

**Prolegomena by Talia Pecker Berio to the dedication concert
of the Berio-Saal, Wiener Konzerthaus, 16 December 2010**

Dear Mr. Kapsch, Bernhard Kerres, Barbara Lebitsch and the staff of the Wiener Konzerthaus, Astrid Koblanck and colleagues of Universal Edition, dear friends, ladies and gentlemen. This evening is an important moment for Luciano Berio and for me. Allow me to say a few words, and please forgive me for doing so in English.

I don't possess any kind of supernatural power, but today I do feel I can speak on behalf of my husband expressing gratitude and pride for the honour and recognition bestowed on him with the dedication of this beautiful hall within one of the most glorious musical institutions in the world, and in the city that is, more than any other, a synonym for MUSIC.

Luciano Berio's liaison with Vienna goes back to the late fifties; to the beginning of his collaboration with Universal Edition, by then a synonym for innovation, priority of value and quality over commercial success, open-mindedness and independence from political consensus and pressure. The imprint of Mahler and Schoenberg, of Webern and Berg – all of them UE authors marked and forbidden as degenerate artists during the dark years of the Nazi regime – allowed Vienna to emerge soon after the end of the war with a message of musical progress and hope. It became the home – whether concrete or ideal - for musicians from all over the world, with no distinction of language, faith, or ethnic affiliation. That this could happen in the city of Mozart and Beethoven, of Schubert and Brahms, Bruckner and Strauss, is one of the miracles of musical history.

Berio's music, while deeply rooted in its time and place, or places (Italy, Europe, the Western world of the second half of the 20th century), and completely anchored in the intellectual and musical explorations of the post-war avant-garde, speaks to us, ultimately, of the possible co-existence of innovation and tradition, of a critical approach towards the present, and faith in the future. His music solicits a dialogue and sets the scene for the converging of apparent opposites. He has often underlined this aspect of his Weltanschauung - the need, that is, as he put it, to "enact an organic compenetration of different musical 'truths'", a need that is not " just one of many modes of musical behavior; it is a way of thinking, a way of being."

The quest for complementarity and dialogue between independent and sometimes distant elements dominates many of Berio's works, regardless of their size and genre. He raised the concept of polyphony to the status of an ethic principle of heterogeneity and pluralism. He was aware of the complexity and of the risks of conveying these ideals in music, yet he remained true to them to the end of his life, reminding us that, in order to be meaningful, they had "to translate

themselves into processes and ideas, not into forms and manners." "In a true polyphony," he said about *Altra voce* ("another voice," performed this evening) "the different voices contribute to the whole, while maintaining their identity, and even their autonomy." Tonight's program can indeed be seen as a multifaceted tribute to this important dimension of his poetics: from the implicit polyphony of the flute *Sequeunza* to "The five situations" of *Momenti*, "which follow one another like separate panels, in a display of the different possible faces of the same sound material"; from the explicit tributes to Italian and Sicilian folklore in *Quattro canzoni popolari* and *Naturale* to the stream of reminiscences from the history of the accordion, hosted and elaborated in *Sequenza XIII*, which endows the popular instrument with a new 'literate' capacity of self-analysis and reflection. The piano *Sonata* is an homage to the dialogical principle of the historical sonata form and genre, as well as to the instrument that, more than any other, stimulated its evolution; yet the language, structure and expressive vein of Berio's *Sonata* imply the impossibility of resurrecting the past.

I wish the Berio-Saal to be a polyphonic meeting point between the different, even distant domains and idioms of today's music. Just as *Notturmo*, Berio's major string quartet, had its première in the Mozart-Saal by the Alban Berg Quartet in January 1994, or as the many *Sequenzas* heard over the years in the Schubert-Saal, just as his major orchestral and choral works in the Grosse Saal, this beautiful modern hall can honour, is already honouring the name it carries and the generous sponsor who has made this dedication possible, with lively and creative programming that combines timeless chamber masterpieces of the Western tradition with new experimental contributions of the young generations to the reshaping of musical language, in the spirit of mutual listening and respect for an art which, beyond any form of speech, involves fundamental areas of our moral and emotional being. "Music," Berio wrote, "though self-significant – is never alone [...]; its problems – if they are such – come from somewhere else; and we must continue to question it relentlessly in all of its aspects." Thank you.

The quotations are taken from the following texts by Luciano Berio:

- *Intervista sulla musica*, con Rossana Dalmonte, Laterza, Roma (1981), 2007, p. 73
- *Remembering the Future*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, 2006, p. 30
- Program notes for *Altra voce*, *Momenti*