



## Text, Music, and Meaning in the Third Movement of Luciano Berio's Sinfonia

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**TEXT, MUSIC, AND MEANING IN  
THE THIRD MOVEMENT OF LUCIANO BERIO'S SINFONIA**

**MICHAEL HICKS**



Figure 2. Berio, Sinfonia: mvt. 3, mm. 59-69

Mahler:  
Second  
Symphony,  
mvt. 3

Berg: Violin  
Concerto, mvt. 2  
m.6; mvt. 1  
mm. 169-170

Brahms:  
Violin  
Concerto,  
mvt. 2  
mm. 48-49

(Mahler's  
Second)



Strauss:  
Der Rosenkavalier

Ravel: La Valse

etc.

Poco Tratt.

Fl. 1  
Fl. 2  
Cl. 1  
Cl. 2  
Ob.  
C. Ang.  
Bas. 1  
Bas. 2  
Tr. 1  
Tr. 2  
Tbn. 1  
Tbn. 2  
Tuba  
Arpa  
I Timp.  
II Timp.  
III Sn. Drum  
A  
T  
B  
A  
Viol. I  
Viol. II  
C  
Vla.  
Vcllo  
Cb.  
gliss.  
Poco Tratt.

before the curtain rises  
 (More and more frenzied)  
 (S) that's the show waiting for the show, is the sound of a woman, you try and be reasonable, perhaps it is not a value at all, perhaps it's the dir. ascending, ascending.  
 (and...)

gliss.  
 (very frenzied)  
 gliss.  
 gliss.

Poco Tratt.

Figure 4. Berio, Sinfonia; mvt. 3, mm: 441-450

Beethoven: Sixth Symphony,  
mvt. 2

Cl. 1

Fl. 1

Cl. picc.

Ob. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn.

Tr. 1

Tr. 2

Tr. 3

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Tbn. 3

Tuba

Oboe

I Timpani

II Timpani

T

Viol. A

Viol. B

Viol. C

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabasso

Y (♩ = 104)

Y (♩ = 104)

Y (♩ = 104)

(hard sticks)

I T. 1.

II T. 1.

T. 1.

the lastest settles the end of the stream. In a chamber, flammuous volcano. I do not care and never shall again so long used or short.

The fact is I trouble no one, but I did. And after each group disintegration, the name of Maglovsky hangs in the clean air.

(Mahler's Second)





Stockhausen:  
Gruppen für  
drei Orchester

(Mahler's  
 Second)

ff

II Clarinet

III T. - I

P1

P2

T1

B1

Viol. A

Viol. B

Viola

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabasso

ff

II Clarinet

III T. - I

I Trombone

II Trombone

I Trumpet

II Trumpet

III Trumpet

Saxo

Alto

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabasso

Bei mir it's done, it's over, we've had our chance. There was once, for a second, hope of restoration, or almost.

UE 13783 M1

Some theorists have scrutinized the third movement of Luciano Berio's celebrated *Sinfonia* after the manner of so many twelve-tone analyses: label the notes and their sources.<sup>1</sup> These descriptions—they are strictly less than analysis—have value as far as they go, but they typically fail to penetrate the composer's aesthetic consciousness and interpret the large musical gestures according to the context in which the work was penned by the composer. Certainly in Berio's case such note-counting—or quote-counting—is a mistake. Few composers, few at least of Berio's competence, so consistently charge their work with cultural associations, conceive their music as not only communion but commentary. And the commentary in the movement in question we can properly view only in its relation to its preeminent text, Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*. So doing, we will see that the movement is best viewed as a setting and interpretation of that text: it is a book turned into music. Further, it is an explicit assertion of Berio's artistic values, biases, and concerns at the end of the nineteen-sixties.

Berio's models. As often as not, Berio displays his affinity for romanticism in taking literary figures as his artistic heroes. In this movement, specifically, he joins the work of Mahler—a champion of text-into-symphony—and of Beckett to the aesthetic notions of Joyce, to whom Berio has consistently looked for models.<sup>2</sup> It is well to examine these figures in turn: Mahler, Joyce, and Beckett.

Berio's selection of the Mahler Second Symphony scherzo as the immense cantus firmus of this movement transcends mere homage: Mahler has been scorned and celebrated for his eclecticism, his rejection of "stylistic purity," and his musical quotation. His scherzo is, in fact, a prime example of the latter, being an adaptation of his own *Wunderhorn* song, "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt."<sup>3</sup> An understanding of this song uncovers yet a deeper layer in Berio's movement. The text describes the sermon of St. Anthony,

who after visiting the churches and finding them empty, takes his message to the fish. The fish make for an attentive but unresponsive congregation. They feign appreciation, but in the end are wholly unmoved:

Die Predigt hat g'fallen.  
Sie bleiben wie alle.

The Wunderhorn poem has been variously interpreted as suggesting the “endless monotony of life,”<sup>4</sup> “the endless sameness of the world’s course,”<sup>5</sup> “the futility of human endeavor,”<sup>6</sup> and so on, all of which associate with the despair of life’s vanity made explicit in Mahler’s symphonic program. Beyond this, however, the poem and the song focus their drama on a solitary, inspired figure. Mahler’s position at the center of his creation, his feeling of personal exile, his anxiety over the misunderstanding of his music—these have been often discussed; it does not seem unreasonable to presume his self-identification with St. Anthony and his plight. Berio, in his selection, links the unheeded preacher with Martin Luther King, celebrated in the second movement of the *Sinfonia*.

Mahler’s symphonies and songs are characterized by allusion to folk material, “common brass band march tunes, hymns, and love songs.”<sup>7</sup> By “allusion” we distinguish from quotation as such, and refer to a more oblique stylistic reference, something that suggests but does not connote. In a typically allusive work, Mahler fashions common melodic formulae into a nostalgic panorama, the center of which is the composer’s own intensely personal experience.<sup>8</sup> Such a pattern of allusion to mundane jargon finds a literary parallel—indeed, a wild fruition—in the writings of James Joyce.

Joyce freely melded quotation and allusion into the texture of his stream-of-consciousness. The principal rationale of his technique is to depict the artist in his cultural and spiritual locale. His quotations and allusions, often multilingual (like Berio’s), include songs,<sup>9</sup> proverbs, newspaper headlines, and liturgy.<sup>10</sup> Taken together they create an aura of specific culture; and by them “the past is made to belong, through a changed context, in the immediacy of a new present.”<sup>11</sup> In Ulysses Joyce, like Mahler, takes an existing model, the Homeric epic (itself a compendium of earlier oral traditions), then fashions within it

the “traditions” of his own experience. Joyce himself described it as

the epic of two races (Israel-Ireland) and at the same time the cycle of the human body as well as a little story of a day (life). . . it is also a kind of encyclopedia . . . (every hour, every organ, every act [is] interconnected and interrelated in the structural scheme of the whole).<sup>12</sup>

In Ulysses the mind of the artist, Dedalus, becomes a repository of seemingly random experiences that, when mingled with the cultural myths and symbols of the unconscious, order and clarify themselves, resonating through many levels of meaning. In this manner, nostalgia gives way to epiphany. This transformation of materials reaches its probable limits in Finnegan’s Wake in which “everything and everyone merges, including Joyce and his characters,”<sup>13</sup> while language becomes music —an intuitive communication that cannot be explained or responded to according to any conventional train of logic.

In Beckett’s The Unnamable, however, the waking dream of Joyce turns to nightmare: not only does Beckett merge with his characters, he “despairs of ever being able to decisively separate himself from them.”<sup>14</sup> The artist becomes a prisoner of his art; he can do nothing but quote. He constantly seeks his own identity amid a crowd of anonymous “voices that have tricked him into believing that it is he who speaks.”<sup>15</sup> The novel, Beckett’s own translation of the last of his trilogy (Molloy, Malone Meurt, and L’Innommable), deals with the purgation of the artist Mahood (cf. “Mahler”), following his death in the previous novel. He descends to an irrational underworld where he imagines his body trapped in a jar. All his senses are deadened, and he is conscious only of occasional lights and shadows, and an incessant play of voices. Obviously, such a work has a rich potential for quotation and parody: fragmented references to characters and events of earlier books, allusions to scripture, Shakespeare, even Joyce. And, as in Joyce and Mahler, the quotations function as “aspects of the total identity of the narrator.”<sup>16</sup>

For all three men, and for Berio as well, the artist has become the subject of art. Their themes continually return to

the relationship of the artist to his work and to his culture. Further, these artists explore their themes beneath a surface treatment of death, purgation, and resurrection: Mahler in his Resurrection Symphony; Joyce by his classic descent into a cultural Hades and reascent in Ulysses (as well as in the purgatorial dream of Finnegan's Wake); and Beckett in the disembodiment of the Unnamable, his quasi-penitential torments, and, if not resurrection, at least "denial of death's existence as an absolute."<sup>17</sup>

Mahler's program and The Unnamable. There are two programs to the Mahler scherzo. The first is taken from a letter by the composer:

When you awaken from the wistful dream of movement 2, to return into the turmoil of life again, it may easily happen to you that the ceaseless flow of life strikes you with horror—like the swaying of dancers in a brightly lit ballroom into which you happen to gaze from the outer darkness and from such a distance that its music remains inaudible. . . life appears senseless to you and like a dreadful nightmare from which you may start up with a cry of disgust.<sup>18</sup>

The other scherzo program is the "official" one, later suppressed by Mahler:

The spirit of unbelief and negation has taken hold of him. Looking into the turmoil of appearances, he loses together with the clear eyes of childhood the sure foothold which love alone gives. He despairs of himself and of God. The world and life become a witches' brew; disgust of existence in every form strikes him with iron fist and drives him to an outburst.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, here is an excerpt from the general program of the whole symphony:

Our hearts are gripped by a voice of awe-inspiring solemnity, which we seldom or never hear above the deafening traffic of mundane affairs. "What next?" it says. Have we any continuing existence? Is it all an empty dream or has this life of ours, and our death, a meaning? If we are to go on living, we must answer this question.<sup>20</sup>

Mahler's "What next?" echoes in the opening lines of The Unnamable. "Where now? Who now? When now?" With these words, the Unnamable awakes into his dubious new "existence," and, like Mahler, he is consumed with the notion of continuance. "I am afraid as always of going on," he says; still, there is a compulsion to "keep going," that is, to continue stripping away the tissue of voices that shrouds his real identity.<sup>21</sup> The conflict of fear and compulsion are at the heart of the narrative, and the struggle remains unresolved even in the closing lines of the book: "you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on." That sort of paradox is typical of Beckett's narrative, and it often reaches an ecstatic, almost religious pitch. Unlike the placid "stream-of-consciousness" of some narrators, the Unnamable's is a frantic, eternally unsettled consciousness, one to which existence itself has become a "witches' brew." The Unnamable despairs of himself because he cannot define the "self"—that is, he cannot name it. His afterlife, not unlike Mahler's romantic mortality, is one "essentially like life itself but a little more painful, that is, a condition in which solitude, failure of communication, futility, torture, and uncertainty are all the more sharply felt."<sup>22</sup>

The selection of texts. Of the more than 1400 words of spoken and sung text in the Berio movement, more than two-thirds are from Beckett. The rest derive from various sources including Joyce; the spoken phrases of Harvard undergraduates; dialogues between Berio, friends, and family; and slogans written on the walls of the Sorbonne during the May 1968 riots, to which Berio was witness. While the concept of *Sinfonia* is not strictly political, the inclusion of this last material informs the movement with added ramifications, the death-resurrection motive expanding into a metaphor for the socio-political state of the sixties. At a more immediate level, these references give the work a sense of historical place, much as Picasso's and Braque's inclusion of contemporary headlines in their early collage pieces place those works in a specific context, allowing the viewer to perceive them with the proper historical outlook. The use of fragments of conversation is another example of the artist making his own mundane experience the focus of his art. The colloquial, offhand character of the conversational elements (as far as we can

identify this material) corresponds to Mahler's musical allusions; these dialogues make the work one of authentic Volkstümlichkeit.

Words and music: an analysis. While this work is of such formidable complexity that it could easily weather a measure-by-measure inspection, that is far beyond the scope of the present paper. So we will limit ourselves to examining some principal passages only, ones that afford a basic understanding of the work's dramatic movement and its meaning.

The "title" of the movement, "In ruhig fließender Bewegung," is, of course, the tempo indication of the Mahler scherzo. Other directions from Mahler appear in Tenor 1 at m. 4 ("nicht eilen, bitte"), Bass 1 at m. 6, and Tenor 2 at m. 8 ("recht gemächlich"). These rise above the level of ordinary printed superscription by being spoken and dramatically interpreted according to the directions given for their declamation ("detached," "calm," "bewildered," etc.). Thus interpreted the directions are infused with personality; they become characters in the drama. As for the celebrated musical "collage" itself, its potential complexity can be fairly apprehended in these opening measures (see fig. 1). In mm. 1-2, the brass play a fragment from the fourth of Schoenberg's Fünf Orchesterstücke. The title of the movement ("Peripetie") is immediately declaimed by the eight voices. Strings and harp play the opening measures of "Jeux de Vagues" from Debussy's La Mer at m. 5, as is announced by Soprano 2.<sup>23</sup> Above the Debussy, the flutes play the opening figure of Mahler's Fourth (see also the sleighbells, mm. 2-10, and violin B, mm. 6-7). At m. 8 the Mahler scherzo begins to emerge, first in the winds, then in the strings and percussion. From this point to the end of the movement, the Mahler scherzo is always present—though not always audible. That is, it continues, heard or unheard, and when resurfacing after a period of inaudibility it is at the point to which it would naturally have progressed had it been playing.

The pieces quoted on this first page are introduced by the voices; like the pieces to which they refer, the introductions are vertically superimposed:

deuxième symphonie  
quatrième symphonie

These refer to Mahler's Second and Fourth, both present, as we have seen. The voices continue:

première partie  
deuxième partie  
troisième partie  
quatrième partie

i.e., the first movement of Mahler's Fourth, the second movement of La Mer, the third movement of Mahler's Second, and the fourth "movement" of Schoenberg's Fünf Orchesterstücke. This is, however, to the chagrin of the interested student, the only time that the musical quotations are labeled, however obscurely.

At m. 15, the first quotation from The Unnamable appears in Bass 1, the opening words of the book: "Where now? Who now? When now?" As a general rule, Beckett quotations appear in the movement in the relative position they occupy in the book, the earlier passages earlier in the movement, the later toward the end, and so on. Curiously, there are few quotations from the middle sections of the book. Rather, phrases are occasionally drawn from the early and late sections of the book and combined to form wholly new sentences.

Following some solfège (corresponding to the Mahler melody) and a repeat of "peripetie," Tenor 2 introduces another important fragment from Beckett, the motto "Keep going."<sup>24</sup> This becomes a refrain in the movement (see mm. 56, 60, 62, 77, 87, 105, 143, 181, etc.) and relates to the Mahler obsession with "continuing existence." It also creates a nice pun on the frequent Mahleresque direction Vorwärts. The Unnamable himself, in fact, makes an interesting comment relative to Mahler's superscript: "Forward! that's soon said. But where is forward? and why?"<sup>25</sup>

Tenor 2 announces (m. 25), "nothing more restful than chamber music," an intriguing allusion to Joyce.<sup>26</sup> Tenor 1 specifies "than flute," and Soprano 2, "than two flutes," at which point the corresponding passage for two flutes in the Mahler scherzo begins. A measure later, a solo violin takes up a portion of Hindemith's Kammermusik No. 4, which continues above the scherzo until Bass 2 and Tenor 1 interrupt with the



comments “no time for chamber music . . . you are nothing but an academic exercise.” Such ironic references to quoted pieces characterize the Berio movement and become especially important in the closing section of the piece, as we shall see.

At m. 46 a wave of quotations moves through the voices, among which are the lines, “For though the silence here is almost unbroken, it is not completely so . . . I am not deaf, of that I am convinced, that is to say, half-convinced.” This passage is from an early section of Beckett’s book, just as the artist becomes aware of the presence of other voices. To this point he has presumed his own deafness, but the presence of these voices assures him he has at least this sense remaining. He is at first, then, comforted rather than haunted by the “quotations.” At m. 51, Bass 1 introduces a further thought: “So after a period of immaculate silence there seemed . . .” which is completed by Beckett, “a feeble cry was heard by me . . .”<sup>27</sup> But Berio’s completion is, “to be a violin concerto being played in the other room in three quarters,” beneath which a passage from Berg’s *Violin Concerto* appears. When Alto 2 insists upon “two violin concertos,” the Berg piece is interrupted by Brahms’s *Violin Concerto* (see fig 2). (Here is a fine example of Berio’s method of linear rather than vertical assemblage, making one phrase of several.)

At m. 77, another important quotation from Beckett appears: “This represents at least a thousand words I was not counting on. I may well be glad of them.”<sup>28</sup> In the context, the Unnamable, after he will find the words to continue speaking—that is, to “keep going”—recalls that his memory, “which I did not think myself entitled to draw upon,”<sup>28</sup> will provide him with enough words, just as Berio’s memory will provide him with at least “three thousand notes” (see Alto 1, m. 80). It is memory, conscious or unconscious, says Beckett, that always furnishes the artistic voice. The appearance here of Ravel’s *La Valse* in the orchestra and of the *Rosenkavalier* waltz thereafter affirm and illustrate the notion of nostalgia as the source of art. Both waltzes, especially *La Valse*, correspond closely to the Mahleresque vision of “the swaying of dancers in a brightly lit ballroom” and the senselessness of their oblivious dance.<sup>30</sup>

The Unnamable, quoted by Tenor 1 at m. 98, muses "I am the air, the walls, everything yields, opens, ebbs, flows. . ." <sup>31</sup> Beckett completes this, "like flakes"; Berio, "like the play of waves." This is answered in the orchestra by a passage from the "Jeux de Vagues."

"I feel the moment has come for us to look back, if we can, and take our bearings," says Bass 1 at m. 106;<sup>32</sup> here again the Unnamable resolves to cull from his memory topics for his continuing monologue. Above this, fittingly, the flute and oboe play Berlioz's *idée fixe*.

At m. 170 Stravinsky's *Le Sacre* appears, a portion of the "Danse de la Terre." At the close of the musical quotation at m. 185, Tenor 1 speaks: "it is as if we were rooted, that's bonds if you like. . . the earth would have to quake, it isn't earth, one doesn't know what it is." This statement in its context<sup>33</sup> finds the Unnamable greatly disturbed over a facet of his identity, a primal, insistent character called "Worm." The voices he hears attempt to persuade him that Worm is his essential identity. The Unnamable tries to confront the creature, but Worm is elusive: "an eruption is what's needed to bring him to light." In order to reveal him then, the "earth" (his soul? or body?) must quake and open. The Stravinsky quotation is more than pun (earth/terre). For Berio *Le Sacre* suggests the instinctual and primitive in man's nature, just as "Worm" does for Beckett.

The Unnamable's comment, "it isn't earth, one doesn't know what it is" (followed in the novel by: "it's like sargasso, no it's like molasses, no, no. . .") is amended by Berio: "maybe a kind of competition on the stage, with just eight female dancers." This textual emendation reintroduces the theme of the artist's relation to his audience; it is set by a quotation from Stravinsky's *Agon*, the double pas de quatre for eight female dancers.

At m. 200 Tenor 1 repeats a phrase he has spoken twice earlier in the movement: "But now I shall say my old lesson, if I can remember it. I must not forget this, I have not forgotten it. But I must have said this before, since I say it now."<sup>34</sup> In performance this line is comic, perhaps, but to the Unnamable it is intensely serious. Upon "looking back" he realizes that he has been saying the same things over and over, incessantly, for as long as he can remember. He is doomed to this continual

repetition, for as he says, "I have a pensum to discharge before I can be free—free to speak no more."<sup>35</sup> He must continue speaking until he can distinguish his own voice from all the others.<sup>36</sup> Then he will find rest, silence, a kind of paradise. This third reiteration of the Beckett fragment is followed by a massive self-quotation from Berio's Epifanie.<sup>37</sup>

Over the course of the movement thus far, the speaking parts have been divided fairly evenly among the several vocalists, with the male voices somewhat predominant. Gradually however, by giving him more lines and by decreasing the textural density when he speaks, Berio brings Tenor 1 to the fore as the protagonist of the movement. He assumes the Unnamable's monologue; later, he seems to speak as the composer. At m. 234, he begins the first of two large soliloquies. It is easily the longest quoted passage in the piece.

Well, I prefer that, I must say I prefer that oh you know, oh you, oh I suppose the audience, well well, so there is an audience, it's a public show, you buy your seat and you wait, perhaps it's free, a free show, you take your seat and you wait for it to begin, or perhaps it's compulsory, a compulsory show. You wait for the compulsory show to begin, it takes time, you hear a voice, perhaps it is a recitation, that is the show, someone reciting, selected passages, old favourites, or someone improvising, you can barely hear him, that's the show, you can't leave, you are afraid to leave. . . you make the best of it, you try and be reasonable, you came too early, here we'd need latin, it's only beginning, it hasn't begun, he'll appear any moment, he'll begin any moment. He is only prelude, clearing his throat, alone in his dressing room, or it's the stage manager giving his instructions, his last recommendations before the curtain rises, that's the show waiting for the show, to the sound of a murmur, you try and be reasonable, perhaps it is not a voice at all, perhaps it's the air ascending, descending, flowing, eddying, seeking exit, finding none, and the spectators, where are they, you didn't notice, in the anguish of waiting, never noticed you were waiting alone, that is the show for the fools in the palace waiting, waiting alone, that is

the show, waiting alone, in the restless air, for it to begin, for something to begin, for there to be something else but you, for the power to rise, the courage to leave. You try and be reasonable, perhaps you are blind, probably deaf, the show is over, all is over, but where then is the hand, the helping hand, or merely charitable, or the hired hand, it's a long time coming, to take yours and draw you away, that is the show, free, gratis and for nothing, waiting alone, blind, deaf, you don't know where, you don't know for what, for a hand to come and draw you away, somewhere else, where perhaps it's worse. . . .<sup>38</sup>

This text is essentially a solo, a kind of muttering aria, with only an occasional interruption by another speaker and two important interpolations. Just before the phrase "waiting for something to begin, for there to be something else but you," Berio inserts: "while every now and then a familiar passacaglia filters through the other noises" (musical quotation: Brahms's Fourth Symphony, mvt. 4); and, just following "the courage to leave," he adds, "picking your way through the crossed colors, seeking the cause, losing it again, seeking no longer. We shall overcome the incessant noise, for as Henri says, if this noise would stop there'd be nothing more to say" (musical quotation: Couleurs Croisées by Henri Pousseur).

In this textual passage, for the first time, the Unnamable acknowledges the reader, the audience. He muses that his hellish predicament has become a "public show." But the audience is really sharing in his predicament. They are alienated, isolated, seeking meaning for their existence in the show, the profusion of voices emanating from a stage; that they have come to watch him is evidence of their own search for identity. They want "selected passages, old favorites" to amuse themselves.<sup>39</sup> The Unnamable claims an advantage: he at least knows full well his situation, however futile seem his attempts to extricate himself from it. As for the audience, they never noticed their own state. The essence of the show, this meeting together in a darkened hall to watch and listen, is the "anguish of waiting. . . waiting alone, in the restless air. . . for something to begin."

The suggestion of a "somewhere where perhaps it's worse" brings on in the Berio movement a recapitulation of the original questions, "Where now? Who now? When now?" which have taken on a sudden new context. After "the show," what then? Once again, our continuing existence as living humans and the continuing existence of the artist in society are paralleled. The question the Unnamable and Berio pose in this passage is, can there be any meaningful existence without the "show," that is, a public exchange in which audience and performer and creator together explore these "voices," characters, identities, in order to at last arrive at the "I" of their existence? Beckett would probably say that there is no ultimate meaning to existence with or without the show. Nevertheless, the fact that Beckett writes and Berio composes is their affirmation that "going on"—speaking and listening, exploring the unconscious realm of voices—is an enterprise of worth. The show may in the end be for nothing, but it is more or less compulsory if we are individually and collectively bent on continuing existence.

With this as a premise, Berio suggests that much recent music fails in the show. In an article written while *Sinfonia* was being composed, Berio explains at some length the great concerns he had as a composer in the sixties. "Never has the composer come so dangerously close to becoming an extraneous or merely decorative figure in his own society"; this is to say he risks losing his place as art-maker. Too many, he regrets, no longer deal in "the invention and elaboration of patterns of expectations . . . creating modes of conditioning and perception," but occupy themselves with "the assembly-line production and collection of well-made, cleverly imitated musical objects." These peculiar objects of Berio's contempt are the products of the prevailing compositional/theoretical schools of the sixties, with their "formalistic and escapist attitude of twelve-tone composition." The problem is not the medium of composition, but the lack of genuine poetics:

Shuffling notes with the illusion that one is dealing with the formation of music is like using words like "peace" and "freedom" in speaking about Vietnam without touching the underlying relationships that constitute the real and horrifying meaning of that rotten war.

A theory cannot substitute for meaning and idea; a discrete analytical tool can never be turned to creation by dint of polishing and perfecting it. It is poetics which guide discovery and not procedural attitudes; it is idea and not style.<sup>40</sup>

I dwell at length on this article not only because it again reveals Berio's essentially Schumannesque aesthetic posture, but because it makes explicit some of the implications of the closing passages of the Sinfonia movement. In this final section the exploration of art and artist evolves into a commentary on the peculiar state of music among the arts. As a necessary prelude, Berio introduces several German quotations. The first is a scene from Berg, the drowning of *Wozzeck*.<sup>41</sup> This quotation reasserts the death motive, indeed extends it into murder and suicide, relates to the underwater imagery of *La Mer* and the "Fischpredigt," and makes a further pun on "keep going." (*Wozzeck* himself seems a likely character in the drama—the alienated visionary at the service of an impulse beyond himself.) Most importantly, this quotation reintroduces the music of the Second Viennese School.

At m. 429, the solo violin again takes up *Kammermusik* No. 4 while Tenors 1 and 2 add a commentary from Beckett:

If only this voice would stop for a second, it would seem long to me, a second of silence. I would listen, I'd know if it was going to start again, it's late now, and he is still talking incessantly, any old thing, repetition after repetition, talking unceasingly. . . .<sup>42</sup>

In the music that ensues, Berio contrasts the "academic exercise" with the charms of an earlier Vienna: "I shall never hear again the lowing cattle, the rush of the stream. . . ." <sup>43</sup> spoken over a passage from the second movement of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony (see fig. 4). This is a tribute to Beethoven's tragic loss as well as a lament that we are not apt to hear another *Pastoral* Symphony.

The Mahler scherzo reasserts itself strongly at m. 457, after a long period of seeming neglect. It is quickly overwhelmed by the self-quotation from *Epifanie*: the harmony swells into a huge aggregate in which all twelve pitch-classes sound simul-

taneously in various registers and colorations, with a counterpoint of *crescendi* and *diminuendi*. At m. 488 there is a recapitulation of the opening measures of the movement. The "Peripetie" returns to the brass, La Mer to the strings (this time from the "Dialogue du Vent et de la Mer"). Tenor 1 here begins his second soliloquy, a quite different one from the first. Some of the opening lines derive almost verbatim from the aforementioned article:

And when they ask, why all this, it is not easy to find an answer; for when we find ourselves, face to face, now, here, and they remind us that all this can't stop the wars, can't make the old younger or lower the price of bread, can't erase solitude or dull the tread outside the door, we can only nod, yes, it's true, but no need to remind, to point, for all is with us, always, except, perhaps at certain moments, here among these rows of balconies, in a crowd or out of it, perhaps waiting to enter, watching. And tomorrow we'll read that [name of a work on the same program] made tulips grow in my garden and altered the flow of the ocean currents. We must believe it's true.

The speaker then precedes three final quotations with some commentary on the state of modern music:

There must be something else. Otherwise it would be quite hopeless. But it is quite hopeless. Unquestioning. But it can't go on, it, say it, not knowing what. It's getting late. Where now? When now? I have a present for you. Keep going, page after page. Keep going, going on, call that going, call that on.

The quotations that follow apparently symbolize for Berio fashionable serialism: Boulez ("Don," Pli selon Pli), Webern (*Kantate*, op. 31), and Stockhausen (Gruppen für drei Orchester). Though presumably not cynical about these pieces or even the "school" they represent (of which Berio was once an ostensible member), the composer rejects the adoption of serialism as a specific technique rather than the recognition of it as an historical moment, a "spiritual situation of the early fifties."

What I'm against is the use of serialism in the abstract sense. . . . it becomes a sort of immobile, static world revolving around itself.<sup>44</sup>

Such a world, not unlike the world of the "Fischpredigt," denies the process of change ("going on") that for Berio is the soul of music.

After briefly introducing all the singers by name—an epic catalogue—Tenor 1 closes with a final, Mahleresque "outburst of despair."

But now it's done, it's over, we've had our chance. There was even, for a second, hope of resurrection, or almost. Mein junges Leben hat ein End. We must collect our thoughts, for the unexpected<sup>45</sup> is always upon us, in our rooms, in the street, at the door, on a stage.

Beneath this, a stuttering Mahler scherzo winds down to a final cadence—a conclusion that Monika Tibbe feels is itself a quotation from Schumann.<sup>46</sup> This is above all fitting, for Schumann in so many ways presages Berio's notions: the welding of the literary and the musical; the insistence that composition be more than "bare mechanics"; that music consists in the unexpected, the poetic.

We may well ask the composer, if these things are so, where now? For Berio the movement itself is answer enough. As an expressive mode, this piece seemed to signal the rise of a new compositional outlook in the seventies, especially among American composers—one in which quotation and explicit reference to the past became the rule rather than the exception.<sup>47</sup> These days there is certainly a new eclecticism afoot, one in which musical languages, "voices" from many places and epochs, are freely gathered and refashioned in striking new contexts. In connection with this, one may note a growing desire among composers to communicate with listeners at a more basic, intuitive—romantic?—level. As for its ultimate meaning, then, Berio's movement reveals itself not as a tract of pessimism or despair, but as an affirmation that, whatever comes in music today or tomorrow or the next day, it will certainly not be the last word.



## NOTES

1 See for example: Georg Krieger and Wolfgang Martin Stroh, "Probleme der Collage in der Musik aufgezeigt am 3. Satz der Sinfonia von Luciano Berio," **Musik und Bildung** 3 (May 1971): 229-35; Elmar Budde, "Zum dritten Satz der Sinfonia von Luciano Berio," in Rudolf Stephan, ed., **Die Musik der sechziger Jahre: Zwölf Versuche** (Mainz: Schott, 1972); Clemens Kühn, **Das Zitat in der Musik der Gegenwart** (Hamburg: Wagner, 1972); and so on.

For those unfamiliar with the general nature of the movement the basic source description is Luciano Berio, Notes to **Sinfonia** (Columbia Records MS 7268). A new recording of the work, Boulez directing, is forthcoming.

2 Berio discovered Joyce in 1957. By 1958 he had already completed **Omaggio a Joyce**. His continuing fascination with the writer Berio discusses in "Luciano Berio on New Music: An Interview with David Roth," **Musical Opinion** 99 (September 1976):548-51.

3 The relationship of the "Fischpredigt" to the Mahler scherzo is detailed in Monika Tibbe, **Lieder und Liedelemente in instrumentalen Symphoniesätzen Gustav Mahlers** (Munich: Emil Katzsbichler, 1971), pp. 48-59.

4 Krieger and Stroh, p. 230. (All translations are my own.)

5 Ibid., p. 231.

6 Richard Specht, **Gustav Mahler** (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1925), p. 217.

7 Lou Harrison, "On Quotation," **Modern Music** 23 (Summer 1946):166.

8 This is perhaps best exemplified in some of the music of Charles Ives—who, incidentally is also quoted in the Berio movement. See Christopher Ballantine, "Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music," **Musical Quarterly** 65 (April 1979):167-84.

9 In **Ulysses**, "Music is used most obviously in setting the scene in the Hades chapter. . . . Bloom sees no hope of a second life and little ultimate reward in the first. . . . the song has the effect of reducing the dead to the common denominator of hopelessness." See Zack Bowen, "Libretto for Boomusalem in Song: The Music of Joyce's **Ulysses**," in Fritz Senn, ed., **New Light on Joyce from the Dublin Symposium** (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 150-51.

10 For a full treatment, see Weldon Thornton, **Allusions in Ulysses: An Annotated List** (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

11 Peter Dickinson, "A New Perspective for Ives," **Musical Times** 115 (October 1974):838.

12 Letter to Carlo Linati, 21 Sept. 1920, in Stuart Gilbert ed., **Letters of James Joyce** (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp. 146-47.

13 Barbara Reich Gluck, **Beckett and Joyce: Friendship and Fiction** (Lewisburg: Buckness University Press, 1979), p. 117.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., p. 115.

16 Raili Elovaara, **The Problem of Identity in Samuel Beckett's Prose** (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, n.d.), p. 191. See also p. 211: "The narrator (of **The Unnamable**) identifies himself with a voice . . . made up of words that have originally been received from others . . ."

17 Steven J. Rosen, **Samuel Beckett and the Pessimistic Tradition** (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1976), p. 64.

18 Quoted in H.F. Redlich, **Bruckner and Mahler** (London: Dent, 1955), p. 187.

19 Quoted in Alma Maria Mahler, **Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters**, Basil Creighton trans. (New York: Viking Press, 1946), p. 213.

20 Ibid.

21 I have discussed this at length in another paper, "A Wilderness in the Voice: Beckett's **The Unnamable** as Zen Literature" (Unpublished, 1980).

22 Rosen, p. 64.

23 The selection of **La Mer** is consistent with the Joycean tradition of sea-music images. See for example, **A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man** (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 167.

24 Samuel Beckett, **Three Novels** (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 291.

25 Ibid., p. 368.

26 Dr. Thomas J. Mathiesen has pointed out to me that Joyce may have been interested in Mahler setting some of his **Chamber Music**. Mahler came to Trieste in 1904 and 1906 when Joyce was there.

27 Beckett, p. 296.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 It also suggests the masked ball scene of Jean Paul's **Flegeljahre**, which was such an inspiration to Schumann. See Edward A. Lippman, "Theory and Practice in Schumann's Aesthetics," **Journal of the American Musicological Society** 17 (Fall 1964):314-18.

31 Beckett, p. 386.

32 Ibid., p. 335.

33 Ibid., p. 364.

34 Ibid., pp. 306, 335.

35 Ibid., p. 351.

36 "**The Unnamable** (is) a novel about the impossibility and yet the necessity of saying 'I.'" Vivian Mercier, **Beckett/Beckett** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 40.

37 The quotation is from the only section of **Epifanie** (1959-63) that actually quotes Joyce (a passage from **Ulysses**).

38 Beckett, pp. 381-82.

39 This becomes an obvious poke at New York Philharmonic audiences, as the Sinfonia was commissioned by that orchestra.

40 "Meditation on a Twelve-Tone Horse," **Christian Science Monitor**, 15 July 1968, Home Forum page.

41 This also parallels the Maiden's Rock drowning scene in **Ulysses**.

42 Beckett, p. 364.

43 Ibid., p. 345.

44 "Luciano Berio on New Music. . .," p. 548.

45 Berio, in "Meditation. . . ." says that "Composition deals in the invention and elaboration of patterns of expectation." Compare this with Boulez's notion of "l'inattendu" ("the unexpected"), briefly discussed in Ernest Krenek, "Extents and Limits of Serial Techniques," in **Problems of Modern Music**, Paul Henry Lang ed. (New York, Norton, 1962), p. 78.

46 See Tibbe, pp. 58-59. The quotation she believes to be from the closing of "Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen" (**Dichterliebe**).

47 For a discussion of the reasons for this, see Zofia Lissa, "Historical Awareness of Music and Its Role in Present Day Musical Culture," **International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music** 4 (June 1973):17-32.

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