Laura Rossi’s War Musics
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Of the many eminent and acclaimed composers writing today for both film and the concert hall, not just men but also such women as Laura Karpmann, Anne Dudley, Lolita Ritmanis, Lesley Barber, and Debbie Wiseman, it is Laura Rossi who is perhaps best known for the intimate connections between her works for the cinema and the stage.

Rossi, nominated for an Academy Award for her music for Unfinished Song (2012), was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum (IWM) to compose original scores for films from the period of the Great War, including the 1916 The Battle of the Somme (2008) and 1917 The Battle of the Ancre (2002).1 Rossi has also been heralded for her concert works, and in 2014 her work in these two spheres overlapped with the creation of her Voices of Remembrance for orchestra, choir, and spoken voices.2 Voices was composed for the centenary of the First World War, and includes spoken recitations of ten World War I poems, musical settings of three of the poems for voice and orchestra, and seven instrumental movements based on the remaining poems. In reading Rossi’s Voices in the context of her scores for World War I films and analyzing Rossi’s approaches to scoring texts and testimonies of various natures documenting the war, I theorize that Rossi’s Voices of Remembrance differs in approach from her film scores in that it does not function just as music to help audiences understand the context of wartime artistic creations but also seeks to serve as a musical autobiography-by-proxy for the poets upon whose works the work is based.

Musical Autobiography by Proxy

I have written elsewhere about composers and autobiography, documenting ways in which composers frame and communicate elements of their own lives in their music.3 As Rossi’s work dealing with the war progressed, and as her personal connection with the events of the war deepened through the discovery of her own family’s involvement in the conflict, she became increasingly invested in having her musical representation of the war’s events serve as an autobiographical medium for some of the most eloquent written responses to the war. Because Rossi was not giving musical voice to her own experiences and emotions, however, I call this musical autobiography by proxy: it is music that seeks to communicate non-musical autobiographical material, music created through the composer’s desire to understand more fully and to make others more fully aware of the original work’s emotional and/or artistic message.

In the first movement of her Voices of Remembrance, for example, Rossi musically represents Isaac Rosenberg’s poem ‘Break of Day in the Trenches’. Rossi does not use Rosenberg’s words to communicate her own thoughts or emotions, nor is she using music as her own response to his words—those approaches would both be straightforward musical autobiography on Rossi’s part. Instead, she seeks to mediate Rosenberg’s words through her music, thus creating for Rosenberg a musical autobiography. She both serves as and constructs a medium for the poems that appear in Voices.
Because of the nature of such interpretation and the incorporation of a third party into the dialogue between autobiographer and audience, musical autobiography by proxy is not unproblematic. Like any translated autobiography, it can easily become hagiographic, and is subject to the criticism that it is either too personal on the part of the interpreter or too rigid.

Autobiography by proxy has frequently taken form in recounting the lives of saints and other, often martyred, figures, about whom first-person accounts of the self were considered essential for reasons of historiographical importance. In English literature, there is a long history of autobiography by proxy that can be traced to Chaucer and his contemporaries, and in music it is possible to frame both texted and untexted works as autobiography by proxy. Benjamin Britten set poetry by Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex, as a song for the character of Essex in his 1953 opera Gloriana, musically amplifying the text and creating a case in which he composes autobiographically-by-proxy for Essex. Edward Elgar explicitly stated that the theme of his Enigma Variations ‘expressed … my sense of loneliness of the artist as described in the first six lines of [Arthur O’Shaughnessy’s] Ode [The Music Makers].’ Elgar intended his theme to be a musical equivalent of an autobiographical statement by O’Shaughnessy; that the statement also happens to represent Elgar’s own personal feelings adds further autobiographical signification to the music.

In my previous analyses of women’s autobiographical composition, I have focused on the ways in which music could serve as a personal manifesto declaring sexual identity, religious commitment, and specific desire. These are not, of course, the only concepts that can be expressed through autobiographical composition: Rossi’s Voices of Remembrance expresses beauty, anger, misery, morbidity, excitement, and mourning as recorded first by the poets and then expressed through Rossi’s music in her position of the poets’ proxy communicator. Careful review of Voices reveals that Rossi represents other sentiments in the poetry as well, particularly pastoralism, which functions to represent both the experiences and words of many of the poets and the elite musical culture of their time, when works featuring pastoralism by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi, and others were prominent in British concert halls. These works are understood as manifestations of nationalism—that is to say, English—pride. As Eric Saylor writes: ‘many English musicians who embraced the pastoral also assumed the responsibility—either consciously or indirectly—of creating art that would both edify and entertain the masses.’ In creating musical autobiography-by-proxy for the war poets, Rossi takes on this mantle: in order to properly honour the words of the dead, she writes in a language much like what they themselves might have wanted or heard had they lived to hear their words represented by or set to music.

The Origins of Voices: Rossi’s Scores for War Films

Rossi’s official biography emphasizes her identity as a film composer, but particularly stresses her work for films from the period of the Great War and definitively connects it with Voices of Remembrance:
Laura has also written music for many silent films including the British Film Institute’s Silent Shakespeare and the famous IWM 1916 films The Battle of the Somme and The Battle of the Ancre. Her latest work Voices of Remembrance is a choral/orchestral work featuring war poems read by Ralph Fiennes and Vanessa Redgrave. The music was commissioned by Boosey and Hawkes to mark the Centenary of the First World War.\textsuperscript{x}

These related compositions are also publicized together on Rossi’s website. The materials there include an announcement of the Somme100 FILM: The Battle of the Somme Centenary Tour, which, sponsored by the IWM, sought to secure screenings of the historic film accompanied by a live orchestra at more than 100 venues throughout Britain between July 2016 and July 2017; a page detailing Rossi’s music for live accompaniments for World War I films; and information about Voices. This suggests that these projects are those Rossi wishes to promote more heavily than others, and they are clearly those on which she has built a significant part of her public identity.

Rossi began working with the Imperial War Museum in 2002, when she was commissioned to create a score for the 1917 film The Battle of the Ancre. The score for Ancre employs chamber orchestra and piano, and often the piano takes on a solo role with orchestra accompaniment. Rossi’s music for Ancre is atmospheric and predictable, offering languid melodies for scenes of the wounded at a dressing station and low rumblings in the bassoons—signifying the imminent brutality of shelling and battle—as howitzers are shown being prepared for use. The score is generally modal and often minimalist in both texture and compositional language, but it also contains some foreshadowing of the structures and language Rossi uses in Somme, in particular her musical references to earlier English pastoralism (what Saylor describes as ‘modally flexible melodic and harmonic language’) and her use of close musical mimicking of action.\textsuperscript{x}

The IWM commissioned Rossi again in 2008 for its re-mastering of the 1916 film The Battle of the Somme. While working on this score, Rossi learned that her great-uncle Frederick Ainge had been a stretcher carrier for the 29th Division, which is featured in the film. Ainge kept a diary, which Rossi read as she composed. ‘I have become really interested in the First World War’, Rossi said in an interview about the Somme film score,

and I now have a much clearer picture of what it must have been like to be a soldier in the Somme battle and what a horrific time these men went through. … I think this film brings you closer to the reality of the First World War and I feel very passionately that others should know more about it.\textsuperscript{xi}

Rossi immersed herself in learning about the war, including taking a trip to the Somme and participating in the 1 July memorial ceremonies at the battlefield. But she deliberately avoided musical artifacts of the time and place, particularly shunning listening to the 1917 accompaniment for The Battle of the Somme by Morton Hutchinson, composed in the style of a contemporary film accompanist, and recommendations that she listen to and incorporate into her score melodies popular at the time of the war:
I decided not to listen to the current video with improvised piano accompaniment or the Morton Hutchinson version of suggested pieces as I didn’t want to be influenced by it. I really wanted to be influenced by the film itself and write music I felt fitted the pictures and made them come to life.

I think someone watching the film today would watch it in a completely different way [than spectators did in 1917] as we now can look back in hindsight and we already have a pre-conceived idea of what the war was like from watching documentaries and reading books so I wanted the music to follow the action on the screen so that you are drawn into what’s happening in the film and watch it in a very real way.\textsuperscript{xii}

Rossi’s music for Somme is scored for full orchestra. It is highly sectional, and tonal or modal with little dissonance. It also contains a number of similarities to her more minimalist score for Ancre, especially in that it is replete with examples of mickey-mousing, particularly for gunfire. Rossi attempted to follow the film’s many cuts and sudden changes of scene with the music: ‘It was very challenging writing music for this film as there are some very contrasting scenes juxtaposed’, she wrote.

We see happy soldiers receiving mail, then it suddenly cuts to dead bodies in a crater. So the music was needed to link these contrasting images, help make them flow and enhance the loose structure of the film.\textsuperscript{xiii}

While Rossi created leitmotivs and repeated rhythms and figures that she used throughout the score to provide some sense of continuity, these rapid cuts sometimes result in abrupt musical shifts. Overall, the music is redolent of the English pastoral of the early twentieth century; in its use of underlying string textures with oboe and clarinet solos it seems clearly influenced by Vaughan Williams, particularly by his 1914 tone poem The Lark Ascending, inspired by Siegfried Sassoon’s poem of the same name, and his Third Symphony, the ‘Pastoral’, composed as his own response to the war and premiered in 1922.

Critic Gary Dalkin noted that Rossi’s reconstruction of ‘an appropriate early 20\textsuperscript{th} Century English concert hall idiom’ in the Somme score is a successful one, brimming with influences from Finzi, Vaughan Williams, Elgar, and Arnold Bax.\textsuperscript{xiv} Rossi’s score for Somme is also strikingly similar in many ways to the film scores of Scottish composer Patrick Doyle, in particular his music for Kenneth Branagh’s Much Ado About Nothing (1993), in that Rossi emulates Doyle in her melodies that suggest English folk song and provide a sense of nostalgia or reference to the mythologized pastoral past; in passages of counterpoint between strings and winds; in long, lyrical passages for solo violin; in her use of large intervallic leaps between notes that are embellished by closer pitches on either side of the leap; and in her writing for brass and percussion that is triumphant without being bombastic. Rossi’s musical references make it easy for even casual listeners to link the musical meanings found in both composers’ works.

\textit{Voices of Remembrance}
Rossi

Perhaps because her great-uncle’s diary entries and letters are so terse and prosaic, Rossi chose not his words—not those of any other relatively unknown soldiers—as texts for *Voices*. Instead she selected ten famous war poems, including several for which there had already been composed musical treatments.xvi Wilfred Owen’s ‘Anthem for Doomed Youth’, for example, famously opens Benjamin Britten’s 1962 *War Requiem*, and John McCrae’s ‘In Flanders Fields’ has been set numerous times for voice and varied forces. The popularity of these texts remains strong, and this, along with Rossi’s desire to ‘get closer to the thoughts and feelings of the soldiers’, made them ideal for *Voices*, which she hoped would bring new audiences and new understanding to the Great War.xvi

Rossi orders the pieces as though they describe a progression through a day, or perhaps through the war itself. The first movement, inspired by Isaac Rosenberg’s ‘Break of Day in the Trenches’, is followed by a setting of Rupert Brooke’s ‘The Soldier’; then come treatments of Julian Grenfell’s ‘Into Battle’, William Noel Hodgson’s ‘Before Action’, John William Streets’s ‘A Lark Above the Trenches’ (set, like the Brooke poem, as sung text), Wilfred Owen’s ‘Dulce et Decorum est’ and ‘Anthem for Doomed Youth’, Ewart Alan Mackintosh’s ‘In Memoriam’, John McCrae’s ‘In Flanders Fields’, and, finally, Robert Binyon’s ‘For the Fallen’ (likewise set as a sung text). In the next several paragraphs I analyze three of these movements—two of which use the chorus but give them only the syllable ‘ah’ and one in which Rossi sets the text of the inspiring poem—as representatives of Rossi’s musical autobiographies-by-proxy.

“Break of Day in the Trenches”

Pacifist Isaac Rosenberg (1890–1918) joined the war effort for the pay, which he sent home to his poor family. Despite a lack of formal schooling in his youth, his interests and talents in painting and poetry led to his attendance at the Slade Art School and Birkbeck College; he was well-read in English poetry, particularly that of Shelley, Keats, and Blake, whose influences appear in his work. Throughout his military service, from 1915 until his death in April of 1918 at Fampoux, Rosenberg wrote poems critical of the war, many of them using strikingly visual language to depict life in the trenches. Critic Paul Fussell, writing about the literature of the Great War, has declared Rosenberg’s first-person poem ‘Break of Day in the Trenches’ the ‘greatest poem of the war’. xvii

In ‘Break of Day in the Trenches’, Rosenberg speaks to Time, characterized as an ‘old druid’, who is perhaps seeking new sacrifices, and to the only living thing he sees before the soldiers are roused for the morning ‘stand to’ (preparation for an attack by the Germans), a ‘queer, sardonic rat’. This ‘droll’ rodent insouciantly traverses the battlefield to enter both English and German trenches and witness the surrounding destruction. An urban, anti-pastoral motif in the otherwise pastoral setting, the rat reminds Rosenberg that someone always benefits from violent conflict. Waiting for a potential morning attack, Rosenberg places a poppy behind his ear as he considers how the rat is less likely to die than are the men around him. He passes through amusement to rage to grief as he watches the fall of poppies, ‘whose roots are in man’s veins’, finally coming to realize that he is safe, for the moment, and that the poppy he wears is ‘just a little white with the dust’.
Rossi’s musical representation of ‘Break of Day’ is in four sections and is mostly modal, with a tonal centre of A-flat. All the movement except for the coda is in 5/4, the uneven meter exemplifying the uncertainty of whether the morning will see an early attack. Sustained, slow-moving chords in the strings, winds, and voices (using ‘ah’) throughout mostly sound various voicings of A and E while occasionally suggesting tonic, sub-dominant, and dominant chords. This open sound and lack of development, paired with oscillations of seconds and thirds, establishes a stable sonic field reminiscent of the similarly undulating orchestral texture of Vaughan Williams’s Lark. Above this field, a solo acoustic guitar is given sweeping, ascending lines: the rising sun, the burning away of morning mist, and the soldiers rising for another day. Above the static field, too, a solo viola and solo violin have shorter ascending motifs that are irregular in rhythm: the narrator’s view of the nimble rat, crossing the ‘sleeping green’ between entrenched lines. Both the guitar and violin solos become more elongated and lyrical leading into the movement’s second section at measure 36, where the violin has one last iteration and the guitar takes over a rising four-semiquavers-slurred-to-a-longer-note motif that transitions the movement into the new section.

In this second section, the pulse becomes quicker. The tempo is marked ‘accel. poco a poco’, and the section violins and piano take on oscillating crotchet and quaver patterns that contribute to the sensation of forward movement, assisted by emerging semiquaver motifs in the upper winds, suggesting the movement and readiness of the ‘strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes’ that both Rosenberg and the rat see taking their places for the dawn hour. More instruments take up increasingly active lines. By the beginning of the third section at measure 52, representing Rosenberg’s rising disgust at the ‘whims of murder’ that lead to men ‘sprawled in the bowels of the earth’, only the voices and a few instrumental lines continue the long and slowly moving chords from the opening. At measure 64, the movement enters its final section: the tempo becomes faster and the dynamics rise continually from mezzo forte to a fortissimo ending. The majority of the instruments churn out an ecstasy of oscillating notes, the poet’s experience of the ‘shrieking iron and flame/Hurled through still heavens’ that comes just before the poem’s end. This climax is followed by a coda of four measures in 6/4 beginning at measure 78, in which the extra beat of each measure perceptibly slows the tempo and stabilizes the meter as the oscillating figures begin to disappear and the texture thins. The coda serves as a musical realization of the poet’s experience of the proximity and stillness of death and of the exhilarating feeling of fleeting safety expressed in the poem’s concluding lines: ‘Poppies whose roots are in man’s veins/Drop, and are ever dropping;/ but mine in my ear is safe—/Just a little white with the dust.’

“Before Action”
William Noel Hodgson’s poem ‘Before Action’ was written while Hodgson, a lieutenant in the Ninth Battalion, Devonshire Regiment, was waiting for the Battle of the Somme to begin. The British had been scheduled to attack German entrenchments at the Somme in August of 1916, but the date was suddenly moved forward to 29 June, then postponed until 1 July. Hodgson, the Bombing Officer for the attack, had been in place for several weeks preparing for the action; his poem describes his view of the location, his fears and
Rossi’s treatment of ‘Before Action’ is composed in four sections, each with its own motif and method of signifying the passing of time and the desire of the poet for personal transformation. As with ‘Break of Day in the Trenches’, Rossi does not set the text of the poem that inspires the movement but assigns only an ‘ah’ sound to the chorus. ‘Before Action’ is essentially non-developmental; it could be described as being in ‘crescendo form’.

The first section introduces running semiquavers in the piano, guitar, second violins, and violas that outline the Aeolian mode based on A. It serves as an introduction and sets the scene for the next three stanzas. The tempo is set as ‘stately,’ at eighty crotchets per minute. Flutes and clarinets play two short semiquavers on weak beats. Over this harmonically static field Rossi assigns a narrator’s part to the trumpets, which carry a theme of two demisemiquavers rising stepwise to a third pitch that is held for almost two measures. Just as the first lines of Hodgson’s poem establish the pastoral setting of the field before the battle, the music here emphasizes and revels in its modality and pastoral nature, with the ‘glories of the day’ illuminated by the bright brass motif. At measure 19, Rossi begins a five-measure coda to the introduction that fits with Hodgson’s text in which he prays to become a soldier. The texture shifts to one less redolent of pleasure and bucolic hills; the poet wishes to become a soldier, and with that wish comes an end to ‘beauty lavishly outpoured’. While the running semiquavers continue, they move apart, spanning larger intervals. The pitch centre of A moves briefly to D, then to G. The flute and clarinet’s semiquaver pulses move to strong beats, creating momentum. The bass introduces a new motif, a syncopated semiquaver-quaver-semiquaver figure that destabilizes the sense of calm created in the previous section and which can be read as a rhythmic interpretation of the stanza’s final line, spoken by a slightly tremulous young man at the front: ‘Make me a soldier, Lord.’ The trumpet’s rising motif disappears and is replaced by a scalar figure in the flute, moving from A4 to A5 and back again in a flutter of demisemiquavers that begin on weak beats and end on strong ones without any resolution to the key centre, suggesting anticipation and fear.

At measure 25 Rossi starts a section that represents the poem’s second stanza, in which Hodgson prays that his experience and received wisdom will make him a man. This second section is marked by an increase in tempo and an increase in dynamic
intensity, with all forces beginning at *forte* and immediately starting a long crescendo. The syncopated motif from the previous section becomes the section’s primary rhythmic figure, reiterating its employment as a signifier of Hodgson’s quest to become the manly soldier idealized by wartime propaganda and social customs. Rapid accents in the bass—two semiquavers on strong beats, the second tied to a longer duration—and a steady march of accented minims in the low brass and the right hand of the piano give voice to Hodgson’s prayer: ‘Make me a man, O Lord.’ The section comes to a climax with all playing and singing fortissimo at measure 29, at which point the broken chords indicating A Aeolian return in the piano, guitar, and second violin. The fierceness of the climax fades abruptly as Rossi brings the entire ensemble down to *piano* for the start of the last section at measure 32. Rhythmic elements of the three previous parts of the movement are all present, but rather than focus on these past motifs Rossi develops a line of crotchets in the tenor voices that rises through mostly stepwise motion. This inexorable march—the ‘fresh and sanguine sacrifice’ of soldiers ‘ere the sun swings his noonday sword’—to the author’s final plea, ‘Help me to die, O Lord’, culminates in the climax of the section at measure 39. For the final eight measures, the movement revisits the earlier rhythmic motifs in the same order in which they were introduced as the volume level gradually lowers and the running semiquavers finally wind down to a stop. Over the fields, the author believes he has seen his last sunset, and he says ‘good-bye to all of this’.

“A Lark above the Trenches”

Much like ‘Break of Day in the Trenches’ and ‘Before Action’, ‘A Lark in the Trenches’ expresses a soldier’s experience with natural beauty while surrounded by ‘sanguine strife’. Written by John William Streets, ‘A Lark’ was published posthumously following Streets’s death on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. The poem describes Streets’s encounter with a lark singing over the battlefield even while ‘hurting shells’ fall around it.\textsuperscript{xx} Rachel Stevenson has written that for the soldier poets of the Great War, the lark was ‘a metaphor for war poetry itself’; along with the poppy, the lark was a signifier of ‘nature “undaunted by the desolation, heedless of human fury and stupidity”’.\textsuperscript{xxi} The freedom of the birds in the air was frequently cited by soldiers who compared it to their entrenched positions in the earth’s muck and mire, and while the soldiers poets saw the war as denaturing, many of them nonetheless continually engaged with the pastoral and used pastoral references as metaphors for (English) normalcy and peace.

Streets’s ‘A Lark’ is a sonnet with a rhyme pattern of ABBA CDCD EFFE GG. Rossi’s movement is centred around C, with an oscillating quaver pattern in the piano, guitar, and vibraphone, above which the winds and upper strings play rising figures that suggest the movement of the lark that catches the poet’s eye ‘somewhere within that bit of soft blue sky’. This introductory texture lasts for eight measures; at measure 9, Rossi thins the oscillations to just flute and first violin, and speeds them up to semiquavers. The rest of the orchestra for the most part doubles the vocal lines but occasionally adds a brief dissonance. Rossi sets the text of the poem simply, assigning the full text to one or two voices while giving the others either truncated texts to fit longer, supporting pitches or nothing at all. In the first section, the sopranos and altos sing the full text; the tenors have a slightly edited text; and the basses’ text is considerably more limited. Descending
instrumental lines represent shells coming down on the trenches and a rising line in the soprano and flute matches the lark’s ‘ecstasy’ in its flight. In the following section of text, the voices return to the ‘ah’ of the untexted movements; their lines are at first in counterpoint with the prominent melodic materials but then become static, serving as harmonic support. The poet watches, and the audience hears Rossi’s musical representation of Streets following the lark’s flight and hearing its song high above the ground.

The second section of the poem begins at measure 36. The lark’s flight and song are still represented by rising motifs in the flute and viola, and the earth below is still represented by the oscillating pattern, but here the poet turns his attention to himself, comparing his lot with that of the lark. The tenors and basses speak for the (male) poet as he ‘dream[s] of Love’ and lets the lark’s song ‘lure my soul to love till like a star it flashes into Life’. By employing traditionally masculine vocal ranges for this text, Rossi centre the music on the poet’s epiphany of finding love in the lark’s beating wings. This accomplished, the movement of the lark is transferred from the upper winds and strings to the higher voices of the chorus; the winds sustain pitches to support the underlying modality and the violins iterate each measure’s pitch area through semiquaver figures that also serve to represent the tirelessness of the lark’s ‘tireless wings’. The sopranos and altos repeat ‘tireless wings’ and transition into the third part of the sonnet at measure 60.

As in the first section, the music here is modal and pastoral, with repeated open fourths and fifths and melodic lines in parallel thirds and sixths. The sopranos and altos sing the complete text, while the lower voices, serving as support, have truncated texts that skip words so that specific words all fall together despite the lower voices’ slower-moving notes. As the section progresses, the winds and the upper strings alternate and then come together in oscillations, and the lower strings outline the suggested modal pitch centres. The final couplet of the sonnet (GG) is attached to the end of the EFFE section without pause. For these last two lines, Rossi asks the entire ensemble to crescendo to a forte that arrives on ‘strife’ on the downbeat of measure 74. The voices switch to ‘ah’ sounds for the final fifteen measures while the orchestra recalls the ‘Help me to die, O Lord’ passage of ‘Before Action’ and reiterates the closeness of death despite the beauty of the pastoral environment and the sense of amazement present in the poet’s voice as he describes the scene: ‘‘Tis strange that while you’re beating into life / Men here below are plunged in sanguine strife!’

Conclusion

Not surprisingly, given the origins of the work, Rossi’s compositional language for Voices of Remembrance is at times similar to that of her scores for the Great War documentaries. However, her interest in the writings of those who experienced the war and her use of their poems to construct her movements for the concert work enabled her to compose music that, rather than being a general background for images of the war, speaks for individual poets and their personal experiences at the front. The pastoralism of a pre-war Britain in Voices serves as the emotional backdrop on which the events of the poems are inscribed, and Rossi’s larks obviously pay homage to those of Vaughan
Williams, both of which are created out of autobiographical impulses. The difference between them is that Rossi’s understanding of the larks and poppies is one step removed: she is citing Vaughan Williams’s larks, while his inspirations were his own battlefield experiences.

The language of the war poems in *Voices* is especially visual and descriptive, and has its origins in the poets’ own observations of their unique situations in and out of the trenches, at the front and in hospital camps, living in the before and after states of the destruction of war. Several of the poets foresaw the necessary memorials that would follow the war; many of them began writing poetry only when compelled to do so by their realization of mortality, by their fears, and by their desires to explain what it was like fighting a war unlike any in recent history. Rossi’s approach makes use of this language and the poets’ autobiographical stances; instead of catering to audience expectations through familiar, formalized tropes and image-matching mickey-mousing, as her scores for the war documentaries do, in *Voices* she crafts movements that represent the soldiers’ experiences and first-person views. Although unmistakably influenced by and deliberately recalling English pastoralism of the time when the poets lived, *Voices of Remembrance* stands on its own as a complex and evocative concert work quite independent of Rossi’s cinematic music.

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1. There is some controversy in musicology about the use of the term ‘silent film’ and its lexicographical cousins. Many scholars object to the labeling of film during this period as ‘silent film’, because such film was almost never in fact silent: it was most frequently accompanied by live music, but was at times also provided with external sound via the means of phonograph recordings, unscored sound effects (blurring the supposed line between music and sound), and other sonic technologies that preceded the invention and widespread use of sound-on-film technology. In this essay, I refer to this body of film simply as ‘early film’ or ‘early cinema’.

2. Rossi’s concert works include *Under the Rainbow; Dream with the Fishes; Jailhouse Graffiti; Something Written*; *...Only Connect*; *Three Hopkins Songs; Golden Jubilee; A Poor Torn Heart; Grotta di Nettuno; The River; Midnight Mover; Tatorat; Frog; Reflections; Cat and Mouse; Peace; Let Her Sail; In Search of Love; Summer; Learning to Fly*; *Jinx; Behind closed doors; Alice in Wonderland; Salute to the Amethyst;* and others.


9. Available at http://www.laurarossi.com/

10. Saylor, 11.


12. Ibid.

Available at http://www.laurarossi.com/voices/.