

Giovanni Grosskopf

LARK MUSIC

**for voice (soprano), flute and guitar
(1995)**

IL VOLO

**for flute and guitar
(1995)**

**Texts: Bernard de Ventadorn (ca. 1130-1195)
Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)**

ENGLISH INTRODUCTORY NOTES TO “LARK MUSIC” AND “IL VOLO”

*When I see the little lark moving
 its wings for the joy against the sun beams,
 that forgets itself, and lets itself drop down,
 because of the sweetness that goes to its heart,
 oh, so great is the envy that comes to me,
 towards the one that I see joyous!
 I marvel that my heart, spontaneously,
 does not melt down with desire.*

Bernard de Ventadorn, “Quan vey la lauzeta mover”.

(Troubadour, about 1130-1195; original lyrics in Old Provençal or Languedoc)

INTRODUCTION

This composition is the second result of a research carried on in the field of the birdsongs.

The aim was only to detect in them some clearly recognizable formal structures, and not, as it had already been done, to copy their melodic or rhythmical patterns in order to imitate the birds with the musical instruments. On the contrary, the purpose of imitation was completely absent.

I was wondering, however, whether in some of the birdsongs I had examined there was a musical - and therefore formal - logic capable to explain the impression of coherence, consequentiality and inner balance that one felt while listening to them.

While the analysis of the songs of many other species have so far given frustrating or unclear results, the analysis of the song of the European Skylark (*Alaudaarvensis*, a bird largely present throughout Europe, and present also in America, in the Vancouver area) has given results which are really amazing from this point of view, to such an extent that it is possible, starting from them, to carry on an investigation on the borders among repetition, variation and development.

We have started at first by slowing down (to eight times slower) a professional recording of a section of the song of the Skylark, so that the original duration of about 39 seconds became over 5 minutes.

In this way an easier analysis has been possible, and the way of listening has become more suited to the limited capability of the human ear to separate two sound details when they are very close in time to each other, and also more suited to the way we feel the time flowing on; these capabilities seem to be different in Humans and in the Skylark.

The second step has been to write an approximate “score”, to make possible to follow the different elements in the song. This has turned out to be composed of a succession of Repetitive Structures (RS), in which the basic elements appear always identical in the same order, and Free Parts (FP), in which some basic elements, which were or will be part of the Repetitive Structures, are intermingled with other occasional elements that appear only once.

In this approximative score, the analysis led me to detect the following formal scheme:

8X ABC ABC AB'C' XA'2X A'B2XCC 4XD4XE3XF4X FGEHI FGEHI FGEHI FGEHI
FP I RS FP FP II RS

FGELLXO LGEP"E'M LGEP"E'M LGEP"E'M LD2XN'XE"XE'5XM //NI //NI //NI //N3XOO
FP III RS FP IV RS FP

NO NO NO NO NO N6X P'Q PQ PQ PQ PQ PQ PPP4XE'PPP2XEG'3XE
V RS FP VI RS FP

- A, B, C... = Basic elements of the song (15, altogether), always identical.
- A', P', P" ... = Variants of the basic elements (there are 7 basic elements with one variant, and 2 also with the second variant).
- // = retrograde of N (which has also a variant //')
- X = Occasional elements, which appear only once (each X is each time different from any other X element)
- FP = Free Parts
- RS = Repetitive Structures

2X stands for XX, 3X for XXX, and so on.

Spaces to not indicate any break or pause, which do never occur, but are placed here only to individuate the Repetitive Structures more easily. The song is a frenetic, quick, sweet, continuous flow.

Including also the repetitions, the elements are 170, including the occasional elements X. From the point of view of perception, the fact that some basic elements are present in different Repetitive Structures and sometimes even in the Free Parts, sometimes combined in the same order, and sometimes changing it, creates extraordinary effects of variety in the repetitions or, vice-versa, of similarity also where there are no real repetitions. The border between these two cases becomes very faint itself.

Therefore, the following twelve development rules have been detected, very interesting for a composer, which we could define the bases of the "compositional style" of the Skylark:

1) To repeat the beginning of a Repetitive Structure, but to go on differently:

Ex. FGEHI FGEHI FGELLXO...
or ABC ABC AB3X...

2) To insert extraneous elements or variants in a Repetitive Structure, as if "filling" it.

Ex. ABC ABC AB'3XC

3) To iterate an element which will be used in a Repetitive Structure just before the beginning of that structure, as if "announcing" it.

Ex. EE BFGE BFGE...

4) To iterate it immediately after the structure in which it is used, as if exhausting its role.

Ex. FM FM FM FFF

5) To change all the elements of a Repetitive Structure, if compared to the preceding structure, except the second and third elements (an effect of similarity also in presence of diversity)

Ex. FGEHI FGEHI... LGEP"E'M LGEP"E'M...
or BFGE BFGE... HFGIL HFGIL...

6) To use Repetitive Structures made of 2-3 elements at the beginning and at the end, and more complex at the centre.

7) To make the second element of the preceding structure become the first one in a new Repetitive Structure.

Ex. ABC ABC ...BFGE BFGE

The concept is the inverse of the rule nr. 5.

8) To make an almost "occasional" element become an important one much later (see E and O in the original model).

9) To begin a structure gradually, that is with a variant of a basic elements. The listener, therefore, does not realize that he is listening a Repetitive Structure at the second repetition, as it happens normally, but at the third one. At that point, however, he realizes that three repetitions have already been listened, though the first one had something different.

Ex. 6XP'Q PQ PQ PQ...

10) The ratio between the elements (of any kind) belonging to the Free Parts and the elements belonging to the Repetitive Structures keeps around parity (81 / 89).

11) In the Free Parts the ratio between elements X and total number of the elements is close to the golden section (55 / 81, the golden section would be 50,06 / 81), as well as the ratio between the number of the basic elements (A, B, C...) including their repetitions and the number of the elements in the whole model (115 / 170 ; the golden section would be 105,06 / 170). The two ratios are indeed almost identical.

12) Every Repetitive Structure must include from 4 to 5 repetitions (6 repetitions are possible only where the repeated formula is made of two elements, 3 repetitions are possible only with repeated formulas of 6 elements at least).

An artificial model where all these rules are applied is, for instance, the following:

5XAAXB3XA2X ACD ACD ACD ACD AC'E'FGDD 2XD'2XB'3X HH CBGH CBGH CBGH
FP **I RS** **FP** **II RS**

CBGH CBG'IGH 2XH'2XL'3XE2X L'BGIE LBGIE LBGIE LBG'F'AFF B'F BF BF BF BF BF
FP **III RS** **FP** **IV RS**

BBB 4XC3XG' BBB 3XG2XB'3XG"5X
FP

Of course, better attempts could be made to analyze the song, using more sound samples of it and analyzing longer fragments, and better artificial imitations could be built, even starting from this analysis. However, the results presented in this short notes are without any doubt already interesting and fascinating for many musicians.

Giovanni Grosskopf
Sesto San Giovanni, Milan, Italy, 1995.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

- In every variation the melodic outline of the guitar follows the troubadour's melody, which is presented by the guitar at the beginning. The guitarist must be aware of this all the time and must try to make the audience be aware of this as well.

In every variation the flute follows exactly the authentic structure of a true Skylark song, as illustrated hereabove.

In the variations I and II the guitar chords and the flute notes have been derived from an adaptment to the tempered musical system of the harmonic spectrum of a sample of a Skylark song (*Alauda arvensis*), analyzed by a computer, in order to recall also its timbre.

In the III variation the melody by Bernard de Ventadorn has been transcribed also in the flute part, but using only the notes derived from this spectrum, thus adapting the melody to them, and then the resulting melody has been restructured, following the same aforementioned formal scheme of a true Skylark song.

- First performance:

Villa Braida, Mogliano Veneto (Treviso, Italy), July 14th, 1995.

Insight Quartet: Gemma Bertagnolli, soprano

Silvia Cesco, guitar

Maia Dalvai, flute



(Sabrina Strozzi, harp, not playing in this piece)

- In the first performance the flute was out of the stage, visible by the other performers, but not by the audience. It is a scenic device approved by the author, which helps to create the proper sense of distance and "wonder", similar to what is felt by one who, whelmed by the flow of notes, looks in vain for the tiny shape of the Lark in the sky. From a technical point of view, it creates a better balance in the group. Anyway, it is not an obligatory prescription.

- The piece can be performed only by flute and guitar, with the title "**Il volo**" (meaning "The Flight"), if the vocal part is omitted. If possible, certainly the author prefers the performance with three performers, including the singer, with the title "**Lark Music**".

-  short fermata  long fermata

- Except in the last line (page 14) the two instruments must *not* play coordinating with each other; on the contrary, each one shall keep its own independent tempo, according to the indications. The vertical alignment between their two parts is therefore only an approximate indication.

On the contrary, at the signs  and  it is strictly compulsory to start together (one of the three performers will give a signal to the others).

- The breath marks (') in the flute part indicate the moments where the flutist *can* breathe, also doing it with some ease and no haste. It is *not* obligatory to breathe at each of those marks, but it should be done *only* when a breath is really necessary. When it is not necessary, please ignore the breath marks. The use of circular breathing is approved by the author, but not obligatory at all.

- Two versions of the flute part exist. The first one, on the main score (pages 1 - 14), is the one which indicates phrasing, articulation and accents better, and is the only one to be used in a concert performance. The second version, with its regular division of any duration into separated and tied quarter notes, can be useful to study how to perform the rhythms correctly. It is attached as an appendix after the end of the piece (pages A1 - A11).

- The accidentals apply only to the note they precede, excepted the case of immediate repetitions. However, many courtesy cautionary marks have been placed.

- Non l.v. = non lasciar vibrare = do not let it vibrate (stop the strings)

l.v. = lasciar vibrare = let it vibrate

EXPLANATION OF SOME DIRECTIONS ON THE SCORE

Page	system or line	bar (approx.)	instrument	Translation
1	1	1	guitar	Placid, with a free rhythm, the upper part well audible
1	1	2	guitar	Always let the vocal part end
1	1	2	voice	Spoken, declaiming, always solemn, very calm
1	6	2	voice	Moved
3	1	1	flute	As quick as possible, at least ♩ = 84
3	1	1	guitar	At least ♩. = 84, that is ♩ = 252 or ♩ = 126, ♩ of the flute = <u>approximately</u> the ♩ of the guitar.
3	2	2	voice	with freedom in rhythm
3	2 and footnote	2	flute	TT ~~~~~ = (*) "timbre trill", trill with a key normally extraneous to the basic fingering usually employed.
3	4	3	voice	(**) Sing on the sound represented by the letters in the square, and not on the preceding vocal (= <i>Singing on consonants. The same in the following cases</i>)
4	4	1	guit.&flute	(this attack does not involve the vocal part)
5	3	2	guit.&flute	wait for each other on this fermata
5	3	2	flute	(each group repeated for two quarters)
5	4	1	guitar	♩ = the former ♩.
6	2	1	guit.&flute	♩ of the flute = approx. ♩ of the guitar
6	5	2	guitar	each note group repeated for a duration of two quarters
6	4	1	guitar	give an attack signal to the voice
9	3	2	guit.&flute	wait for the other instrument in any case on this fermata. Before going on, let the vocal part end.
9	4	1	guit.&flute	Before going on, let the vocal part end.
9	4	2	flute	(the flute remains at the former tempo)
10	1	1	voice	x = note of approximated intonation, almost spoken
				E high indication of the register in
				middle the passages with relative or
				low approximated intonation
10	1	4	voice	the "declamation" follows the natural rhythm of the speech
11	2	2	voice	(quasi piatto) = almost like a cymbal
12	2	1	voice	(*) Ad libitum, confused muttering
12	2	2	voice	Infantile, meccanico = childish, mechanically
12	3	4	voice	(perplexed and scandalized) (SPOKEN)
13	3	6	voice	(that is: with closed mouth)
13	4	4	voice	(SPOKEN) (with a strongly interrogative intonation)
13	4	4	guit.&flute	Wait for the other instrument in any case on this fermata. Let the vocal part end, than GO ON.

VOLTE = times (referring to the fragment to be repeated, written within the repeat marks)

eco = echo

almeno = at least

Voce = voice

Flauto = flute

Chitarra = guitar

fl. = flattertongue

ATTACCO ALLA VOCE = give an attack signal to the voice

disteso = relaxed

con calma = calmly

buffo = funny

pizz. (guitar) = pizzicato (stop the strings with your right hand or wrist immediately while playing)

giocoso = playful

declamato = declaimed, spoken

sim. = always similar

quanto possibile = as possible

rilevata / rilevato = in the foreground, well audible

deciso = firm

sognante = dreaming

secco = dry, short (without an arpeggio)

The flute should not play in a soloistic, expressive fashion: its "expression" is in this case to play in an inexpressive, cold, mechanical way, as if unconcerned and uninvolved. It represents a bird, not a human. It should play with precision and nervousness, with a metallic tone color, in strict tempo, without any rubato, rallentando or accelerando. No notes should be prolonged, and no vibratos added. Besides, it should never be too much in the foreground, therefore it should never play too loudly.

On the contrary, the "human", expressive, communicative, free element is represented by the voice, which should emphasize these features, strongly present in its role.

Average duration: about 9 minutes.

Quan vey la lauzeta mover
 De joy sas alas contra'l rai
 Que s'oblida e's laissa cazer
 Per la doussor qu'al cor li vay:
 Ai! tan grans enveya m'en ve
 De cui qu'eu vey jauzion!
 Meravilhas ay, quar desse
 Lo cor de dezirier no'm fon.
 Quando vedo l'allodola per la gioia
 Muovere le ali contro il raggio (del sole),
 Che si oblia e si lascia cadere
 Per la dolcezza che nel cuore le penetra:
 Ah! quale invidia mi prende
 Di chi io veda gioioso!
 Meraviglia mi prende che il cuore immediatamente
 Di desiderio non si strugga.

Quan vey la - lau - ze - ta mo - ver De joy sas
 a - las con - tra'l rai, Que so - bli - da e's lais -
 sa ca - zer — Per la dous - sor qu'al cor li - vai:—
 Ai! — tan grans en - ve - ya m'en ve De cui qu'eu
 ve - ya — jau - zi - on! Me - ra - vilh - as ai,
 quar des se — Lo cor de de zi - rier no'm fon —

Bernart de Ventadorn (ca.1130-1195)

Before you thought of Spring
Except as a Surmise
You see - God bless his suddenness -
A Fellow in the Skies

With specimens of Song
As if for you to choose -

With gay delays he goes

And shouts for joy to Nobody
But his seraphic self -

Split the Lark - and you'll find the Music -
Bulb after Bulb, in Silver rolled -
Scantily dealt to the Summer Morning
Saved for your Ear when Lutes be old.

Loose the Flood - you shall find it patent -
Gush after Gush, reserved for you -
Scarlet Experiment! Sceptic Thomas!
Now, do you doubt that your Bird was true?

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)
POESIE ed. Bompiani

Prima che tu presuma primavera
Se non come una ipotesi,
Tu vedi su nel cielo -
Benedetta la subitanità -
Un monello di tinte tutte sue,

Con varietà di canti -
Vuole che scelga tu -

Tra gaie soste va

E dal giubilo strilla, a nessun altro
Che al serafico suo sé.

Spacca l'Allodola - e troverà la musica -
Un bulbo dopo l'altro - laminati in argento -
Scarsamente concessi al mattino d'estate
Serbati pel tuo orecchio
Quando saranno vecchi i liuti -

Libera il flusso - e ti sarà patente -
Un fiotto dopo l'altro - per te tesoreggiati -
Scarlatto Esperimento! Ancora dubiti -
Tu scettico Tommaso -
Che l'Allodola era vera?

(Traduzione italiana
di Guido Errante)

Comprendendo anche le ripetizioni, gli elementi sono 170, x incluse. Dal punto di vista percettivo, il fatto che alcuni elementi base si presentino in diverse strutture ripetitive e talvolta perfino nelle parti libere, a volte associandosi tra loro sempre allo stesso modo e a volte mutando invece l'ordine di presentazione, crea degli effetti straordinari di varietà nella ripetitività o viceversa di forte somiglianza anche dove non vi sono ripetizioni vere e proprie. Lo stesso confine tra questi due casi diventa anzi molto labile.

Sono state dunque individuate le seguenti regole di sviluppo, di notevole interesse per un compositore, che potremmo definire come le basi dello "stile di composizione" dell'Allodola:

1) Ripetere l'inizio di una struttura ripetitiva, ma farlo seguire da altro. Es.: FGEHI FGEHI FGELLXO...

Opp.: ABC ABC AB3X...

2) Inserire elementi estranei o varianti nella struttura ripetitiva, "farcendo" la formula. Es.: ABC ABC AB₁3XC

3) Reiterare un elemento usato in una struttura ripetitiva subito prima di essa, per "annunciarlo": EE BFGE BFGE...

4) Reiterarlo subito dopo, per "liquidarlo": FM FM FM FFF...

5) Mutare tutti gli elementi di una struttura ripetitiva rispetto alla precedente, tranne il secondo e il terzo (effetto di somiglianza nella diversità). Es.: FGEHI FGEHI...LGEP₂E₁M LGEP₂E₁M...

opp.: BFGE BFGE...HFGIL HFGIL...

6) Usare strutture ripetitive di 2-3 elementi all'inizio e alla fine, più complesse al centro.

7) Fare diventare primo elemento di una nuova struttura ripetitiva il secondo della precedente: ABC ABC ...BFGE BFGE

opp.: WNI WNI...NO NO

Concettualmente è l'inverso della regola n.5.

8) Far diventare importante un elemento comparso quasi "per caso" molto tempo prima; (vedi E ed O nel modello originale)

9) Iniziare una formula gradualmente, cioè con una variante di un elemento base. L'ascoltatore, cioè, non si rende conto di trovarsi di fronte ad una struttura ripetitiva alla seconda ripetizione, come avviene normalmente, ma alla terza. A quel punto, però, intuisce che sono già passate tre ripetizioni, anche se la prima aveva qualcosa di diverso. Es.: 6X P₁Q PQ PQ PQ...

- 10) Il rapporto tra elementi (di qualsiasi genere) appartenenti alle parti libere ed elementi appartenenti alle strutture ripetitive deve essere all'incirca di parità (81/89).
- 11) Nelle parti libere il rapporto tra elementi X e numero complessivo degli elementi che ne fanno parte deve approssimarsi alla sezione aurea (55/81; la sezione aurea sarebbe 50,06/81), così come il rapporto tra numero degli elementi base (A, B, C, ...) includendo le ripetizioni e numero degli elementi nell'intero modello (115/170; la sezione aurea sarebbe 105,06/170). I due rapporti sono infatti quasi identici.
- 12) Ogni SR deve avere da 4 a 5 ripetizioni (6 possibili solo con formule di 2 elementi, 3 possibili solo con formule di almeno 6 elementi)

Un modello artificiale che rispetta queste regole é, per esempio, il seguente:

5X A A X B 3 X A 2 X A C D A C D A C D A C D A C ₁ E ₁ F G D D 2 X D ₁ 2 X B ₁ 3 X H H C B G H C B G H C B G H C B G H
 C B G ₁ I G H 2 X H ₁ 2 X L ₁ 3 X E 2 X L ₁ B G I E L B G I E L B G I E L B G ₁ F ₁ A F F B ₁ F B F B F B F B F B F B B B
 4 X C 3 X G ₁ B B B 3 X G 2 X B ₁ 3 X G ₂ 5 X

Lark Music (1995)

Testi: Bernard de Ventadorn (ca.1130-1195)

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

IV

- In tutte le variazioni il profilo melodico della parte di chitarra segue quello della melodia del grande trovatore: è bene che il chitarrista ne sia conscio.

- In tutte le variazioni la parte del flauto segue rigorosamente la forma di un vero canto di allodola, che è stata precedentemente illustrata.

- Nelle variazioni I e II gli accordi della chitarra e le note del flauto sono ricavati da un adattamento al sistema temperato dello spettro armonico di un campione di canto di allodola (*Alauda arvensis*) analizzato al calcolatore, in maniera da richiamarne anche il timbro.

- Nella variazione III la melodia di Bernard de Ventadorn è stata trascritta anche nella parte del flauto, ma usando esclusivamente le note di questo spettro ed adattandola ad esse, ed è stata poi sottoposta al trattamento formale sopra illustrato.

Prima esecuzione:

Villa Braida, Mogliano Veneto, 14 Luglio 1995

Insight Quartet: Gemma Bertagnolli, soprano

Silvia Cesco, chitarra

Maia Dalvai, flauto

(Sabrina Strozzi, arpa).

Nella prima esecuzione il flauto era fuori scena, visibile agli altri interpreti, ma non al pubblico. Effettivamente si tratta di un espediente scenico approvato dall'Autore che contribuisce a creare il giusto senso di lontananza e di "mistero", simile a quello provato da chi, investito dal fiume di note, cerca invano nel cielo la minuscola sagoma dell'allodola. Dal punto di vista tecnico contribuisce ad un miglior equilibrio del gruppo. Non si tratta comunque di un'indicazione obbligatoria.

Il brano può essere eseguito solo da flauto e chitarra, con il titolo "Il volo", se viene esclusa la parte vocale. Se possibile, l'Autore preferisce senz'altro l'esecuzione a tre, con la cantante.

AVVERTENZE

- \wedge corona breve \frown media
- Tranne che nell'ultima riga (pag.14) i due strumenti e la voce non devono procedere coordinandosi tra loro, ma battendo ognuno un proprio tempo indipendente secondo le indicazioni. L'allineamento verticale tra le loro parti é dunque solo un'indicazione molto approssimativa.
Viceversa, ai segni \downarrow oppure \uparrow é assolutamente obbligatorio riattaccare insieme (uno dei tre esecutori darà un segnale)
- I respiri (') nella parte del flauto indicano i momenti in cui si può respirare, prendendosi anche un pò di tempo per farlo con comodità, senza fretta.
La loro realizzazione non é obbligatoria ad ogni loro comparsa, ma solo quando é necessaria. Se non è necessario, ignorare il segno di respiro.
L'uso di respirazione circolare è approvato dall'autore, ma non è assolutamente obbligatoria.
- Esistono due versioni della parte per flauto. La prima, sulla partitura principale, è quella che indica meglio il fraseggio, l'articolazione e l'accentuazione voluta dall'autore, ed è l'unica da usare per la vera e propria esecuzione. La seconda, con la regolare divisione in quarti ed in battute, può servire da aiuto per lo studio della corretta scansione ritmica. La si allega in appendice.
- Le alterazioni valgono solo per la nota davanti alla quale sono poste, eccettuato il caso di nota ripetuta.
Sono tuttavia stati posti diversi segni di precauzione.