those who take part in this kind of musical action, it is, in short, a matter of doing what the others are doing, putting aside one's own personality/individuality with the aim of constructing a collective identity. In this case, the act of collective synchronization is more important than the content of the performance, so what counts is the *how* and *why* of a performance rather than *what* is sung. Usually, the sonic result consists of standardized melodies built on a few pitches but rhythmically marked and appealing (Macchiarella 2016).

This kind of performance reflects participants' claim to being a "unique collective entity." As elsewhere, this kind of performance practice is commonly shared across Sardinia, especially in the settings of festive days, when musical practice plays a strong role in the construction and affirmation of identity. In these cases, the individual chooses to negate his or her own singularity in favor of merging with the collective, reinforcing the crucial image of an undifferentiated multitude.

As a rule, this type of pattern is considered to lie outside of the definition of polyphony (Agamennone-Facci-Giannattasio 1996; Arom et. al. 2005), and the sonic results are often not deemed to be *music* in the full sense of the term. Instead, it is understood to have something fundamentally in common with the slogans of demonstrators, the chants of football fans, or other analogous expressions belonging to common social experiences (Ayats 2002; Sarno 2022).

Performance schemes

Within the general phenomenon of collective musical performance, an important distinction exists between, on the one hand, musical practices that consist of the interlocking of individual sound gestures performed by a single voice and, on the other hand, musical practices in which each distinct and perceptible auditory component is realized by two or more people singing (or attempting to sing) the same sound gesture in synchrony, thus giving lesser (or no) relevance to their individuality as performers.

This basic distinction is not properly acknowledged in studies on multipart singing, which tend to consider sound results almost exclusively in terms of texture. But it is of crucial importance in understanding how multipart music is approached, and it has a significant impact on the actual results of a performance, going far beyond what is attributable to the mechanisms of musical combination/overlapping alone.

The multifaceted singing of *gosos*

In Sardinia, just as elsewhere, processes of constructing and representing identity are also found in inclusive collective singing practices. This is especially true in the case of devotional singing, which includes the practice of *gosos* (or *goccius*) singing. *Gosos* are religious texts that are sung in different ways according to local customs. The singing of *gosos* (albeit that it has several different possible structures) can be considered a unique musical phenomenon in that it is spread all over the island, whereas all other forms of musical expression are (more or less) limited to one area. The term *gosos* identifies texts in Sardinian language, often those made up of stanzas of eight syllables, with or without a chorus in different verse forms. The contents of lyrics include hymns of praise in honor of saints, of the Madonna, and of moments in the liturgical year (Holy Week, etc.). The prevailing structure is that of a song with verse and refrain, the predominant meter being octonary.

Gosos singing gives rise to participatory musical performances, those where there is no precise division of roles between performers and listeners, since all those taking part in the event are potential performers. As far as the musical results are concerned, it is enough to consider that the same text *gosos* can be sung:

- by a single voice (monody) without any accompaniment. This type of performance belongs to the sphere of private life, so there is no relevant documentation. It is usually considered to be typically female

- by two or more singers in unison (polyvocality), without the number of performers being fixed or remaining stable for the duration of the singing

- by two or more singers organized in vocal parts showing considerable variety of sound overlaps, including two-part parallel, two-part non-parallel, and chordal forms, with the composition of the performance groups varying from case to case

- by one or more singers, in monodic/polyvocal/polyphonic forms or with accompaniment provided by monophonic instruments (e.g. percussion idiophones such as *matraccas*) and/or polyphonic instruments (launeddas, organ, harmonium, guitar, etc.), in various combinations.

Different performance schemes, including those featuring different melodic lines, can coexist within a single village . Not only can the musical contents be different, but the performance behavior can also contrast to a significant degree (including in its details and nuances). The variability of *gosos* and devotional singing is the subject of an extensive research project by the Labimus—Cagliari and ISRE-Nuoro, with the establishment of an open-access sound archive that currently includes documents from more than one hundred villages.[26]

A common pattern in various Sardinian villages is the responsorial type in which a solo voice (usually male, but there are also cases of female voices) sings the verses of the verbal text and a mixed choir responds in the refrain. Given their length, these texts are transcribed in manuscripts for personal use or in popular printed sheets. Each of them is sung at a specific time of the year in different forms and ways.

26 http//boghes.org

The spread of this phenomenon is what means the chanting of the *gosos* can be considered the only musical practice found across the entire island, from north to south. According to Giampaolo Mele (2017), the origins of the *gosos* are to be found in the medieval religious lyrics in the vernacular that are widespread in Catalonia and Castile and in various other areas of the Iberian Peninsula (Ayats 2007).

Neoneli

Within everyone's reach

As elsewhere, in Sardinia, the *inclusive* patterns embrace different forms of vocal performance, often characterized by the singing of lines in parallel motion. Usually these are musical practices in which each distinct and perceptible aural component is realized by two or more people synchronically singing the same sound gesture (or trying to do so), thereby attaching lesser (or no) relevance to their single individualities as performers.

For instance, within religious events throughout the liturgical year, different rituals depend on parallel-part singing – above all, in thirds and/or octaves. As a rule, these rituals favor the widest participation, being performed by groups of men or women, or by groups of men and women together (Macchiarella 2008). This singing is built on the redoubling of parts, since an unpredictable number of persons synchronically sing the same sound sequence (or aim to do so, more or less rigorously).

However, this is not *spontaneous* music making, since some groups (at the very least) deliberately create and shape their sounds during rehearsals. This is particularly relevant in the case of performance in religious contexts, where each group aims to find a distinct amalgamation of voices and attributes special meaning and symbolic value to their sounds.

Significant cases can be discovered by studying specific examples among the endless sets of music practices arising from this performance pattern. One finds different patterns for how participating voices combine, whether male and/or female voices, depending on the specific performance contexts. The number of performers is usually not fixed, but there are some exceptions. In Aggius, for example, the *gosos* (called *laude* here) heard during devotional novenas are sung by the friars in antiphonal form. A group of four singers intones the verses, while another group made up of the remaining friars sings the refrain. On other occasions, all the friars sing the verses while the assembly of the faithful, both men and women, respond with the refrain.

In other villages (Santulussurgiu, Bortigali), depending on the circumstances, there can be performance situations in which *sa boghe* of the *cuncordu* intones the verses while the refrain is sung by four voices in the exclusive pattern mode. Another option is for the verse to be sung by *cuncordu* and the refrain to be sung by *cuncordu* and faithful (both men and women) together, the only case in which specialist and non-specialist singers join forces.

Other instances of devotional singing found in many villages have different performance schemes. The intonation of the rosary, for example, is often sung in antiphonal form by two choirs, one male and one female, each with different melodic characteristics. The male part has a range of more than an octave, while the female part is limited to a fourth or a fifth. In Dolianova and elsewhere, there are situations where the male/female alternation breaks down during the performance. In certain passages, as well as in the conclusion, the two choirs sing their own melodies together in homorhythm, this combination resulting in different bi-chords. The texts (including translations of the Lord's Prayer and other devotional passages) are in Sardinian rather than Latin.

Elsewhere there are also responsorial and antiphonal forms sung only by men or only by women. In various cases, the unison between the groups is not regular, and especially in processional performance contexts (those that attract the greatest number of participants), one can hear approximate intonations or more or less refined parallel movements of the parts. In Orgosolo, for example, the performance pattern of the Assunta festival processions is based on alternating groups of male and female voices. Performances here are characterized by the parallel thirds that are openly sought by both male and female voices – this may be connected to the fact that these choirs include male and female singers who are part of the polyphonic choirs of the Nuoro school (see below).

Despite the inclusiveness of these vocal performances, local actors are fully aware that they hold cultural value beyond their religious and devotional significance (Lutzu 2014). Thus, there is no shortage of Rassegne (festivals) and other

occasions where groups of singers from different areas meet to compare their performance practices, as well as to share publications, new media sites, and CD recordings (Mameli 2001).

Singing of the Mass

Cagliari

A case that is particularly representative of an integrative multipart mechanism are the choral practices associated with the complex and sumptuous ritual of Holy Week in Cagliari, the capital of the island.

The performers involved here are extremely large choirs belonging to the two confraternities (Santissimo Crocefisso and Solitudine) located in the two "old districts" of the historic center. These choirs are made up of an unlimited number of

singers and can number into the hundreds of people. For this reason, they are called "massa di cantori" (masses of singers). They are divided into five sections: basses, first and second tenors, altos, and sopranos, each with its own conductor. A choir leader coordinates the performance, indicating the entrances, the tempo, etc. The singers are male; the female voices are found in the choir of *voci bianche* (children's voices), which sings the highest parts. As a rule, about thirty songs are sung, all of them written down in ancient Italian. The lyrics are attributed to the famous eighteenth-century playwright Pietro Metastasio, through the intermediary of St Alphonsus de Liguori, one of the most important Catholic figures of the period. The musical parts are learned and transmitted orally (although the confraternities also own a complete transcription of the repertory, made by ear by a choir conductor).[27] Of course, recordings and means of secondary orality provide fundamental support to memorization. This kind of "horizontal polyphony" is made up of different lines, each of them are performed by several people more or less synchronically, thereby again attaching lesser (or no) relevance to their single individualities as performers.

This musical practice is the core of an intense collective mobilization that goes on for several months before Holy Week. Beyond the expression of religious faith,[28] the aims of the performance are not aesthetically oriented. For the singers, to take part in multipart performance is a way to solemnly affirm (and confirm) their place in the social life of the neighborhood; it is a shared musical experience representing the intentionality and needs of the social life of a local community.[29] Many people derive satisfaction from giving up their music individuality through the social experience of being a member of a large ensemble (Solinas 2007).

27 This musical practice has significant similarities with those found in the Cilento villages, starting with the use of the same religious texts (Macchiarella 2017/b)

28 This expression belongs to the private sphere and therefore it goes beyond the scope of this work and will be put to one side.

29 See http://www.sardegna-visuale.it/home.html, which includies an interesting film *Is cantoris de cira santa* (The Singers of Holy Week) by Marina Anedda.

Confraternities as a crucial multipart singing institution

Spread all over Sardinia, secular confraternities play an important role within village social life. They organize all paraliturgical rites (with special regard to those of Holy Week, which in some villages are very complex; see Lortat-Jacob 1998) and other events in the liturgical calendar. At the same time, they also impact on community dynamics, helping those in need, intervening in social affairs, and so on.

The institution of the confraternity has a history covering several centuries, with traces dating back to the early Middle Ages. A crucial moment in its development came with the post-Council of Trent reform action, which led to their systematic dissemination. At this moment, brotherhood associations were established even in the smallest rural villages, being conceived of as in direct filial relation to some "mother congregations" of Rome, whose statutes were adopted.

Local supervision was entrusted to bishops, while it was the regular clergy (in Italy especially Franciscans, Jesuits, Benedictines) who carried out training within various associations. Through these confraternities – which involved men and women of all social backgrounds – the Church ensured a powerful means of control over every aspect of the religious (and non-religious) life of believers.

However, the historical events surrounding the confraternity institution are generally little known, especially as regards the rural centers and on islands such as Sardinia. It can, however, be assumed that over the centuries their activity has been changing, not only as regards the religious cult itself, but also in the realm of what might be called socio-cultural-political action within the various local communities.

The same must, therefore, be true of the specifics of musical practice, which obviously could not fail to reflect the changes in the conception and in the playing conventions of Christian music over time (Macchiarella 2003). An important moment in this history is recorded towards the end of the nineteenth century, when the secularization program of the government of united Italy decreed the dissolution and confiscation of the assets of confraternities. It was only at the beginning of the

twentieth century that confraternities regained their ancient vigor, and only partially at that. Furthermore, in the 1960s and 1970s, coinciding with strong migratory processes and with radical lifestyle transformations associated with the coming of the mass media era, confraternities were faced with a deep crisis of participation, one that seemed to be leading towards their definitive dissolution.

Towards the end of the 1980s, however, with new trends for rediscovery of the local (as opposed to the global) emerging almost everywhere, the first signs of rebirth were felt. About a decade later, the phenomenon began to show consistency, as various associations flourished and recovered vigor, and there are even cases where confraternities inactive since the first half of the twentieth century resumed operations (Macchiarella 2017). Others, of course, remained "asleep" or were only formally designated as active.

Although in a way decidedly different from in past custom, many confraternities today play a leading role in the organization of the ritual events of the annual religious cycle. Almost everywhere they are present, they are also behind various other actions of great importance in the social life of the local community. In most cases, a fundamental contribution has been made by the younger generations, who have often shown an active protagonism, also assuming positions of responsibility in the management of confraternities.

Naturally, this rebirth has very complex motivations, which certainly cannot be summarized in a few words. Indeed, each association has its own history, marked by the personality of its various protagonists and by its central interpersonal relationships, circumstances of village life, and customs and habits that vary from village to village. Beyond its religious sentiments (which belong to the sphere of the private individual and therefore go beyond the interest of the musicologist), the confraternity as a form of social aggregation has played a part in the composite process of rediscovering the local and of connecting with original mechanisms for (re)construction of social micro-identities. This is all in reaction to the sense of alienation, insecurity, and anonymity typical of the mass media era.

Confraternities present themselves as "small societies" made up of men (sometimes also including women) who are united not only by their religious beliefs but also by a general sentiment usually summarized as an "attachment to traditions." It is a small society that has great importance for the social life of a village or city in all its aspects (including those related to local politics), and that is essentially independent from the local church. It has its own internal organization (going beyond what is dictated by statutes) and its own rules, often formed on the basis of an essential egalitarianism. There is the figure of an absolute leader, to whom maximum obedience is due, but who changes every year to ensure distribution of influence.

Confraternity members state that their institution is "the last space of true democracy in today's life: the last space in which one is considered for what one is and not for what one has, because the rich and the poor within the brotherhood count equally" (Macchiarella 2017: 78).

Confraternities normally pay special regard to collective singing practices, both multipart and polyvocal – or to put it another way, to exclusive and inclusive practices.

Undoubtedly, the activity within confraternities affords the widest use of music. There is both ensemble practice in which all members of the association can take part, and music as a form of expression entrusted to specialist choirs. Confraternities have served as a kind of *schola cantorum* of the oral tradition (Macchiarella 1995: 275-280).

After the period of crisis in the twentieth century, culminating in the 1960s and 1970s, the confraternities experienced a progressive phase of rebirth, in parallel with the rediscovery of the local (versus the global) that continues up to the present day. In several villages, the Oratorio, the seat of the confraternity, is an extremely inclusive place, where men from all generations spend their time after work.[30] At these meetings, they organize their yearly ritual events, but above all, they discuss the problems of daily community life.

30 Although the presence of women is included in the statutes, the actual participation of women in the Oratorio is still very limited.

As is well known, music practice has been a decisive element in the life of all the Christian confraternities, ever since they came into being, and it strongly characterizes their activities throughout the course of the year. Nowadays, in Sardinia (just as elsewhere), confraternal musical practices show a wide variety of forms. They range from highly inclusive ones, involving the wider participation of members of the association (such as the so-called polyvocal singing consisting of voices in unison or in parallel parts) to exclusive forms reserved for groups of singers who have specialist skills (such as those necessary to perform oral transmitted polyphonies in three, four, or five parts).

Almost everywhere, musical practice has represented an important – if not decisive – stimulus for the various operations of rebirth. This is true as people look to "local tradition" (the memories of the local elders and possibly written sources or sound recordings) to envisage both their inclusive and exclusive practices. In either case, musical practice is a focus for intensive and incessant collective mobilization within the association, with even those who do not sing exercising their influence on the sound result through competent listening. Many young people claim to have joined confraternities and accepted their rules (however reluctantly) just to have the opportunity to practice polyphonic singing in context (Macchiarella 2017). The same musical practices are also a strong focus for external appeal, as passionate lovers of "traditional song" often make long journeys to listen to in-context paraliturgical performances.

Organized chorality

The Sardinian vocal panorama includes other inclusive and exclusive expressions of polyphonic singing, for which there is no space to discuss here. Many exclusive four-part forms of expression require the presence of a musical instrument, especially the organ. The material for this instrument is essentially transmitted by ear and even today many performers do not know the notation (Macchiarella

2021; Milleddu 2014). The presence of instruments is also to be found in inclusive practices. This mainly means the accompaniment of launeddas when the *gosos* are performed in various kinds of procession (Milleddu 2014). The intervention of instruments in both exclusive and inclusive practices regularizes vocal expression by creating other modes of interaction (Macchiarella 2021).

Finally, polyphony, organized in ensembles and directed by a conductor, is widespread throughout Sardinia. This practice belongs to a typology that began to spread in Sardinia, just as in the rest of Italy, during the fascist period, with the aim of regulating the popular culture of the nation. In the post-war years, this form of performance was revived in Sardinia, especially in the city of Nuoro, where various ensembles (Coro in Nuoro, Coro Ortobene, Coro Barbagia) were formed.
These ensembles were linked to the names of certain masters, such as Giampaolo Mele, Tonino Puddu, Banneddu Ruiu, etc., who were also authors of the repertoire of the various choirs. The singing practices usually take the form of harmonizations of traditional songs or new songs with texts in Sardinian, fixed on staves. The vocal style is based on the chest singing of polyphonic choirs from the academy, and the pieces sung often have a structure characterized by a solo part accompanied by chord combinations formed of voices emitting nonsense syllables ("bam-bim-bom," etc.). This style of music, thanks in part to the spread of the mass media (among other things enabling ensembles to participate in music competitions broadcast by RAI all over Italy, such as Campanile Sera), has had great success. Since the 1970s, choirs from the Nuoro school have sprung up all over the island, and today the phenomenon is still widespread, often featuring offshoot women's or mixed choirs (Macchiarella, Milleddu, Oliva 2014).

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Audiovisual anthology

As a commentary to the previous pages, the QR code provides access to an anthology of exclusive and inclusive multi-part performance audio and audio-visual documents. These materials have been recorded and edited by Labimus researchers as part of the Tedimus project and by other researchers as part of their field documentation programmes. In particular, I would like to thank Marco Lutzu, Ottavio Nieddu, Luigi Oliva and Diego Pani for their valuable contribution to the anthology and Andrea Lotta for the video editing. Thanks also to ISRE (Modas and Boghes projects) and the Hymnos Foundation (Gosos project).

European Voices: Audiovisuals **is a series of the Department of Folk Music Research and Ethnomusicology of the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. An essential element of it is the partnership with institutions in which members of the Research Centre for European Multipart Music (EMM), based in this Department, are engaged. EMM members present here unknown audio and video recordings of multipart music and dance practices, primarily from fieldwork, with comprehensive explanations drawn up in close cooperation with music and dance makers.**

This book is a first, partial contribution on Sardinian multipart singing to the EVA series. The volume does not intend to be an exhaustive guide but rather highlights key aspects of the variety and complexity found in multipart singing practices across the island, Sardinia.

It explores an essential distinction between two principles of performance: multipart singing adopting inclusive patterns (those that offer possibility for anyone interested to participate), and multipart singing based on exclusive patterns (those mastered only by selected specialist groups who comprise a predeterminetd number of performers). The volume and the audio-visual anthology are produced as part of the TeDiMuS (Digital Technologies and Multipart Singing in Sardinia) project, funded by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Regional Law 7/2007, for the "Promotion of scientific research and technological innovation in Sardinia"), and carried out with the support of Labimus (Interdisciplinary Laboratory on Music of the Department of Humanities, Languages and Cultural Heritage of the University of Cagliari).

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