

# **“Chi ama è ardito” (“He who loves is daring”) - Poetics of affect in Salvatore Sciarrino’s opera *Luci mie traditrici***

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## **Abstract**

The most influential post-war avant-garde discourses have focused upon systems, structures, and the generation of musical material. At the same time, emotion and musical expression have been neglected and denied, if not even rendered taboo. Musicological research on contemporary music has maintained this focus whereas the succeeding generations of composers have developed different strategies to surmount this dogma. In fact the representation of emotions proves to be a crucial challenge for contemporary composers, as exemplified by the affect of love in opera. The avant-garde movements did not abandon it from the opera stage but its artistic representation has become increasingly problematic. The Italian composer Salvatore Sciarrino, born in 1947, has shaped his own highly original poetics of affect in his operas. An autodidact, Sciarrino stands apart from the dominant centers of contemporary music and has shaped a very individual style. In this paper, I employ his opera *Luci mie traditrici* (1996-98) to explore his fundamental strategy for representing emotions, in particular love, bringing together two central features of his music. Sciarrino implements and subsequently defamiliarizes musical material and techniques from the late 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century on several levels. By drawing upon this musical age he is able to share its musical rhetoric of affect, as it does not exist in a comparable form in contemporary music. At the same time, he applies the avant-garde playing techniques he has developed himself to the historical material, thereby integrating it into his decidedly contemporary music and aesthetics. The combination of this recourse to the musical past with Sciarrino’s characteristically concentrated and precise sound gestures opens a complex net of musical symbolization techniques, and as a result new possibilities for the representation of emotion at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **CV**

Lydia Rilling is currently a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University in New York. She earned her M.A. in Musicology and Comparative Literature from the Technische Universität Berlin in 2008 after having studied abroad at Washington University in St. Louis (USA) and Université Paris 8 (France) on fellowships of the German National Merit Foundation. In 2008 she joined the Ph.D. program of the Freie Universität Berlin. In her dissertation she explores the poetics of love in contemporary European opera. Her current projects include co-editing a collection of source texts of 20<sup>th</sup>-century music with Helga de la Motte and Julia Schröder. In addition, she works as a broadcasting producer, journalist, and writer for institutions including the Berliner Philharmoniker, Südwestrundfunk (SWR), and Donaueschinger Musiktage.