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2

Allegro non troppo at a Glance

“A Film Full of Fantasia!”

“A film that will let you ... see the music and listen to drawings; in a word, a film full of *Fantasia*!”¹ Within the very first minutes of *Allegro non troppo*, when the actor Maurizio Micheli addresses the film audience as a sleazy and mellifluous host, the gamble the film is going to take is revealed straightaway. In Italian, the word *fantasia*, accented on the *i*, means “imagination,” but it also identifies a kind of musical composition for instruments only, “whose form and invention spring ‘solely from the fantasy and skill of the author who created it’.”² This double entendre is easily perceivable also by English speakers (who however prefer to accent the word on the second “a”), and it is precisely because of this that Walt Disney and Leopold Stokowski chose it to name their “concert feature,” which was destined to use animation to freely visualize images inspired by a miscellaneous selection of classical music pieces.³ In Bozzetto’s film, though, that word becomes a *triple* entendre: while in Micheli’s line it seems to mean just “imagination,” its shout-out to the Disney film works also as a metaphorical wink to the spectator. The implicit meaning is that, disregarding the pompous claims of originality and creativity of the host, the author knows exactly what he is doing: the film that has just begun is an unashamed and provocative parody of *Fantasia* itself. The joke gets reinforced by the almost literal quote of

¹“Un film dove potrete ... vedere la musica e ascoltare i disegni, in una parola un film pieno di fantasia.”

²Christopher D. S. Field, E. Eugene Helm, and William Drabkin, “Fantasia,” in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Grove Online, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040048?rsk=x541Fd> (accessed August 1, 2019), quoting in turn Luis de Milán, *El maestro* (Valencia, 1536), ed. Charles Jacobs (University Park, PA, 1971), 6.

³John Culhane, *Walt Disney’s Fantasia* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987), 18.

Disney's famous tagline for *Fantasia* ("you will be able to SEE the music and HEAR the picture"),⁴ but also by the phone call that Micheli takes right after he has dropped the name of the Disney feature. From his reactions, we get that someone from Hollywood is complaining about this blatant case of plagiarism. Micheli gets angry, hangs up the phone, and then says while looking into the camera: "They are crazy. ... They claim that this film ... had already been done, many years ago, by a certain ... Frisney, Prisney, Grisney ... An American guy, in short."⁵ Those jokes would have missed the point altogether if someone in the audience had never heard of Disney or *Fantasia*. However, those references were taken for granted, and reasonably so: Bozzetto and his collaborators experienced firsthand how deeply the Disney features had rooted into the expectations of the Italian audience and film market, to the point that any animated feature project by an Italian studio needed to choose between two mutually exclusive alternatives: do as Disney, or reject that aesthetics altogether (see the Introduction and Chapter 1). So, it was a sure bet that the jokes would have been understood by the vast majority of the audience. Moreover, in the mid-1970s *Fantasia* had finally gained its status of "cult" film, after its disappointing 1940–1 box-office performance in the United States, paired with mixed reviews; as Robin Allan wrote, "The critical reception was muddled and the public puzzled by the film."⁶ *Fantasia* earned back its \$2.28 million budget and started to make a profit only after its third reissue in 1963.⁷ The film was gradually repositioned as a "classic," a forerunner to the psychedelic vogue, which granted it a circulation in arthouses and colleges. In Italy, the film had theatrical reruns in November 1973 and November 1975;⁸ Bozzetto could thus securely assume that many cinemagoers had fresh memories of it, while also taking a chance to watch the film again himself and bear it in mind during the production of *Allegro non troppo*.

The *Allegro non troppo*–*Fantasia* Connection: A Premise

Allegro non troppo is not a copycat of *Fantasia*, though; but it could not be understood without having first watched that Disney feature. It is a film

⁴Ibid., 36.

⁵"Sono dei pazzi. ... Sostengono che questo film ... l'avrebbe già fatto, parecchi anni fa, un certo ... Frisney, Prisney, Grisney ... Un americano, insomma."

⁶Robin Allan, *Walt Disney and Europe* (London: John Libbey, 1999), 105.

⁷Amy Davis, "The Fall and Rise of *Fantasia*," in *Hollywood Spectatorship. Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: BFI, 2001), 72.

⁸Nunziante Valoroso, "Stagioni cinematografiche Walt Disney Italia 1938–2000," *Cabiria* 171 (2012): 57.

whose meaning depends completely on another film: in a word, *Allegro non troppo* is a parody. In their 1993 article on Bruno Bozzetto and parody, Raffaele De Berti and Elena Mosconi try to define parody as a binary relationship where “the parodying one exists thanks to the parodied, of which it reveals its constituting principles, its inner workings, by separating from it.”⁹ Then, they elaborate on four modes of generic transformation posited by John G. Cawelti—humorous burlesque, evocation of nostalgia, demythologization of generic myth, and affirmation of myth as myth¹⁰—holding that Bozzetto uses only the last two to “propose ... self-reflective criticism on mass culture and obtain an amusing and beneficial effect of estrangement.”¹¹ The two authors, however, do not take into account *Allegro non troppo* and just refer to Bozzetto’s first two animated feature films, which they consider more similar in tone and style (and closer in term of release date). If *Allegro non troppo* was to be compared with those modes of generic transformation, it could be argued that all the four of them are in fact exploited; the parodistic discourse changes between episodes, and delves indeed into nostalgia; as for burlesque, the whole of the live-action interstitials is a grotesque exaggeration of the introductions to each one of the animated shorts of *Fantasia*.

Bendazzi, however, differed on this point. He agreed on the fact that the first two animated features by Bozzetto are parodies: “Tradition serves as a connecting device; by using it as a support, Bozzetto can operate at ease, without narrative or explanatory constrictions. ... The choice of a tradition, one the audience is as familiar with as a physical place, allows for the exploitation of all the situations it offers.”¹² In his view, instead, *Allegro non troppo* is not a parody at all. He reasoned that “the reviewers and the audience never hesitated to consider (and praise) it as an autonomous work, with values of its own. It is rather an example of a cinematographic postmodern: a deliberate and claimed use of fragments of mass culture for

⁹“Il parodiante esiste grazie al parodiato del quale svela, distaccandosene, i principi costitutivi, i meccanismi di funzionamento.” Raffaele De Berti and Elena Mosconi, “Il mondo alla rovescia. Bruno Bozzetto e la parodia,” in *Il movimento creato. Studi e documenti di ventisei saggi sul cinema d’animazione*, ed. Giannalberto Bendazzi and Guido Michelone (Torino: Edizioni Pluriverso, 1993), 46.

¹⁰John G. Cawelti, “Chinatown and Generic Transformation in Recent American Films,” in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, and Leo Braudy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 508.

¹¹“Proponendo ... delle riflessioni autocritiche sulla cultura di massa e conducendolo ad un divertito e benefico effetto di straniamento.” De Berti and Mosconi, “Il mondo alla rovescia,” 48.

¹²“La tradizione serve da connettivo; usando di essa come di un supporto, Bozzetto è in grado di operare a suo agio, non costretto da impegni narrativi o espositivi. ... Siamo alla scelta di una tradizione, ben presente al pubblico quanto un ambiente fisico, ed allo sfruttamento di tutte le situazioni che essa offre.” Giannalberto Bendazzi, *Bruno Bozzetto: animazione primo amore* (Milano: ISCA, 1972), 22.

the sake of citation, in order to compose a new work.”¹³ The considerations by Bendazzi and De Berti-Mosconi might possibly be mutually balanced if seen through the definition of modern parody as proposed by Linda Hutcheon in 1985.¹⁴

After advancing that “there are no transhistorical definitions of parody. The vast literature on parody in different ages and places makes clear that its meaning changes.”¹⁵ Hutcheon suggests that modern art forms might specifically activate a neglected secondary meaning of the ancient Greek prefix *para*, the etymological root of the first half of the word “parody”: “*para* in Greek can also mean ‘beside’, and therefore there is a suggestion of an accord or intimacy instead of a contrast.”¹⁶ Still, “a critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work.”¹⁷ So, the modern parody can keep a close relationship with the original text while remaining substantially independent from it. In this view, the perceivable reference to a parodied text does not hinder the autonomy of the parodying work.

On top of that, what *Allegro non troppo* parodies is not the visual or narrative content of *Fantasia*, but its overall structure and audiovisual premise. More in general, it could be said that the target of the parodistic discourse in *Allegro* is the logonomic system of *Fantasia*—that is to say, the features that are pertinent to the genre or textual mode of the film. In his study on film parody, Dan Harries elaborated on the semiotic concept of logonomic system of a text after Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress;¹⁸ he held that, in a parody, the reference to a logonomic system “helps to guide the viewer by evoking particular textual norms and conventions.”¹⁹ In *Allegro*, the overall reference to the audiovisual model of *Fantasia* gives to the spectator enough ground to compare the two works, while providing the director with ample space to innovate, content wise.

At the time of Bozzetto’s film, the logonomic system of *Fantasia* was still unique: no other film had ever used it again. A compilation of animated

¹³“La critica e il pubblico non hanno mai avuto dubbi nel considerarlo (e lodarlo) come opera autonoma, dotata di valori suoi propri. Esso è piuttosto un esempio di postmoderno cinematografico: un deliberato, rivendicato uso citazionistico di frammenti di cultura diffusa, allo scopo di comporre un’opera nuova.” Giannalberto Bendazzi, “La maturità del ragazzo d’oro,” in Bruno Bozzetto. *Cinquant’anni di cartoni animati*, ed. Dino Aloï (Torino: Edizioni Il Pennino, 2005), 33–4.

¹⁴Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms* (New York: Routledge, 1985).

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress. *Social Semiotics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

¹⁹Dan Harries, *Film Parody* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 104.

pantomimes, whose rhythms were closely knitted to classical music, was an unmistakable reference to *Fantasia*, even without any shout-out to famous moments in the Disney feature. That is to say, *Allegro* does not need to use any of what Harries calls “intertextual disruption”:²⁰ an explicit sign of the referenced text, which conspicuously emerges as an extraneous item in the parodistic work. There is a shout-out in *Allegro*, though, but only to the title of *Fantasia* and to the name of Disney, during the opening monologue of Maurizio Micheli, who also informs the audience about the film structure. However, that moment seems to be there exactly because of how the *Fantasia-Allegro* parodistic connection works. As the object of parody is a large-scale formal structure, without that shout-out the spectator would not be able to clearly see the *Fantasia* reference at least until the beginning of the first animated episode. That shout-out moment is the only overt intertextual intromission in the parodistic stance of *Allegro*, but it does not contradict it, as it is functional to let the spectator see the *Fantasia* reference straightaway, while waiting for the rest of the film structure to unfold. It sets their expectations right, in a sense. After that shout-out, nothing in *Allegro* can be directly linked to a precise moment in *Fantasia*. There are a few visual allusions indeed, for example, in scene layouts; however, those feel more like homages than parodies.

The concept of homage is actually tangent to that of parody in many points. In her discussion of modern parody, Hutcheon finds that homage can be a consequence of a particular take on irony.

For Hutcheon, irony is a spontaneous consequence of the friction between the two texts involved in the modern parodistic process. While, as mentioned above, they are texts with an affinity—signified by the *para* prefix in “parody”—such affinity is (ironically?) what allows the audience to notice the differences between the old and new work. Irony is born from the rhetoric use of the gap between two texts with a strong mutual affinity. It does not necessarily mean mockery, though, as, by following Hutcheon again, “there is nothing in *parodia* that necessitates the inclusion of a concept of ridicule, as there is, for instance, in the joke or *burla* of burlesque. Parody, then, in its ironic ‘trans-contextualization’ and inversion, is repetition with difference.”²¹ *Allegro non troppo* is indeed a “repetition with difference” of Disney’s *Fantasia*, but not a plain mockery of it. Hutcheon noticed that the ironic intertextual device in modern parody does not always have a negative ethos, which is ridicule.²² There is also a kind of ironic parody of a “reverential variety ... [that] would be closer to homage than to attack.” This is where the more “intimate” meaning of *para* gets activated, as

²⁰Ibid., 113.

²¹Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 32.

²²Ibid., 56.

a signifier of closeness between texts, more than opposition. It could be argued, then, that this kind of ironic parody is pertinent to the animated episodes of *Allegro non troppo*, or the parts of the film that try to break new grounds in Italian animation while demonstrating an affectionate respect for Disney's achievement. The live-action interstitials, instead, are marked by an irony with a negative ethos, as they take their *Fantasia* counterparts and desecrate their educational intent by twisting the whole concert-hall narrative into a grotesque farce. Even with this dual ethos, the ironic stance of *Allegro non troppo* seems endowed with that "power to renew"²³ that Hutcheon attributes to modern parodies.

The presence of such complex intertextuality leads to another deduction about the film: *Allegro non troppo* does not include very young children in its ideal target audience. This is actually one of the reasons behind the troubles the film had with Italian distributors (see Chapter 3); in all, it is a film that requires the cognitive resources of at least an average teenager. Apart from that, some of its themes and imagery would not be suitable for preschool children; in fact, it includes violent visualizations of the perverse effects of consumerism and sexual innuendo, especially in the opening and closing episodes. As a matter of fact, those two episodes were completely removed from the film in occasion of the 2003 and 2005 Milan "concert" screenings with a live orchestra, which were open to a general audience; they were a case of forced targeting, which is a symptom of the persisting Italian prejudice about animation being an expressive form for children only.²⁴

Outside of Italy, the quirky nature of *Allegro non troppo* did not prevent it from having a very satisfying circulation. Among Bozzetto's features, it was the one with the best international results;²⁵ its first wide release was in the United States; the film then opened in Germany and received a full Italian distribution only on December 22, 1977 (see Chapter 3). Its pervasive use of pantomime, the fame of its model, the technical quality of the animation, and the effectiveness of the visual gags made the film universally enjoyable. However, *Allegro non troppo* remains a film that

²³Ibid., 115.

²⁴On December 20, 2003, the film was accompanied by the Orchestra Sinfonica Giuseppe Verdi di Milano, conducted by Marcello Bufalini at the Auditorium di Milano (Luigi Di Fronzo, "I cartoon di Disney e Bozzetto. Questa sì che è buona musica," *La Repubblica*, December 20, 2003, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2003/12/20/cartoon-di-disney-bozzetto-questa-si.html?ref=search> (accessed August 2, 2019); on April 16, 2005, the same orchestra, in the same place, was conducted by Ruben Jais and the show also featured two actors: Nicola Olivieri and Marco Calabrese (Luigi Di Fronzo, "Allegro non troppo. Il film di Bozzetto musicato dalla Verdi," *La Repubblica*, April 16, 2005, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2005/04/16/allegro-non-tropo-il-film-di-bozzetto.html?ref=search> (accessed August 2, 2019).

²⁵Bozzetto during a class for the History of Animation course at the Department of Cultural Heritage, University of Padova, Italy, November 25, 2014.

works only within a specific context: its reference needs to be kept in mind, in order to appreciate at best its communicative intent. The intertextuality, or the cross-dependence between a text and its sources, is a trait of all kind of narrations and it is so emphasized and celebrated in Bozzetto's film that it becomes its defining feature. As such, *Allegro non troppo* is an outstanding case of a "lazy machine," an expression that Umberto Eco used to define a narrative text in respect to what it requires to its audience: "It demands the reader to contribute a considerable amount of effort in order, so to speak, to fill in the empty spaces that have been left blank, the spaces where what has not been said and what has already been said belong."²⁶ The "empty spaces" of *Allegro non troppo* cannot be filled just by remembering *Fantasia*; as explained before, its status of a modern parody implies a great deal of autonomy and innovation. First of all, the parodied feature was not seen from a neutral point of view, but it was filtered by the sensibility of a mature director with a style and a technical approach very different from those of *Fantasia* or Disney in general. The author respected greatly the legacy he was referencing, but he wanted also to make comedy out of it: hence the dual ethos of the irony featured in the film. Then, Bozzetto's point of view was immersed in a sociocultural environment that was separated a great deal from that of the Disney artists from the 1940s: Bozzetto revisited *Fantasia* in the Italy of the second half of the 1970s. Such points are integral to the poetics of *Allegro non troppo* and constitute a necessary premise to its appreciation and analysis. The next pages will thus provide an introduction to the film, opened by an overview to its content (in general; summaries of the single episodes can be found in Part Two); its context will then be outlined, first by means of a panorama on the Italian history and popular culture in the 1970s. The discourse will then move on to a comparison between *Allegro non troppo* and *Fantasia*; the aim will be to not only explain the communicative strategy of the film but also show that the intertextual relationship between the two films is biunivocal: it is not just *Fantasia* that explains *Allegro*, but *Allegro* might also work as a commentary on *Fantasia*.

The Tales of *Allegro non troppo*

Allegro non troppo is a collection of animated episodes joined together by a live-action continuing story. The episodes are varied in style and content, while the live-action frame is homogeneous: it is photographed in an

²⁶"Il testo è una macchina pigra che esige dal lettore un fiero lavoro cooperativo per riempire spazi di non-detto o di già-detto rimasti per così dire in bianco." Umberto Eco, *Lector in fabula. La cooperazione interpretativa nei testi narrativi* (Milano: Bompiani, 1979), 24–5.

“expressionist”²⁷ black and white, intended to create a stark visual contrast with the colorful animated shorts. Sometimes, however, animated characters or effects (in color) interact with the live-action parts.

The encasing storyline is a deranged version of its equivalent in *Fantasia*: the performance of a symphonic concert program by an orchestra, explained by a commentator. Nothing of the solemn authoritativeness of the Disney film remains; the situation is surreal from the start. The host (Maurizio Micheli) reads from notes and seems to dissimulate his musical ignorance and indifference under excessive emphasis and fake enthusiasm. He talks to an empty theater (the Donizetti, in Bergamo) where a young cleaning girl (Marialuisa Giovannini) keeps doing her job, with no seeming interest in what is going on. The conductor (Nestor Garay) is a vulgar and violent Argentinian man, who kidnaps a bunch of old ladies to make them pose as his orchestra; they then sit on stage in vintage party dresses and in a seating setup nothing like that of a professional ensemble. They get often scolded and comedically brutalized during the performance. Next to the orchestra, there is a figure in charge of creating impromptu translation of the sounds into images and stories: an animator (Maurizio Nichetti) chained to his animation desk who is treated as a slave by the conductor. The host incompetently introduces each one of the pieces, with no concern about providing serious details about the music; the tales that unfold, even though replete with tongue-in-cheek humor, are however untouched by the cultural degradation of the host and conductor. They implicitly indicate the oppressed animator as the only person in possess of commendable professional skills. The animated episodes start from a mythological world, where an old satyr, obsessed by sex and the female body, courts wood nymphs in vain, until he hallucinates and sees feminine body parts everywhere (Debussy). The second episode introduces a community of people that obsessively copycat one member of them, who ultimately tries to kill everyone else by taking advantage of their compulsion to imitate his actions (Dvořák). The next story is about the birth and evolution of life on a faraway planet (but it might also be the Earth itself)²⁸ from a drop of carbonated drink inside a Coca-Cola bottle littered by astronauts, which sprouts a procession of wondrous beasts, destined to be dramatically interrupted by the sudden outbreak of human civilization (Ravel). Then comes the sad stroll of a stray cat in the ruins of the house where he used to live with his owners; the place is now empty but still full of memories that vividly come alive (Sibelius). The misadventures of an anthropomorphic bee, who gets ready to feast on

²⁷Bozzetto defined it as such, in “Ricordando *Allegro non troppo*,” a documentary in the *Allegro non troppo* DVD (Roma: Multimedia San Paolo, 2005).

²⁸Bozzetto voluntarily refrained from clarifying this point; he prefers to leave open all the possible interpretations about the pictured planet. Personal communication to the author via Skype, January 20, 2019.

a flower, come next; she risks to be squished by a couple of human lovers, who roll on the grass and almost sit on her, until she decides to use her sting (Vivaldi). The last piece is a quirky take on the biblical tale of Adam and Eve: the apple gets refused by both of them and the snake decides to eat it himself, only to be caught in a dizzying assault of commercials, power, and wealth symbols that make him regret his decision (Stravinsky). The live-action plot interwoven to those episodes focuses on the contrast between the animator and the conductor; the younger and smaller man tries to rebel to the arrogance of the bigger one, sometimes by using his drawing skills, sometimes by recurring to brute force (to no avail); finally, he turns himself and the cleaning girl into a cartoon prince and princess, free to fly away from the theater. The host and the conductor are thus left without a conclusion for their show; so, they call Franceschini, the protagonist of an extra-animated episode of *Allegro non troppo*, but one that is not set to a single piece of classical music. He is a farcical hunchback, possibly inspired by Igor (Marty Feldman) from *Young Frankenstein* (Mel Brooks, 1974; “Franceschini” might be a pun on “Frankenstein”),²⁹ and the keeper of a cellar in the theater where stock finales are kept; he needs to choose one and so reviews some of them (one more absurd than the others), but no one seems useful. Fragments from majestic conclusions of classical compositions (not from the previous animated episodes) are heard during the unlikely finales that Franceschini checks. The distraught host and conductor start to conjure up a new feature, a love story between a tall woman and seven small men. While they casually drop the title *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, a zoom-out reveals that such events are parts of the finales that Franceschini is still reviewing; he approves and closes the curtain. From the little theater he was looking at, the snake from the Stravinsky episode pops out; he bites Franceschini’s nose. The hunchback runs away until a “happy end” written in bulky letters smashes onto his head.

Notwithstanding its wildly heterogeneous selection of stories, *Allegro non troppo* has a lingering narrative continuity. All its constituents are variations on the theme of the struggle against overwhelming forces that secretly superintend to the everyday life of the characters. The satyr is subjugated by the impairments of old age and by the desire for the feminine sensuality, from which he cannot escape because the very world he lives in is the naked body of a giant woman; in the Dvořák segment, the little clever

²⁹Bozzetto agrees that this could be the case, but he does not remember if this pun was actually discussed or mentioned during the production. Bozzetto in a meeting with the author, Bergamo, July 5, 2019. Giuliana Nuvoli, instead, argued that the name could have a darker undertone, as it could be a reference to Alberto Franceschini, a member of the Red Brigades who participated in the kidnapping of the judge Mario Sossi in 1974. Giuliana Nuvoli, “Allegro oggi,” in *Allegro non troppo. Un tesoro dell’arte italiana*, ed. Chiara Cereda, Shirin Chehayed, Priscilla Mancini, and Andrija Ružić (Milano: Agema, 2016), 6.

man cannot escape from being obsessively imitated by a mindless crowd; in the *Boléro*, the long and relentless march of creatures is wiped away in a few instants by the violent outburst of a civilization that seemingly came out from nowhere; the cat of the *Valse triste* chases happy memories of his old place, but the wasted rooms of his half-collapsed house are ready to be demolished by a wrecking ball; in Vivaldi's *Concerto*, the picnic of the bee is ruined by the arrival of two humans, who are unaware of the disasters they cause to the small world of insects while carelessly indulging in amorous play; the snake of the *Firebird Suite* is buffeted by the rapturous lures of consumerism, which transform him into a caricature of a bourgeoisie man. In the live-action interstitials, the animator tries to evade from the clutches of the conductor; even the finale, which plays with the impossibility to find a proper conclusion to the film, celebrates a defeat—not of a character but of a narrative trope (the necessity of an ending). In few occasions, the struggle is actually victorious: the bee stings the male human and the animator flees with the cleaning girl into a world of fantasy. However, the latter event seems to imply that no real victory can be achieved against the forces that dominate reality: the only way out seems that of escapism into dreams and imagination.

Another continuing thread is that of a landscape affected by changes that spiral out of control. In all of the animated episodes, the characters have to deal with an environment that dangerously changes against their own will, as a consequence of the superior forces they try to fight. The satyr, the little clever man, the *Boléro* monsters, the cat, the bee, and the snake all long for the pristine form of their world, and sometimes they find it in nostalgia and contemplation: those give birth, however, only to short-lived illusions.

These unifying themes elaborate on Bozzetto's recurring pessimism on the human–environment relationship; however, there could be a link between those and the events that changed the sociohistorical circumstances of Italian citizens during the 1970s and that made the whole country feel under the control of unescapable hidden forces.

Italy in the 1970s: Liberation and Violence

Allegro non troppo, as already anticipated, came into being at the twilight of “Carosello.” A daily creative fostering of spending desires was going to be forever withdrawn from the lives of the Italian spectators. Its void was anyway going to be soon filled by the aggressive marketing strategies of the private broadcasters, which introduced commercial breaks in Italian television. Without knowing about this impending far more pervasive form of conditioning, which the scholar of publicity Gian Luigi Falabrino called “an indigestion of TV commercials, unthinkable in other European

countries,”³⁰ around 1976 several intellectuals and commentators saluted the end of “Carosello” with relief. The journalist Enzo Biagi called the program “a transmission that showed a world that does not exist, a fantasy Italian”;³¹ Pasolini, instead, labeled it “the factory of cretinism.”³² On the magazine *La civiltà cattolica* was stated that “Carosello” ignored social problems and conflicts and implicitly affirmed that the only valid values were those of consumers.³³

It is not true, however, that “Carosello” and commercials in general did not take into account the problems of their age. They surely kept an escapist and overtly optimistic stance on life, but the issues of their time and the new voice of previously silent members of society seeped into their language and representational practices. As the 1970s approached, Italy entered one of the most tumultuous periods in its recent history. The economic boom was over; in 1973–4 a new word defined the life of Italian consumers, *austerity*. Following the 1973 international oil crisis, the Italian government had to limit the energy consumption by means of restrictive norms. Social issues arose, with unprecedented vehemence: the patriarchal primacy of the average male man was starting to be questioned by young people and women. The European student agitations of 1968 reached Italy and mixed with an upraise of factory workers in demand of better employment conditions, together with a radicalization of subversive strategies from far-right and far-left organizations. The period of strikes and demonstrations of 1969 was called the “Hot Autumn”; according to the journalists Indro Montanelli and Mario Cervi, the uprising was not due to poverty (the salaries of Italian factory workers were still among the lowest in Western Europe, but the quality of life had significantly improved over time) but to an identification with the ideological turmoil of that age.³⁴ The tensions were exasperated by the ineffectiveness of the Italian government in promulgating social reforms, due to the fragility of the alliances between the parties dominated by Christian Democracy, a centrist political force that guided Italy, with few interruptions, from 1944 to 1994. Between 1968 and 1970, the cabinet in charge changed for five times; the far-left PCI (Italian Communist Party) became the second biggest political force and from 1972, when Enrico

³⁰“Un’indigestione pubblicitaria televisiva, impensabile negli altri paesi europei.” Gian Luigi Falabrino, *Storia della pubblicità in Italia dal 1945 a oggi* (Roma: Carocci, 2007), 46.

³¹“Una trasmissione che mostrava un mondo che non esiste, un italiano fantastico.” Enzo Biagi in Marcello Zane, *Scatola a sorpresa. La Gamma Film di Roberto Gavioli e la comunicazione audiovisiva in Italia da Carosello a oggi* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1998), 198.

³²“La fabbrica del cretinismo.” Pier Paolo Pasolini in Zane, *Scatola a sorpresa*, 198.

³³Enrico Baragli, “Requiem per Carosello,” *La civiltà cattolica* 3036 (December 18, 1976): 580–7.

³⁴Indro Montanelli and Mario Cervi, *L’Italia degli anni di piombo, 1965–1978* (Milano: BUR Rizzoli, 2018), 65.

Berlinguer took its leadership, it sought a “historic compromise” with Christian Democracy, in order to shift the political axis of Italy to center-left. However, the 1970s opened with a shift to the right, because of a reaction to the tumults of 1968 and a need of stability from middle-class people. A movement called Silent Majority, in Milan, gave voice to those claims. The filo-fascist MSI (Italian Social Movement) became a driving force of the new cabinets; in 1970 an ex-fascist and former member of the MSI, the prince Junio Valerio Borghese, almost perpetrated a fascist golpe intended to occupy the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Defense, the RAI, and the main offices of telecommunications, while kidnapping the president of the Republic, Giuseppe Saragat, and killing the head of police Angelo Vicari; Borghese and his political party, Fronte Nazionale, called the golpe off at the last minute for unclear reasons. Anyway, the votes of the MSI, in 1971, had a relevant weight in the election of the new president of the Republic, Giovanni Leone.

Several extraparlimentary associations, both from far-right and far-left, arose in those year and started to contrast the sociopolitical establishment with terrorist attacks. Such violent actions were not always claimed, so their purpose remained sometimes unclear: however, it was suggested³⁵ that the neofascist terrorism operated in accordance with a “Strategy of Tension”³⁶ devised in collaboration with secret services and people from the government to create chaos and render democracy ineffective, so as to undermine institutions and contrast the growth of anti-fascist movements and the leftist shift of the Italian government, which was gradually responding to the pressures from students and workers during the “Hot Autumn.” The neofascist attacks mostly consisted in random bombings of public places. The far-left terrorism, instead, was marked by the initiatives of the Brigate Rosse (Red Brigades), a subversive communist group established in 1970; they elected kidnappings and killings of institutional figures as their preferred line of action. The virulent escalation of political violence was the most outstanding and tragic characteristic of the Italian 1970s, which were later remembered by journalists and historians as the “Years of Lead.”³⁷ The massacres started in 1969: after two minor bombings at the FIAT pavilion at the Milan Fair (April 25), and on several trains (August 8–9), which resulted in a number of severely injured people but no casualties, on 12 December an explosion in the Piazza Fontana branch of the Banca Nazionale dell’Agricoltura (National Bank of Agriculture) killed seventeen and left eighty-eight injured. The next fascist terrorist attacks

³⁵Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Che cos’è questo golpe?” *Corriere della Sera*, November 14, 1974; now in Pasolini, *Scritti corsari* (Milano: Garzanti, 2008), 88.

³⁶Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d’Italia dal dopoguerra a oggi*, trans. Marcello Flores and Sandro Perini (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), 450.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 511.

and political assassinations by far-left extremists followed up at a frantic pace: among the most relevant events, on March 26, 1971, Alessandro Floris, a security guard, was killed by far-left terrorists during a robbery in Genova; on May 17, 1972, terrorists from the far-left association Lotta Continua (Continuous Struggle) killed police officer Luigi Calabresi; on May 31, 1972, neofascists killed three Carabinieri with a bomb in Peteano; on April 16, 1973, the radical left-wing group Potere Operaio (Power of the Workers) attacked the MSI militant Mario Matteo by setting fire to his house in Rome, killing his two sons; on May 17, 1973, an anarchist threw a bomb during a ceremony in honor of Calabresi at the Milan Police Command, killing four and injuring forty-five; eight were killed and 102 wounded in a new bombing that made casualties among civilians, during an anti-fascist demonstration in Piazza della Loggia, Brescia, on May 28, 1974. The first murders by the Red Brigades happened on June 17, 1974, in Padova, where two MSI members were killed; in the following years, the assassinations by the group continued, targeting policemen, judges, lawyers, and journalists.³⁸ The most historically relevant of their crimes was the abduction (March 16, 1978) and then the assassination (May 9, 1978), after a failed negotiation with the Italian government, of Aldo Moro, former prime minister and then president of Christian Democracy. The fascist bombings continued, too: on August 4, 1974, 12 died and 105 were injured on the Italicus Rome-Brennero express train, at San Benedetto Val di Sambro. The most severe terrorist attack occurred on August 2, 1980, at the railway station of Bologna: the bomb destroyed a large portion of the building, killing eighty-five and leaving more than two hundred injured. The subversive aggressions became then less frequent but continued well into the next decade.

Notwithstanding the turmoil, however, the social progress of Italy did not stop. Several laws granted more rights and freedom of expression to minorities and disadvantaged groups: apart from the improvement of the work conditions, equality between women and men started to be promoted; Italian regions were given more autonomy from the central state (1970); divorce became legal (1970) and was later confirmed as such by a popular referendum (1974); abortion also was similarly legalized (1978; referendum in 1981). In 1971, the Sentence no. 49 of the constitutional court decriminalized the promotion of contraceptive practices; in 1976, the Ministry of Health authorized the free sale of the contraceptive pill in pharmacies.³⁹ All those new norms participated in giving more agency to women in respect to life choices; even though a perfect equality with men was (and still is in 2021) far from being achieved, the voice of women,

³⁸Ibid., 517.

³⁹Bozzetto later celebrated the pill in an educational short film (*La pillola, The Pill*, 1983).

thanks to the multiplication of demonstrations and initiatives by feminist associations, became heard at a national level after 1975.⁴⁰

“Carosello” and other forms of communication indirectly acknowledged the ongoing transformations in social life. In general, the advertisements started to be more daring in content and language, especially as far as the representation of women is concerned. However, the cases of alignment with the feminist ideals were rare and not well-received: in 1966, for example, a live-action “Carosello” for the SuperShell gasoline presented two fighting armies of young and strong girls; the “good” ones, in white robes, were served by men scientists. At the time, the advertised product was mostly targeted to men, so the sales results were far from encouraging.⁴¹ The narrative on freedom and self-determination of women occasionally reappeared in advertisement about sanitary pads, shampoos, or clothes: in 1978, the clothing brand Cori promoted a woman model that was “neither witch, nor Madonna,” and as such beyond stereotypes.⁴² In most cases, though, the discourses on the sexual liberation of women became just an excuse for the insertion of higher rates of innuendo centered on the female body, and mostly directed to heterosexual males. A 1971 “Carosello” featured the blonde actress Solvi Stubing and advertised a brand of beer, with the claim “call me Peroni, I will be your beer,” “for men that are used to get the best”;⁴³ in the same years, printed advertisement for a liquor (Fior di Vite Ramazzotti) played with a double entendre related with the “blonde” color of the product, sometimes reinforced by an apparently naked girl partly hidden behind a bottle: the text exhorted the reader to have “two blondes,” “if you think you are enough of a man to have one.”⁴⁴ Naked women appeared in several advertisements for bras or jeans of 1973 and 1974;⁴⁵ a couple of outstanding cases were the printed advertisements for the jeans brand Jesus, which sought (and obtained) scandalized reactions by proposing erotic pictures (by Oliviero Toscani) of the waist or rear of a female model wearing skimpy jeans, with a quotation from the Bible (or one that sounded like that) printed over them. Notwithstanding those advertisements seemed to challenge restrictive moral codes, they actually perpetuated the patriarchal status quo, only conceding more explicit appeasements to its hidden desires and reinforcing ideas as women being commodities for “true” men. The sex-obsessed old satyr in *Allegro non troppo* seems to be an elaboration on this toxic masculinity that shows how sad and trapping the latter could become for men themselves. In the *Firebird*

⁴⁰Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra a oggi*, 495.

⁴¹Falabrino, *Storia della pubblicità in Italia dal 1945 a oggi*, 79.

⁴²“Né strega, né Madonna.”

⁴³“Chiamami Peroni, sarò la tua birra,” “per uomini abituati al meglio.”

⁴⁴“Se pensi di essere uomo abbastanza da farti una bionda.”

⁴⁵Falabrino, *Storia della pubblicità in Italia dal 1945 a oggi*, 81.

episode, moreover, there could be a direct reference to the exploitation of sexual imagery of women in ads for alcoholic beverages: some blonde and naked female figures emerge from beer cans (Figure 3). In 1977, Bozzetto referenced the commodification of the body of women also in *Strip Tease*, a short film that mixed animation with live-action footage of a showgirl; in a theater, a crowd of little men—whose design is close to the typical rendering of the “average man” by Bozzetto, like Mr. Rossi or the satyr in *Allegro*—indulges in exaggerate cartoon reaction to a striptease (a likely reference to the wolf in Tex Avery’s classic *Red Hot Riding Hood*, 1943). At the end of the dance, the naked lady brings the whole theater down; its ruins drop out as crumbles from the undone fly of the pants worn by a man, who walks away nonchalantly.

In parallel to the far-from-flattering direction Italian advertising was taking, other examples of social communication gained new ground. In 1970, Guido Mengacci (president of the TP association of advertising professionals) and Vittorio Orsini (president of OtiPi, the association of advertising agencies) were introduced by David Campbell Harris to the USA Advertising Council, an institution that made fundraising campaign to sustain the army during the Second World War and later converted itself into an organism devoted to the promotion of charity, health, and

FIGURE 3 A production cel and background from the Firebird episode of *Allegro non troppo*. Two naked blonde girls gush out from beer cans and try to seduce the discombobulated snake, lost in a nightmarish visual trip about the worst sides of consumerism. The image satirizes the sexist vocabulary and imagery that many Italian TV ads of the 1970s adopted after the “sexual revolution” of the late 1960s; the main reference here is the advertisement copy of a beer brand that played on a double entendre of the word “blonde.” This production cel was on display as part of the special exhibition on Bozzetto included in “Super,” the 15th *Mostra internazionale di illustratori contemporanei* (International Exhibition of Contemporary Illustrators; Cremona, Italy, November 30, 2019–January 26, 2020).

social assistance. Mengacci, Orsini, and Giorgio Fiaschi saw the creation of an Italian version of the Advertising Council as an occasion to reconcile journalists, sociologists, consumer organizations, and left-wing politicians with advertisements.⁴⁶ Even with this opportunist motivation, the Pubblicità Progresso (Progress Advertising) committee (later made into a foundation) introduced a new trend in Italian commercials; the resulting ads did not invite to buy goods, but to help less fortunate people, promote health care, and protect the environment. The visual and verbal language of those commercials embraced the “sensationalist” vogue of the advertising of the 1970s, but with completely different content, tone, and purpose; the language did not shy away from direct and imperative appeals to awaken the sense of responsibility of the target, as in the first campaign (1971–2), “Donate sangue” (“Donate Blood”), whose claim was: “C’è bisogno di sangue. Ora lo sai” (“There is a need for blood. Now you know it”).⁴⁷ The supporting images were often shocking, in order to solicit a strong emotional reaction in the viewer: the TV ad of “Donate Blood” opened with the staged ending of a successful heart surgery on a 8-year-old child, with no sounds but those of gas from oxygen tanks and blood drops in the intravenous feeding.

In the 1970s, commercials could still be considered Bozzetto’s area of greater expertise, as he himself acknowledged in the late 1960s, when he commented about the thematic choice of his feature *Vip, My Brother Superman* (see Chapter 1). However, Bozzetto gradually decreased his output in this field and substituted it with animated intros to TV programs, such as “Scacciapensieri” (1973) for the RTSI, or the RAI shows “Tante scuse” (1974), “Spaccaquindici” (1975), and “Portobello” (1978): this peaked in 1977, with nine different shows featuring openings by Bozzetto and his studio. The production of commercials did not completely end, though, as the studio kept producing “Carosellos” until 1976; they were mostly shot in live-action and directed by people other than Bozzetto (Emilio Uberti, Francesco Carnelutti, Franco Taviani, Maurizio Nichetti). Bozzetto and his collaborators contributed thus to the advertising trends until the late 1970s; just like in *Vip, My Brother Superman*, in the previous decade, this situation favored a cross-pollination between the commercials and the theatrical works. *Allegro non troppo* is connected with the sociopolitical climate of the Years of Lead by its recurring theme of overruling hidden menaces. In the *Firebird* sequence, the aggressions to the snake by symbols of police forces, like clubs and blue flashing lights, might be a reference to urban riots and their repression. Such theme is generally avoided by commercials; it is specific to *Allegro*. However, the film seems also to be under the influence of

⁴⁶Ibid., 59.

⁴⁷<https://www.pubblicitaprogresso.org/it/campagne/campagne/c-e-bisogno-di-sangue> (accessed August 12, 2019).

the tales about social equality, defense of the environment, and freedom of expression that audiovisual communication was spreading in Italy. A little nod to the issues of factory workers (but also a cutting remark on the vacuous ways of the people who dealt with them) appears at the very end, when Micheli and the conductor discuss about remaking *Snow White*; the host wants the film to star “seven workers, got it? Workers. We add in the social side, too.”⁴⁸ The environmental topic, as suggested before, is inherent to the use of natural or urban landscapes as “lost paradises” that fuel the desires of the characters. It is also evident in the event that gives birth to the march of uncanny creatures in the *Boléro* segment: the disrespectful littering of a Coca-Cola glass bottle impacts a deserted planet in a cataclysmic way, by bringing to it life and the destructive fury of human civilization. In commercials, the theme of landscape and pollution had already been tackled by Bozzetto and his studio in a series of mixed-technique “Carosellos” titled “Sapore di Città” (“The Taste of the City,” Guido Manuli and Maurizio Nichetti, 1972–6). In them, a live-action man is confronted with the living buildings and cars of a city, which suffocate him with smog. The use of nuanced shadows on the animated characters prefigured the visual style of the *Boléro*.

Another link between *Allegro* and the Italian audiovisual trends of the 1970s could be found in the so-called psychedelic vogue. The term “psychedelic” was invented by the English psychiatrist Humphry Fortescue Osmond in 1956;⁴⁹ it is made of two ancient Greek words that mean “mind-manifesting,” in reference to some of the effect that LSD and other substances had on perception: “enriching the mind and enlarging the vision.”⁵⁰ The youth counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s celebrated the effects of LSD in a large array of artistic products; as the scholar David S. Rubin explained, “Something about the LSD trip—marked by super-saturated colors, psychic disjunctions, and surrealist juxtapositions—influenced the entire epoch, spilling over from avant-garde culture to mainstream advertising, as psychedelia became pop cliché and common vernacular.”⁵¹ Animation was a preferred vehicle for psychedelia; its visual freedom, in comparison to the “realism” of photographic live-action, allowed to create close equivalents to the lysergic hallucinations. The foremost example of psychedelic animation was saluted in *Yellow Submarine* (George Dunning, 1968), the full-length feature based on songs by the Beatles; the press

⁴⁸“Sette lavoratori, capito? Lavoratori. Noi ci mettiamo anche il risvolto sociale.”

⁴⁹Humphry Fortescue Osmond, “A Review of the Clinical Effects of Psychotomimetic Agents,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 66, no. 3 (1957): 429.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹David S. Rubin, *Psychedelic: Optical and Visionary Art since the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 51.

called it “the ultimate trip,”⁵² and the designs by Heinz Edelmann, marked by sinuous and concentric lines, flat surfaces, radical color contrasts, and unlikely settings and characters, were “so powerful that stills from the movie today serve as iconic representations of that hippy era,”⁵³ as John Grant commented. Other films that gained (retrospective) consensus as champions of the psychedelia were the Disney ones, and especially *Alice in Wonderland* (Clyde Geronimi et al., 1951) and, as already said, *Fantasia*. *Allegro non troppo* was not explicitly intended to be a psychedelic piece; however, its use of metamorphoses, flat designs, and bright and unrealistic colors, with lack of dialogue, evidenced a connection with the trending manners of visual psychedelia. Bozzetto actually made subtle references to Edelmann’s designs for *Yellow Submarine* in the streamlined and ever-changing backgrounds of at least two animated “Carosello” series: “Los Prinziarno” (1969) and “Supermano” (1971). No reference to radical color palettes was possible, as they were in black and white, just like all the “Carosellos.” Traces of the psychedelic style can be seen also in the mixed-technique “Carosellos” for the Zucchi bed linens (Giulio Cingoli, Guido Manuli, 1971–3), which have a real girl on a black background interact with shape-shifting flat drawings, while an obsessive jingle by Franco Godi, based on whispered gibberish, creates an oneiric and vaguely disturbing atmosphere.

Allegro non troppo and *Fantasia*: A Comparison

The work that had the biggest impact on *Allegro non troppo*, and that constitutes the main source of its intertextual communication and humor, remains however *Fantasia*. If compared, the two films display a remarkable amount of deliberate similarities; but it is the departures from the model that consolidate *Allegro non troppo* as an original work, with a status of modern parody. Those differences are a consequence of how Bozzetto filtered and interpreted the Disney film according to his own directorial approach, but also of the deep distance between the two in terms of geography, historical period, culture, production method, technology, artistic skills, and budget. The cultural specificities of the Italian feature have been already addressed in the previous paragraphs; so, in order to understand how and why *Allegro non troppo* took after *Fantasia*, a comparison between the two can be made in respect to the following areas: Bozzetto’s interpretation of the Disney film; the overall structure of the feature; the musical selection; the use and presentation of music; the visual styles; and the animation techniques.

⁵²John Grant, *Masters of Animation* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 2001), 78.

⁵³Ibid.

The most direct source on Bozzetto's view of *Fantasia* is a pair of notebooks he kept in the early 1970s (the date on the first page is December 23, 1972), plus a few extra pages collected in a binder; they contain mostly one-page memorandums of stories he imagined while listening to classical music pieces. They also include a series of notes about *Fantasia*,⁵⁴ distributed over four pages. They neither confirm nor disprove the fervent admiration that Bozzetto has always expressed for the Disney film (see Chapter 1); they are just short and functional lists of keywords and brief thoughts about each episode in the film program. The episodes are in a random order; the notes were maybe not taken after a screening of the film, but on the basis of memories.

Fantasia is structured as follows: a live-action sequence, subdivided into sections intercalated to the animated shorts, shows the musicians of the Philadelphia Orchestra as backlit silhouettes, seated around the equally backlit Leopold Stokowski on his podium; the space has a two-dimensional feeling and there is no establishing shot of the whole orchestra; the spatial disposition of the instruments is sometimes hinted, but usually the camera shows only the shadows nearest to the podium, or it singles out soloists or small groups of players, without any clear description of their position in the orchestra and in respect to the audience. The music critic Deems Taylor gives short introductory speeches to each episode, standing between two harp players. There is no live-action conclusion; the film ends right after the last animated short. The first episode is the *Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV 565* by Johann Sebastian Bach (originally for organ, orchestrated by Stokowski); the *Toccata* is visualized with a montage of shots featuring the silhouettes of the musicians, embellished by colored effects; the *Fugue* introduces an animated abstract landscape populated with shapes inspired by parts of musical instruments. The next number is a selection from Pëtr Il'ič Čajkovskij's *The Nutcracker Suite Op. 71a*, arranged in a different order than the original; the animation illustrates the seasonal changes in a wood, caused by little fairies; meanwhile, mushrooms, fishes, and flowers dance. The third episode is the most famous one: *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, based on Paul Dukas's homonymous tone poem. It generated the whole *Fantasia* project; it was born as a stand-alone musical short, with a concept similar to that of the "Silly Symphonies" films: a pantomimic action synchronized to "a unique form of musical pastiche," as Russell Merritt and J. B. Kaufman said.⁵⁵ *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* differed in that it used a single musical piece and did not feature a one-shot main character: it starred Mickey Mouse with a new design by Fred Moore. When

⁵⁴Select scans from the notebooks are featured as an extra, called the "Quaderni di *Allegro*" ("*Allegro* notebooks"), in the Italian DVD edition of the film (2005); on their cover, Bozzetto wrote "Diario. *Allegro non troppo*" ("Diary. *Allegro non troppo*").

⁵⁵Russell Merritt and J. B. Kaufman, *Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies. A Companion to the Classic Cartoon Series* (Gemona: La Cineteca del Friuli, 2006), 8.

the film exceeded by three or four times the series' usual production budget, Disney and Stokowski decided to write off the expenses by creating a whole feature film around it.⁵⁶ The story tells about how Mickey loses control of the broom he brought to life with the magic hat of his master, an old and powerful sorcerer. After the short, the live-action interstitial shows a handshake between the silhouettes of Stokowski and Mickey Mouse, which "art historian Robert Hugues calls a defining moment in popular culture."⁵⁷ The fourth episode is based on excerpts from Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring* and reconstructs, with a documentary-like attitude, the birth and evolution of life on Earth up to the extinction of the dinosaurs. Then comes an intermission: the musicians indulge in a jam session on fragments from the third movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony no. 6 Op. 68 "Pastoral,"* followed by Taylor interacting with an imaginary animated visualization of the soundtrack, which translates the timbres of different instruments into vivid graphic patterns. The "*Pastoral*" ensues; its five movements, drastically shortened, are associated to characters and settings that make up an idealized and decorative version of ancient Greek mythology. The subsequent *Dance of the Hours*, from the opera *La Gioconda* by Amilcare Ponchielli, is a ridiculous ballet of quasi-anthropomorphic animals, ending in a catastrophic chase between alligators, hippopotamuses, elephants, and ostriches. The ending number is made up of two adjoined musical pieces: the tone poem *Night on Bald Mountain* by Modest Petrovič Musorgskij and Stokowski's orchestration of Franz Schubert's *Ave Maria*. The first piece shows a witches' sabbath presided by the enormous demon Chernabog; in the *Ave Maria*, chiming bells dispel the evil forces and a procession of pilgrims slowly walks through the pillar-like trees of a forest, toward the rising sun.

Bozzetto's notes start from the "*Pastoral*" *Symphony*, commented by the keywords "Country life—Classicism—Poetry—Cupids—Gods."⁵⁸ There is no mention of ancient Greece, or of the more sumptuous imagery that populates the short, like the flock of winged horses or the goddess Artemis that fires an arrow by using a moon crescent as a bow. Instead, he singled out the naked cupids—probably the weakest and kitschiest characters in the whole film, which Christopher Finch compared to *passé* ornamental tropes for restaurant murals of the 1930s⁵⁹—and the "country life," which is something that Bozzetto probably caught in the open-air setting, the rustic festival with dances and wine celebrated around a chubby and tipsy version of the god Dionysus and the little flute-playing

⁵⁶Culhane, *Walt Disney's Fantasia*, 17–18.

⁵⁷Merritt and Kaufman, *Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies*, 8.

⁵⁸"Vita campestre—Classicismo—Poesia—Amorini—Dei."

⁵⁹Christopher Finch, *L'arte di Walt Disney. Da Mickey Mouse ai Magic Kingdoms*, trans. Marta Fornasier (Milano: Rizzoli, 2001), 71.

satyrs. It seems that Bozzetto was more intrigued by the weakest figurative elements of *Fantasia*'s "Pastoral," the ones that were actually conceived for a different piece of music, the ballet *Cydalise et le chèvre-pied* (*Cydalise and the satyr*) by Gabriel Pierné, and that were only later fitted to the more solemn music by Beethoven.⁶⁰ The reason for this becomes quite clear when reading a small annotation by Bozzetto near to the title of the "Pastoral" *Symphony*: "Fauno," which means "satyr." Bozzetto was evidently thinking about his take on Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and thus delving into the *Cydalise* side of Disney's episode, more than in its dignified moments in tune with Beethoven's language, to find inspiration for the inept, displeasing, and small satyr he was to use as a protagonist. This explains why the "Pastorale" comes first in Bozzetto's notes: the satyr episode is the one that opens *Allegro*.

Similarly, "Boléro" is written in small letters near to the title of the second *Fantasia* section considered by Bozzetto, *The Rite of Spring*. The keywords are "Birth of life—Prehistoric Age—Struggle for existence—Extinction of the Dinosaurs—Earthquakes."⁶¹ The keyword "struggle for existence" is revealing about Bozzetto's knowledge of scientific literature: the expression was used by Charles Darwin to title the third chapter of *The Origin of Species*. With this, Bozzetto implicitly acknowledged the scientific value of *The Rite of Spring* (even though it was already more than thirty years old, in the 1970s); his *Boléro* would later take a more imaginative and free direction. The theme of struggle would remain, anyway, just like the extinction and the earthquakes. Such catastrophes, in *Allegro*, are however not natural phenomena but consequences of skyscrapers sprouting from the ground, to symbolize the advent of man.

Bozzetto seems to have been less intrigued by the next two episodes he listed, which have a lesser number of keywords. *The Nutcracker* is defined as "Little portraits on nature and animals. Dances—Romanticism";⁶² *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* is appreciated as the only part of *Fantasia* that features a storyline, as the keywords point out that it is a "Tale—Dream of a young person."⁶³

The *Night on Bald Mountain* is then considered separately from the *Ave Maria*. Bozzetto wrote "Faust" near the title: an *Allegro non troppo* musical project that was never developed (see Chapter 3). From this point onward, the director starts taking notes with a different strategy: he first synthesizes with an adjective the tone of the whole episode at issue and then highlights some elements that caught his attention. For the *Night on Bald Mountain*, the

⁶⁰Culhane, *Walt Disney's Fantasia*, 134.

⁶¹"Nascita della vita—Era preistorica—Lotta per l'esistenza—Estinzione dei Dinosauri—Terremoti."

⁶²"Quadretti su natura e animali. Danze—Romanticismo."

⁶³"Racconto—Sogno d'un giovane."

text is: “Dramatic. From a graveyard, souls soar to the Bald mountain that turns into a devil. The bells defeat evil. At morning everything goes back to normal.”⁶⁴ It is a minimal summary of the main events. The adjective choice (“dramatic,” for an episode replete with horrific and sometimes grotesque imagery), together with the lack of mention of the bold designs of monsters and witches, or the powerful acting of Chernabog, animated by Bill Tytla, suggest that Bozzetto was not interested in taking inspiration from the visuals, but to figure out how the Disney artists created a narrative arc over the musical structure of a composition. In fact, the preproduction diaries of *Allegro non troppo* are almost devoid of character design or directorial ideas; they are mostly made of schematic breakdowns of short storylines inspired by classical music pieces. Bozzetto thought that the most difficult challenge in approaching the *Fantasia* model was to find a story that had a satisfying dramatic pacing while following a given musical architecture. He discarded several compositions he enjoyed because the mood shifts of the music were unfit to the storyline he had in mind (see Chapter 3).⁶⁵

The *Dance of the Hours* is defined by the words: “Satirical. Mockery of classical dances. Female hippopotamus courted by an alligator.”⁶⁶ In this case, Bozzetto considered preminent the spoofing of dance routines, probably because of the relevance of satire to his own animation style. The *Toccata and Fugue* is instead just “Surrealistic—Striped dunes that chase each other.”⁶⁷ The brevity of the commentary is understandable: there is no “abstract” episode in *Allegro non troppo* and, given Bozzetto’s preoccupation for finding storylines, the director was probably not much into this purely visual segment. The “dunes” that intrigued Bozzetto, however, might have inspired some of the monsters in the *Boléro*, which have sometimes gibbous shapes that move over their back. The same “dunes” perhaps influenced also the voluptuous landscape at the end of the *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*. In another page of the notes on *Fantasia*, Bozzetto redacted a comment that said: “Tracking shot over the body of a woman (plasticine?). Toccata and Fugue.”⁶⁸ The woman-landscape of the *Prélude* is hand-drawn (and rotoscoped: see Chapter 3), though; Bozzetto would have used plasticine (claymation), instead, at the beginning of the *Firebird*.

The *Ave Maria* is then paired with the *Valse triste*. Also in this case, the interest of the director seems to have not been piqued: the essential commentary is “Religious—Procession of women in the woods.”⁶⁹ There are

⁶⁴“Drammatico. Da un cimitero le anime volano sul monte Calvo che diviene un diavolo. Le campane sconfiggono il male. Al mattino tutto torna normale.”

⁶⁵Bozzetto during a meeting with the author in Bergamo, Italy, on January 4, 2019.

⁶⁶“Satirico. Presa in giro danze classiche. Ippopotama corteggiata da alligatore.” Bozzetto uses an unexisting (and funny) female form of the noun “ippopotamo” (hippopotamus).

⁶⁷“Surreale—Dune rigate che si inseguono.”

⁶⁸“Carrellata su corpo di donna (plastilina?) Toccata e fuga.”

⁶⁹“Religioso—Processione di donne nel bosco.”

not much correspondences between the slow, steady pace of the *Ave Maria* animation and the swinging moods of Bozzetto's more vivid *Valse triste*; they are both suffused with a melancholic tinge, though. The only remaining part of *Fantasia* annotated by Bozzetto, the soundtrack performance in the intermission, was positively commented as "Several sounds interpreted by the track. Poetic presentation of a technical phenomenon."⁷⁰ The transformation of a technological item into a character apparently appeased Bozzetto's penchant for popular science, later expressed in his collaboration with Piero Angela and the TV program "Quark" (see Chapter 1). In *Allegro non troppo*, however, there is nothing that corresponds to the intermission of *Fantasia*. There is also nothing like the meeting between Mickey and Stokowski, even though some animated characters (including Mr. Rossi) interact with the live-action world. Bozzetto had in mind to make something out of that famous moment of the Disney film, anyway, as it is mentioned twice (with no commentary)⁷¹ in the *Fantasia* pages of the *Allegro* notebooks.

Bozzetto's reading of *Fantasia* was functional not only to his film project but also to his will to imprint *Allegro* with traces of the Disney feature; he extracted from the animated episodes the characteristics that served both to help him shape up his ideas and to retain some of the key feelings evoked by the 1940 film. In parallel to this, Bozzetto's analysis of *Fantasia* was a quest for cleverly paced storytelling, more than being an appreciation of bravura pieces in animation technique and unbridled imagination. In fact, this story-oriented approach governed the whole structure of *Allegro non troppo*.

The structural comparison between *Allegro* and *Fantasia* shows how the different importance that Bozzetto and the Disney studio reserved to narration impacted the final shape of their features. *Fantasia* did not envelop its animated parts within a goal-oriented plot because of its premises. First, *Fantasia* was not conceived as any feature film but as a new form of entertainment intended to enhance a concert-going experience by visualizing the "design and pictures and stories that music inspired in the minds and imaginations of a group of artists," as Deems Taylor says in his introductory speech. It foregrounded outstanding technological innovations, like a precursor of the stereophonic sound, the Fantasound. It was a landmark in the exploration of three-dimensional soundscapes for entertainment purposes. Its distinct feature was a combination between the rendering of variable aural depth and the possibility to isolate the instruments by groups, and project their sound anywhere in the space, without adhering to a realistic reconstruction of the orchestra setup, in order to achieve expressive

⁷⁰"Vari suoni interpretati dalla colonna. Present. poetica d'un fenomeno tecnico."

⁷¹"Topolino e Stokowsky" ("Mickey and Stokowsky"); "Topolino appare tra gli orchestrali e parla con Stokowsky" ("Mickey appears among the orchestra players and talks with Stokowsky").

effects in relation with film scenes; it “required the largest outlay of sound equipment that has been used commercially in the theater to date,” as its inventor William E. Garity and Watson Jones reported in 1942.⁷² Other proposed experimentations, which were never actualized, included a 3D sequence (the *Toccata and Fugue*) to be watched with cardboard Polaroid glasses and wafting flower scents through the audience during the *Nutcracker Suite*.⁷³ All those novelties were to be forwarded to the audience through the simulation of a familiar context: the “ritual” of a classical music concert.⁷⁴ The live-action segments are set in a place that, notwithstanding the creative display of lights and colors, bears the fundamental marks of a concert hall. The opening of a curtain at the beginning of the film, and to mark the fifteen-minute intermission, reinforced in the audience concert-going memories. The curtain idea was even mentioned in the marketing campaign of the film, which reinforced the concert “highbrow” aura of the picture by letting the spectators know that if they were to treat *Fantasia* like a conventional picture, and thus expecting to have time to get seated during the opening titles, they would have not enjoyed the show at best: the audience was supposed to behave just like in a concert hall.⁷⁵ As Maureen Furniss put it, “The idea was to present a film-viewing experience that would rival that of a live symphony.”⁷⁶ *Fantasia* did not thus need a strong narration to keep its different sections together: it was to be understood as a symphonic concert, a public event based on performances of orchestral musical pieces. So, there is no continuing story in the intercalated live-action parts, but just shots of the silhouettes of the musicians and of Taylor speaking.

The nonnarrative premise of *Fantasia* was also functional to what the future of the film was initially intended to be. Disney wanted “to make a new version of *Fantasia* every year. ... Its pattern is very flexible and fun to work with—not really a concert, not a vaudeville or a revue, but a grand mixture of comedy, fantasy, ballet, drama, impressionism, color, sound, and epic fury.”⁷⁷ *Fantasia* had to be “loose” from the narrative point of view from the start, as it was to be partly renovated at each new release, by keeping old favorites and mixing them with new animated shorts. This did

⁷²William E. Garity and Watson Jones, “Experiences in Road-Showing Walt Disney’s *Fantasia*,” *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* 39 (1942): 6.

⁷³Culhane, *Walt Disney’s Fantasia*, 10.

⁷⁴It also simulated the aura of authority of a classical concert: see Marco Bellano, “Painted Orchestras. Orchestration and Musical Adaptation in *Fantasia* and *Fantasia 2000*,” in *Relaciones Música e Imagen en los Medios Audiovisuales*, ed. Teresa Fraile and Eduardo Viñuela (Oviedo: Ediciones de la Universidad de Oviedo, 2015), 277–87.

⁷⁵Irene Kletschke, *Klangbilder. Walt Disneys “Fantasia” (1940)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011), 76.

⁷⁶Maureen Furniss, *Animation: The Global History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2017), 107.

⁷⁷Walt Disney in John Culhane, *Fantasia/2000: Visions of Hope* (New York: Disney Editions, 1999), 10.

not happen during Disney's lifetime, due to the financial failure of the film; the later *Fantasia/2000* (Don Hahn and others, 1999) was based on Disney's wish, but the program was completely different, except for *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*.

The final shape of *Fantasia* was that of an about 125-minute⁷⁸ "concert feature" subdivided into two parts; the interval splits it almost perfectly in half, as the "curtain" reopens at about sixty-seven minutes. The eight animated episodes are distributed into two groups of four; the second part also has the "soundtrack" *divertissement*. The running time of the animated parts (including the Mickey-Stokowski handshake and the end of the *Fugue*, where Stokowski is superimposed to the animation) is largely preponderant: about 104 minutes against 21 minutes of live-action interstitials. *Allegro non troppo* is shorter, at about eighty-five minutes. The animated episodes are just six, plus a few mixed-technique moments and Franceschini's search for a finale. There is an intermission, which was however removed in the home video version: it consists of about one minute of live-action footage that ends with an old lady who states, "I really think that part one ends here,"⁷⁹ plus the title cards that signal the end and beginning of reel one and reel two. This intermission divides *Allegro* in two almost equal halves like *Fantasia*, each one with three animated shorts. The second part features also the Franceschini sequence. The proportion between animation and live-action is however very different than that of *Fantasia*. The Disney feature was about 83 percent animation, with just a 17 percent of live-action; *Allegro* has instead about fifty-four minutes of animation (including the mixed-technique parts and the end titles) against thirty-one minutes of live-action, making the corresponding percentages about 64 percent and 36 percent. In comparison, there is much more live-action in *Allegro* than in *Fantasia*. The lower production costs of those parts might of course be accounted responsible for this choice; however, the interstitials required more screen time also because, unlikely those of *Fantasia*, they had a progressively unfolding storyline, filled with gags and incidents (see Part Two for details on the storyline). *Allegro* did not want to mimic a concert experience, nor it was due to be released again with variations in its program: so, its structure could be cohesive and oriented by a unitary narration. The animated and live-action parts are even interwoven by visual gags that make them interact with each other; for example, the Coca-Cola bottle of the *Boléro* is thrown by the conductor, who is later stung by the bee

⁷⁸This is the running time of the current home video releases. The 1940 "roadshow" version of *Fantasia* was about one minute longer, because of a series of scenes from the "*Pastorale*" featuring racially stereotyped black centaurettes. Those had been censored since the 1969 rerelease of the film. The film also circulated in shortened versions, which expunged all the interventions by Taylor.

⁷⁹"Mi sa tanto che qui finisce il primo tempo."

from Vivaldi's *Concerto*; the smoke from the conductor's cigar provides the *Valse triste* with its misty atmosphere; and so on. In addition to that, each one of the animated shorts in *Allegro* has a clear narrative backbone, while in *Fantasia* this is true for the *Sorcerer's Apprentice* alone.

If narration is the major feature that structurally distinguishes *Allegro* from *Fantasia*, in respect to the musical selection the two films are conceptually close. In fact, both of them stray from the requirements of a conventional symphonic concert. A symphonic program usually presents pieces arranged to create an emotional arc that is both well-varied and quite consistent in terms of style and involved players. *Fantasia* and *Allegro* only embrace the idea of the alternance of moods, but for the rest they take a detour from that tradition. In the symphonic concert model that consolidated throughout the twentieth century, a standard structure in the programs was required: as synthesized by William Weber, "by 1900 concert programmes had reached a form that was to be basic in many respects for the 20th century. With recitals, chamber music concerts and orchestral concerts increasingly separated, orchestras now performed shorter programmes of fewer works than before, in the most generic form, an overture, a concerto and a symphony."⁸⁰ *Fantasia* avoided altogether such conventional lineup, likely because the length and form of classical concertos and symphonies would have been ill-fitted to a feature made of short films of about ten or twenty minutes each. Classical concertos and symphonies have in fact a length of about twenty to thirty minutes; during the Romantic age, they expanded to forty minutes and more. They were made of multiple movements (the norm was three for concertos and four for symphonies) that build up a dramatic progression: two fast-paced movement encased a slower one and (in symphonies) a dance (minuet) or a rhythmically connotated scherzo. By using both a whole concerto and a symphony, *Fantasia* would have featured an almost identical dramatic structure twice. Also, giving a different and unrelated animation to each one of the ten-minute movements would not have been feasible, because of the conceptual unity of those classical compositions. There is actually a symphony in *Fantasia*, the "*Pastorale*," a famous but slightly unusual item from the late classic symphonic repertoire, in that it had five movements and a descriptive program related with impressions from country life. The animation was made to present five different episodes taking place in the same setting; however, what Stokowski recorded can hardly be called Beethoven's "*Pastorale*." It is instead a "miniature" version of it, which summarizes in about twenty-two minutes a work whose performances

⁸⁰William Weber, "Concert (ii)," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Grove Online, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-c-0000006240> (accessed August 16, 2019).

could reach thirty-nine minutes⁸¹ and beyond. Apart from this somehow “forced” presentation of a symphony, *Fantasia*’s program takes a completely different route from a standard concert program. It also does not seek any chronological or stylistic coherence. The selection encompasses pieces that are singularly renowned (and sometimes even widely popular, like the *Toccata and Fugue* or the *Ave Maria*), but that do not usually appear side to side in concert programs. The film starts from a twentieth-century arrangement of a late Baroque piece, Bach’s *Toccata and Fugue*; it serves Disney’s intention to open *Fantasia* with quasi-abstract animations, in that it provides music of “absolute” nature (“music that exists simply for its own sake,” as Taylor advances). This resonates with ideals from the late-nineteenth-century musical aesthetics: Eduard Hanslick commented, in respect to Bach, that “older music affords still more unmistakable proof that it aims at nothing beyond itself.”⁸² The selection continues with excerpts from a late Romantic ballet, the *Nutcracker*. The ensuing *Sorcerer’s Apprentice* is from the same age, but it is a tone poem: an orchestral piece with a narrative program. Then there is again a ballet, but of a completely different style: the rhythmic and harmonic asperities of *The Rite of Spring*, in 1940, sounded as brutal as they did during the May 29, 1913, premiere in Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, where a riot broke out among the audience. The decidedly less aggressive “*Pastorale*” goes then back in time, to the early nineteenth century; the *Dance of the Hours* is instead a lively ballet excerpt from an Italian opera of 1876. The final diptych joins together another late-Romantic tone poem, the *Night on Bald Mountain*, with a new arrangement of Schubert’s 1825 *Ave Maria*; notwithstanding its popular title, however, it is not a setting of the Catholic prayer with the same name, but *Ellens dritter Gesang* (*Ellen’s Third Song*), the third part of the song cycle *Liederzyklus vom Fräulein vom See*, from Walter Scott’s *The Lady of the Lake*. *Fantasia* ends thus on a quiet note. While this was functional to the evil versus good theme inherent to the animated finale, it was yet another transgression to the canonical concert model, that, by ending with the fourth movement of a symphony, it is usually wrapped up more assertively.

The music of *Allegro non troppo* is equally far from the canon of symphonic events; in this case, however, the film is not trying at all to simulate a concert hall context. While in *Fantasia* there is at least a coincidence between the authoritativeness of the featured performers and that of the recorded music, which is really played by Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, in *Allegro* there is no relation at all between the laughable “orchestra” of old

⁸¹David Daniels, *Orchestral Music: A Handbook*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 48.

⁸²Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music: A Contribution to the Revisal of Musical Aesthetics*, trans. Gustav Cohen (London: Novello, 1891), 43.

ladies and the quality performances selected by Bozzetto. In fact, differently from *Fantasia*, no music was especially recorded for *Allegro*, apart from the “light” music heard during the interstitials and the end titles, by Franco Godi. Bozzetto acquired the rights to some Deutsche Grammophon⁸³ recordings by the Berliner Philharmoniker conducted by Herbert Von Karajan (Debussy, Dvořák, Ravel, and Sibelius), the Münchener Kammerorchester conducted by Hans Stadlmair (Vivaldi), and the Rundfunk-Symphonieorchester Berlin conducted by Lorin Maazel (Stravinsky).⁸⁴ Curiously, while those are all stereo recordings,⁸⁵ the finished film used a monaural mix: another marked difference from *Fantasia*, which brings *Allegro* very well away from the Fantasound aesthetics of its precursor and even farther from a concert simulation of any kind. On top of that, while *Fantasia* relied on the suggestions of Stokowski and Taylor, *Allegro* did not have any music consultant at all; Bozzetto and his collaborators were not musicians and made their choices out of a combination of sheer intuition and a demanding trial-and-error routine (see Chapter 3). However, even with its distance from concert standards, the musical program of *Allegro non troppo* eventually turned out more plausible than the *Fantasia* one. This has to do with the duration of the selected pieces; while *Fantasia*, as it will be detailed soon, opted for reduced versions of long pieces that would have been unlikely to fit into the same concert evening, *Allegro non troppo* went for short pieces to be heard in full, except for the *Firebird*. By taking out Stravinsky’s ballet, the program would make sense at least in respect to length and dramatic alternance of moods. The six pieces, in fact, seem to be arranged in couples that contrast opposite emotional ranges: The dreamy *Faune* clashes with the ebullient *Slavonic Dance*, while the majestic *Boléro* is followed by the nostalgic spleen of the *Valse triste*. The gaiety of Vivaldi is then toned down by the gentle *Ronde des princesses* from the *Firebird*, and the *Danse infernale du roi Kastchei* gives to the film a fiery finale.

The anthology is quite consistent also from the stylistic point of view. The starting point is a tone poem by Debussy, with a sensual atmosphere—an eminent example of the so-called musical French “impressionism” of late nineteenth to early twentieth century. It is followed by a *Slavonic Dance* (a *Skočná* in C minor) from the sixteen Dvořák orchestrated, originally collected in two sets (1878 and 1886) for piano four hands. The *Boléro* is another French composition, but by Maurice Ravel; its date of composition (1928) makes it the most recent piece in the whole program. However, it

⁸³Deutsche Grammophon later collected Bozzetto’s selection in a stand-alone LP dedicated to *Allegro non troppo* (DG 2535 400).

⁸⁴After the release of *Allegro non troppo*, Bozzetto met Maazel by chance at a dinner; he recognized him because his name was written on his eyeglasses. Personal communication to the author via Skype, March 14, 2019.

⁸⁵They are featured as such in the Deutsche Grammophon *Allegro non troppo* soundtrack LP.

does not introduce any stylistic rupture as that of *The Rite of Spring* in *Fantasia*. The stylistic homogeneity of *Allegro*'s program stays strong at least up to the *Valse triste*, from the incidental music written by the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius for Arvid Järnefelt's 1903 play *Kuolema* (*Death*). All the first four pieces pertain to the transition to post-Romantic tonal languages, which reacted to the grandiloquence and wandering harmonies of late-nineteenth-century music by seeking simplicity and expressivity through refined combinations of sounds. The use of the first movement from a Vivaldi *Concerto*, though, makes a sudden move to Italian Baroque; the final number returns to the twentieth century, as it uses two parts (*Ronde des princesses* and *Danse infernale du roi Kastchei*) from the 1919 version of the ballet suite *The Firebird*, a major example of Stravinsky's rhythmic and sumptuous style of his "Russian" period (but nowhere as aggressive and dissonant as *The Rite of Spring*).⁸⁶ Bozzetto initially considered some pieces that would have brought some transgressive "modernism" to the selection, but he ultimately was not able to pursue that choice (see Chapter 3).

From the comparison of the musical programs, *Fantasia* appears more varied and daring than *Allegro*. In terms of adherence to the shared motto "see the music and hear the picture," however, the use and presentation of music in *Allegro* actually came closer to the ideal of "visual music" than *Fantasia* did. While *Allegro* considered the musical performance an almost unmodifiable guide to the animation (hence Bozzetto's preproduction tribulations in finding stories that could perfectly fit the structure of the musical pieces), *Fantasia* allowed for major alterations of the scores in order to meet the necessities of animation. That was something that was customary in the other theatrical productions by Disney, where music responded to animation, and not vice versa; this often gave way to the so-called mickey-mousing, a pattern of close synchronization that Michel Chion defined as "following the visual action in synchrony with musical trajectories."⁸⁷

Fantasia does not feature any piece of music in its original version, as immediately noticed by the music critics who almost unanimously condemned the film at the time of its first release.⁸⁸ Each composition was rearranged and reshaped with two concurrent goals: to follow more closely

⁸⁶*Fantasia 2000*, the 1999 *Fantasia* sequel/remake, was concluded by an episode on a selection from the 1919 *Firebird Suite* as well: it used the two parts featured in *Allegro non troppo*, plus the *Berceuse* and the *Finale*. It might be a coincidence, as John Culhane reports that "it was one of the first selections that Walt Disney and his associates considered in 1938" (*Fantasia/2000: Visions of Hope* (New York: Disney Editions, 1999), 151–2). However, given Bozzetto's reputation among the Disney artists, the possibility of an unacknowledged homage to *Allegro non troppo* is not to be entirely discarded.

⁸⁷Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 54.

⁸⁸Moya Luckett, "Fantasia: Cultural Constructions of Disney's 'Masterpiece'," in *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom*, ed. Eric Smoodin (London: Routledge, 1994), 224.

the entertainment needs of the animation, while keeping the impression of a legitimate artistic authoritativeness, reinforced by the presence of Stokowski himself and certified by Taylor, who introduced each number without mentioning any shortening or manipulation. The changes appear to be concerned with keeping a feeling of integrity to the music, anyway. Stokowski is credited with all the interventions on the music, and it is certainly because of his competence as an orchestrator that in most of the film episodes the compositions manage to retain a clear trace of their original form. There seems to be three main strategies of intervention on the music in *Fantasia*. One is the alteration of the *pacing* of the music; then it's possible to talk of modifications in the *form* of the composition; finally, there are changes in the *orchestral palette*. The category of the pacing alterations includes all the cuts or iterations that transform the length and phrasing of the original music but do not modify its structure. On the contrary, the interventions on form reshape the inner architecture of the music. The use of a new orchestral palette modifies instead the timbre of the sound and is generally aimed to provide a piece with a more grandiose impact on the audience: it always works in the sense of an expansion of the orchestra.

The *Toccata and Fugue* is presented in Stokowski's orchestral version, which however was not realized specifically for *Fantasia*, but dates back to 1926. The orchestration does not alter the structure of the composition, which is actually the same of Bach's original for organ. It surely alters its sound palette, though, offering to the ear of the spectator an interpretation of Bach's music where each episode has its own acoustic "color." Moreover, the *Fugue* features a little cut of four bars, so a pacing alteration that slightly condensates the discourse occurs. Compared with the far vaster cuts and rearrangements in the other episodes, it is a quite minor modification, but it is still there, as to remember, implicitly, that what we are hearing is no more Bach, nor Stokowski, but an "authoritative" playground for the creativity of Disney's artists.⁸⁹

The *Nutcracker Suite* is more explicit in distancing itself from Čajkovskij, as it is evident how two movements are missing, and the others are played in a wrong order. However, the individual compositions actually maintain their basic integrity: the *Dance of the Plum Fairy* and the *Chinese Dance* are presented in full, and the remaining dances are deprived only of repeated phrases or reprises of episodes. Actually, in some moments is even possible to listen to something that was not part of the original *Suite*. Stokowski added

⁸⁹On a side note, it is interesting how this "simulated" authorship probably contains yet another problem about authorship itself. In fact, Stokowski rewrote the *Toccata and Fugue* just by writing down notes on the margins of a copy of the organ score: the actual orchestration was probably done by one of his collaborators, Lucien Cailliet. See Marjorie Hassen, ed., *Bach-Stokowski Toccata and Fugue for Organ, d Minor*, <http://www.library.upenn.edu/exhibits/rbm/stokowski/bach.html> (accessed August 17, 2019).

a few touches to the orchestration, for example, making the harp reinforce the sforzatos in the *Dance of the Plum Fairy* and requesting glissandos of the trombones in the *Russian Dance*.

The Sorcerer's Apprentice simulates the integrity of Paul Dukas's tone poem in the same way that was exploited in the *Nutcracker*: the key is, again, the systematic suppression of binary repetitions. So, the form remains virtually intact, while the summarization of the phrasing is actually strong, and it gives to the score a completely different dynamism. The animation is also aided by the onomatopoeic (mickey-mousing) addition of cymbal crashes in moments like the off-screen "killing" of the first broom.

The approach to *The Rite of Spring* is instead sensibly different: this is the first case, in *Fantasia's* program, of an evident alteration on the form of the composition. Notwithstanding contradictory accounts about Stravinsky's opinion on this segment of *Fantasia*,⁹⁰ it is easy to understand how an author would be troubled in witnessing such a radical rearrangement of his creation. The opening high-pitched bassoon solo is repeated at the end of the sequence (with omissions in the orchestration of the accompaniment), transforming the *Rite* in a sort of cyclic composition while offering an interesting subtext to the images of the extinction of the dinosaurs, hinting to the rebirth of life after the catastrophe. But more importantly, the First Part of the composition is truncated right before the section named *Spring Grounds*, jumping directly to the Second Part. And then, to provide an appropriated musical lead to the conclusive visions of earthquakes and erupting volcanoes, the music returns to the episode *The Kiss of the Earth (The Oldest and Wisest One)*, from the First Part. Behind such a drastic manipulation of the original source lies maybe an unspoken assumption by Disney and Stokowski about their supposed audience: their ideal spectator was someone who was not familiar with Stravinsky's *Rite*, and who would be positively surprised in discovering its harsh dissonances joined with powerful images of primitive life. More than on preserving the authorship of the form, *Fantasia's Rite* seems concerned about keeping a sensation of authorship in the language: that is to say, exhibiting the disruptive expressive force of the music while controlling and somehow justifying it with the animated reconstruction of a wild and lost world. Following Nicholas Cook, who noticed how in this episode of the film "explosions appear to take place in strict synchronization with the strings' sixteenth notes (though the effect of rhythmic precision disappears if you look at the film without the music)" and "the pizzicati in the lower strings bring out the balletic quality of the jogging dinosaurs,"⁹¹ it is possible to argue how dissonances are here managed by an underlying mickey-mousing approach that, thanks

⁹⁰Allan, *Walt Disney and Europe*, 128.

⁹¹Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 179–82.

to the creation of fictitious cause–effect relationships, transforms them in accompaniments and onomatopoeias.

Stokowski's presentation of Beethoven's "*Pastoral*" managed to bring to *Fantasia* the *Symphony*'s structure in five movements. Notwithstanding the preservation of the fundamental outline of Beethoven's work, the musical editing actually affected its form in a crucial way. Apart from the customary suppression of many binary phrases, Stokowski systematically expunged from the movements all the development sections. So, Beethoven loses the dramatic drive of his dialectic style, and only the pretexts to his musical thinking, the themes, are heard. Without development, they remain as objects of a rather hedonistic listening: they sound as melodies for the sake of melodies and nothing more. This is the place of the least successful simulation of authorship in *Fantasia*.

On the contrary, Amilcare Ponchielli's *Dance of the Hours* is performed in a more than complete way: the *Dance of the Hours of the Day* is in fact played twice, and the second time it features original variations conceived by Stokowski. The new orchestration is here not just trying to make the score more original or spectacular, but it is actually providing comical support to the animation. In fact, the repeat of the first dance marks the ironic debut on screen of the hippo Hyacinth and her fellow ballerinas: her rather serious attempts at being graceful are here not a consequence but the cause of Stokowski's variation, which transformed the airy motive played originally by the woodwinds in a heavy and mockingly staid statement from the bass clarinet and the double basses.

Night on Bald Mountain and the *Ave Maria* are a large celebration of the third kind of approach to musical adaptation in *Fantasia*, namely the change of the orchestral palette in order to achieve better emphasis. The connection between the two pieces is actually the less daring invention by Stokowski, as it was sufficient to omit the last ten measures from Musorgskij's piece, which ends in D major, and to start right away with a G major transposition of the *Ave Maria* (which was originally in B flat major): the transition sounds like a perfect cadence from a dominant to its tonic. But, besides this, both the compositions are largely reworked: in the case of the *Ave Maria*, the orchestration is completely new and features also a humming choir, before the entry of the soloist singing Rachel Field's English version of the song. *Night on Bald Mountain* is instead based on Nikolaj Rimsky-Korsakov's revision of the tone poem, with a series of novelties mainly consisting in a different management of brass instruments and percussions, and the addition of the xylophone, a traditional evoker of the macabre since Camille Saint-Saëns's *Danse Macabre*, but well known with this role also in popular culture: Walt Disney's first Silly Symphony, *The Skeleton Dance* (1929), can serve as an example. However, apart from a few cuts of repeated periods in Musorgskij's composition, both *Night on Bald Mountain* and the *Ave Maria* are not altered in their formal structure.

Allegro non troppo does not need to simulate musical authorship, because its images do not try to convey any in the first place. In the animated episodes, though, Bozzetto took literally Disney's claim about the music-image relationship in *Fantasia* and adhered to it as strictly as he could. He has never been aware of the cuts and manipulations in the Disney feature: he has always believed that the film was based on unadulterated performances of original scores.⁹² Anyway, *Allegro* took a few musical licenses, too, the only ones that the use of preexisting recordings allowed: they mostly consisted in selection of single movements from larger works or in the expunction of bars at the beginning or ending of a piece. Debussy's *Prélude* is left untouched; the *Slavonic Dance* is used in full, too, but it is just one out of sixteen. The *Boléro*, instead, does not start from the beginning: the music fades in four bars before rehearsal number four, when the soloist is the E flat clarinet. This episode, however, features also the only case of sound quality manipulation in *Allegro non troppo*: when the marching creatures fall into a ravine, the recording of the *Boléro* performance gets muffled, as if heard through an obstacle of some sort, until the animals resurface. It was probably intended to create a diegetic effect, as if the music went "underground" with the characters. The *Valse triste* does not have cuts, but the music starts on a sound bridge with the live-action interstitials: the coughs of the animator are heard for a few seconds after the episode has begun. In Vivaldi, only one movement out of three is used (but with no alterations); in Stravinsky, the selected movements are two (out of six); the *Ronde des princesses* is however cut at the beginning, as it starts from the bar before the rehearsal number 5. Bozzetto made himself respect the concept of basing animation on classical music much more than Disney and his artists. Paradoxically, it could be said that *Fantasia* only simulated the transposition of a true concert-listening experience into animation; this ideal became real only with a film that (respectfully) spoofed that model, *Allegro non troppo*.

Visual styles and animation techniques are the areas where *Fantasia* and *Allegro non troppo* depart the most from each other. As he did in his whole career, Bozzetto never tried to imitate the Disney aesthetics, partly because of his own integrity as an author, partly as a consequence of the budgetary, technical, and artistic limitations. For the animation of *Allegro*, Bozzetto pursued the approach he consistently adopted since the beginning of his career: making the most of the available resources by using simplification and stylistic variety in accordance with strong story ideas. In respect to this, the story-oriented structure of *Allegro* might even be read as a way to even out the otherwise unfair comparison with *Fantasia*, which had masterful animation but was lacking in narrative prowess. Bozzetto explicitly stated that the creation of a good story is the ground where he believes to be on par

⁹²So he said in a conversation with the author in Bergamo, on October 16, 2017.

with the greatest animation studios in the world, like Disney or Pixar: the only needed equipment for that is a pencil, a sheet of paper to write on, and ideas.⁹³ For the *Allegro* stories, Bozzetto sought many different animation styles; each one depended on a different animation director (see Chapter 3) and had to mirror the mood of the plot as much as possible. The visuals of the film might as well be considered variations on a unitary storytelling style (all the episodes have similar themes and they are kindred in their writing and humor), in accordance with Bozzetto's recurring use of a theme-and-variation structure as a scaffolding to hold together his films (see Chapter 1). The *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* uses suffused and unrealistic colors, soft designs, slow movements, and rotoscoped characters; the *Slavonic Dance* was animated by Bozzetto alone, so it is rough and sketchy in all its aspects, to reinforce the pungent satire on populist power and conformism; on the contrary, the *Boléro* is lush, detailed, and technically elaborated. It is the *Allegro* segment that sets up the most a three-dimensional space: the illusion is achieved by the use of chiaroscuro on the solid-drawn bodies of the characters and dramatic camera movements that require multiplane parallaxes effects. The animation is also fluid and the movements are organic and believable; it is maybe the closest Bozzetto ever got to the Disney standard of the so-called "illusion of life," as the animators Thomas and Johnston called it in a seminal monography.⁹⁴ The character designs by Giorgio Valentini are however far from the typical Disney standards, as they are neither somber and grave like the dinosaurs of the *Rite of Spring* nor "appealing" as most of the animals that appear in Disney features; the only Disney characters they resemble (probably by coincidence) are Maleficent's Goons in *Sleeping Beauty* (Clyde Geronimi and others, 1959). A convergence with *Fantasia* however emerges in the camerawork: the whole episode is built around an unceasing panoramic shot from left to right,⁹⁵ to convey the idea of the unstoppable march of evolution. The *Ave Maria* from *Fantasia* used a prolonged panoramic shot from left to right too, even if it was decidedly slower and with a different expressive goal (giving a sense of direction and pace to the religious walk of the pilgrims toward the rising sun). A shot from the *Boléro* seems actually to quote the *Ave Maria*: the creatures, seen from the side, walk behind a curtain of trees while

⁹³Bozzetto during a class for the History of Animation course at the Department of Cultural Heritage, University of Padova, Italy, November 25, 2014.

⁹⁴Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation* (New York: Disney Editions, 1981).

⁹⁵This kind of panoramic shot is also largely featured in the segment about the evolution of life of the animated documentary *Of Stars and Men* (1964), by John and Faith Hubley. That segment might have influenced the Italian director: the topic of evolution is close to that of the *Boléro*, the animation in the documentary is choreographed to classical music, and Bozzetto knew and admired the films by the Hubleys.

the camera follows them, just like the candle-bearing pilgrims in the Disney film. In fact, the *Boléro* contains other likely visual reference to *Fantasia*: a shot of the creatures heading toward a desert is staged just like an equivalent moment in the *Rite of Spring*, and the towering statue that appears at the end, because of its pose, size, lighting, and shooting angle, is remindful of Chernabog from *Night on Bald Mountain*.⁹⁶ The cat of the *Valse triste* is instead akin to the skinny felines (like Sergeant Tibbs from *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*, Wolfgang Reitherman and others, 1961) featured in some of the Disney films of the Xerox years, when a “pencil” feeling appeared in the contour lines due to the time- and cost-saving use of xerography to print the drawings of the animators directly on transparent cels. However, the *Valse triste* aesthetics is more three-dimensional than the average Xerox film by Disney, thanks—again—to a volumetric use of colors on the character, paired with daring animations of the whole background in dream sequences, where the wrecked house literally “sprouts” its former rooms back in place, popping them up toward the viewing point. The sequence also mixes in some live-action footage. The style changes yet again in the Vivaldi episode; the watercolor backgrounds become vivid and flat, and the character design cartoony; the rotoscoping of the human couple adds in a contrasting three-dimensional flavor to the rest of the setting. The final piece, the *Firebird*, has a claymation introduction, with ever-changing monochromatic hues; this latter trait, in particular, might have been inspired by the *Toccata* from *Fantasia* and its changes in the backlighting color. In fact, as stated before, in his notes on *Fantasia* Bozzetto mentioned “plasticine” while referring to the *Toccata and Fugue*; the color changes in the plasticine sequence of the *Firebird* might thus have been borrowed from there. The rest of the episode turns back to flat surfaces and stylized designs that however border with the comedic grotesque (especially the giant devils) and interact with live-action elements. A strong vein of grotesque also returns in the Franceschini conclusion; but such film episode also restores a volumetric feel, thanks to shadows drawn on the characters and full animations of objects moving in a three-dimensional space. Each one of the “finales” that Franceschini evaluates actually introduces a slight stylistic variation: the most daring one features a kiss between Humphrey Bogart and Audrey Hepburn. The heads of the two actors are portrayed in a realistic chiaroscuro pencilwork by Mirna Masina; the animation is limited (it feels like a sequence of stills more than a fluid movement). After the kiss, their mouths keep stuck together; as the two faces move away from each other, the drawings become caricatural and exaggerated. The eyes pop out and the skin stretches until it rips off,

⁹⁶The similarity between the evil statue in Bozzetto’s film and Chernabog was mentioned before by Massimo Maisetti in “Il cinema d’animazione a Milano,” *Cinema* no. 98 (Oct.–Dec. 1991): 25–6.

revealing bare teeth. This idea might have influenced later similar renditions of absurdist kisses by the US animator Bill Plympton (*How to Kiss*, 1988, and *H Is for Head Game*, 2014), as Bozzetto himself conceded;⁹⁷ the strong resemblance in expression and animation with the grotesque masks on tortoises that move close together in Walt Disney and Salvador Dalí's short *Destino* (1946, unfinished; later completed in 2003 by Dominique Monfery) is instead entirely coincidental.

Fantasia is much more homogeneous in its approach to design and animation. It is true that it has moments when the character designs stray away from the round, appealing shapes of the Disney norm, like in the almost abstract *Toccata and Fugue*,⁹⁸ in the blocky and quasi-expressionist prehistoric animals of the *Rite of Spring*, and the horrid legion of demons from the *Night on Bald Mountain*. In general, however, the animation style is a consistent testament to what Chris Pallant called Disney-Formalism, an artistic paradigm that Disney artists fully embraced after *Snow White* and that was dominated by hyperrealism: "The most significant element of Disney-Formalist hyperrealism is the lifelike movement—or motor function—of the animation, which reflects both the actual movements of live-action models and the skill of the animator."⁹⁹ *Fantasia* exhibits a great deal of powerful animated acting and three-dimensional use of the scenic space to convey a sense of solid presence; it is however much more "formalist" than *Allegro* in respect to stylistic variation. Even in the use of colors, *Fantasia* is more moderate than the Italian film in straying too much from believability. It is clear that the palette is scripted so to accentuate the emotional content of the scenes; for example, in the *Rite of Spring*, "red is used to underline brute force. ... Brown is the palette of the earth, of bodies and of mud, black that of space, the depths of the sea. Yellow is harsh, a burning sun, desert, sand, bones. Greens and blues are dark, misty, rain swept ... The colors echo the raw quality of the film, its geographical location in America's West."¹⁰⁰ However, the colors dare to completely detach from reality and pursue pure emotional values only in a few moments: in the interstitials planned by the color stylist Lee Blair, when the lights behind the orchestra mutate according to the musical moods (in a further likely connection with the legacy of Fischinger and other specialist of visual music), and in the aftermath of Mickey's "killing" of the first broom in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, as the palette gets radically desaturated to convey feelings of failure and emotional

⁹⁷Bozzetto in a meeting with the author, Bergamo, July 5, 2019.

⁹⁸The *Toccata and Fugue* retained something of the visual patterns typical of a European master of abstract animation that Disney hired, only to see him later leave the *Fantasia* production out of creative divergences: Oskar Fischinger.

⁹⁹Chris Pallant, *Demystifying Disney: A History of Disney Feature Animation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 41.

¹⁰⁰Allan, *Walt Disney and Europe*, 131.

low after a moment of panic. By contrast, the colors of *Allegro* have almost always no verisimilitude; “psychedelia” is the word that comes to mind in respect to them, especially when thinking about the sociocultural context of the film discussed above.

Other than being a consequence of the consolidation of the Disney style at the beginning of the 1940s, the “formalism” of *Fantasia* is also to be seen in light of Disney’s preoccupation in dealing with high culture. To justify the use of classical music with animation Bozzetto could safely rely on the knowledge his audience had of the *Fantasia* model; it had already been done before, and that was the whole point of *Allegro non troppo*. Disney, instead, was breaking new ground: he did not just want to make comedy out of classical music but also wanted to create a new form of entertainment, bringing animation to the same level of highbrow art. He needed to give to his film an authoritative and dignified feeling, to play it “safe” but also to come to terms with his own discomfort with the classical repertoire, which he did not fully understand; the director and animator Wilfred Jackson once said that “Walt was a person with no musical background at all.”¹⁰¹ By means of the union between classical music and film graphics, Disney wanted to carry “the animated film beyond its roots in comic strips and slapstick film shorts,”¹⁰² as Culhane noticed. Bozzetto, who also had no musical training, had no such intention; on the contrary, he reveled in slapstick and cartoon antics, to the point that some of the gags of *Allegro non troppo* are direct quotations of slapstick classics: the fights between Nichetti and Garay are modeled after those of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy.¹⁰³ Also the gag with the pencil sharpener falling down the tilted table, with Nichetti repeatedly catching it on the fly, comes from a film of the famous comedy duo: *The Music Box* (James Parrott, 1932).

In conclusion, *Allegro non troppo* is an Italian film with an international vocation. Constructed as a modern parody (in Hutcheon’s sense, as discussed before), the film straightforwardly foregrounds its ties with *Fantasia*, but at the same time it uses them as a springboard to innovate. The reference to the Disney feature sets up the expectations of the audience about the structure and audiovisual strategy of the film. At the same time, the ironic distancing and the stylistic differences make it detour from *Fantasia* and reveal a remarkable degree of artistic autonomy. The visual and narrative content is very distant from that of the 1940 film, also because of the different place and time of its production. *Allegro* is influenced by some of the crucial sociocultural issues that shook Italy during 1970s, from terrorism

¹⁰¹Michael Barrier, *Vita di Walt Disney. Uomo, sognatore, genio*, trans. Marco Pellitteri (Latina: Tunué, 2009), 115.

¹⁰²Culhane, *Walt Disney’s Fantasia*, 10.

¹⁰³Nichetti in the documentary “Ricordando *Allegro non troppo*.”

to feminism, to the right of workers to the ethics of advertising; it is by no means a film essay on those topics, though, and it is not intended to talk to a strictly Italian audience. Its pantomimic approach to film animation speaks a universal language, which however also departs from *Fantasia*, as it favors a story-driven structure and a wide stylistic variety, whereas the model was more focused on imposing visual virtuosity and relative aesthetic homogeneity. There is then a strong difference in tone: while *Allegro* is satiric, caricatural, and sometimes aggressive, *Fantasia* is mostly solemn and seeking a grandiose kind of appeal. The comparison with *Fantasia* reveals however that the use of classical music in *Allegro* was more respectful of the integrity of the original repertoire. It would be unfair to say that *Allegro* perfected the *Fantasia* model, though, as Bozzetto's feature was nowhere as ambitious and technically advanced as the Disney one. Instead, the essence of *Allegro*'s relationship with *Fantasia* might be summed up as a rendition of Bozzetto's own ideas on the Disney film. The late-1960s theatrical revival of *Fantasia* favored its slow transition from a bizarre commercial failure to a mythical achievement in animated features; Bozzetto was under this impression, when he worked on *Allegro non troppo*. The idealization of the model, paired with a humble attitude with no wish of emulation and a strong creative desire, brought to *Allegro non troppo* some of the best traits of *Fantasia* (or those that Bozzetto figured in his mind as such, like the use of untouched classical music) while letting the director's authorial voice come through, as the artists he coordinated were free to pursue their own styles, devising original storytelling and visual solutions to make up for the lack of budget and resources.