

Side 1

BERIO: SINFONIA (B.M.I.) (Beginning)

Section I (6:31)

Section II (4:47)

Side 2

BERIO: SINFONIA (Conclusion)

Section III (12:21)

Section IV (2:58)

THE SWINGLE SINGERS

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

Conducted by the composer

Notes by Luciano Berio:

The four sections into which *Sinfonia* (composed in 1968) is divided are not to be taken as movements analogous to those of the classical symphony. The title, in fact, must be understood only in its etymological sense of "sounding together" (in this case, the sounding together of instruments and eight voices). Although their expressive characters are extremely diversified, these four sections are generally unified by similar harmonic and articulatory characteristics (duplication and extended repetition being among the most important).

I. The text of the first part consists of a series of short fragments from *Le Cru et le cuit* by the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. These fragments are taken from a section of the book that analyzes the structure and symbology of Brazilian myths about the origins of water and related myths characterized by similar structure.

II. The second section of *Sinfonia* is a tribute to the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Here the vocal part is based on his name, nothing else.

III. The main text for the third section includes excerpts from Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*, which in turn prompt a selection from many other sources, including Joyce, spoken phrases of Harvard undergraduates, slogans written by the students on the walls of the Sorbonne during the May 1968 insurrection in Paris (which I witnessed), recorded dialogues with my friends and family, snatches of *solfège*, and so on.

IV. The text for the fourth section, a sort of coda, is based on a short selection from those used in the three preceding parts.

The treatments of the vocal part in the first, second and fourth sections of *Sinfonia* resemble each other in that the text is not immediately perceivable as such. The words and their components undergo a musical analysis that is integral to the total musical structure of voice and in-

strument together. It is precisely because the varying degree of perceptibility of the text at different moments is a part of the musical structure that the words and phrases used are not printed here. The experience of "not quite hearing," then, is to be conceived as essential to the nature of the work itself.

Section III of *Sinfonia*, I feel, requires a more detailed comment than the others, because it is perhaps the most "experimental" music I have ever written. It is another homage, this time to Gustav Mahler, whose work seems to bear the weight of the entire history of music; and to Leonard Bernstein for his unforgettable performance of the *Resurrection* Symphony during the 1967-68 season. The result is a kind of "voyage to Cythera" made on board the 3rd movement of Mahler's Second Symphony. The Mahler movement is treated like a container within whose framework a large number of references is proliferated, interrelated and integrated into the flowing structure of the original work itself. The references range from Bach, Schoenberg, Debussy, Ravel, Strauss, Berlioz, Brahms, Berg, Hindemith, Beethoven, Wagner and Stravinsky to Boulez, Stockhausen, Globokar, Pousseur, Ives, myself and beyond. I would almost say that this section of *Sinfonia* is not so much composed as it is assembled to make possible the mutual transformation of the component parts. It was my intention here neither to destroy Mahler (who is indestructible) nor to play out a private complex about "post-Romantic music" (I have none) nor yet to spin some enormous musical anecdote (familiar among young pianists). Quotations and references were chosen not only for their real but also for their potential relation to Mahler. The juxtaposition of contrasting elements, in fact, is part of the whole point of this section of *Sinfonia*, which can also be considered, if you will, a documentary on an *objet trouvé* recorded in the mind of the listener. As a structural point of reference, Mahler is to the totality of the music of this section what Beckett is to the text. One might describe the relationship between words and music as a kind of interpretation, almost a *Traumdeutung*, of that stream-of-consciousness-like flowing that is the most immediate expressive character of Mahler's movement. If I were to describe the presence of Mahler's "scherzo" in *Sinfonia*, the image that comes most spontaneously to mind is that of a river, going through a constantly changing landscape, sometimes going underground and emerging in another, altogether different, place, sometimes very evident in its journey, sometimes disappearing completely, present either as a fully recognizable form or as small details lost in the surrounding host of musical presences.

Luciano Berio was born on October 24, 1925, in Oneglia (now Imperia), Italy. He now lives in Weehawken, New Jersey.

Although he is firmly rooted in Italian musical tradition, Berio is a cosmopolite in his interests, his activities and his compositions. He is the third generation of composers in his family, his father and his father's father both having been church organists and composers. Young Luciano began his musical studies with his father and, like his father, completed his training at the Conservatory of Milan.

While carrying on his Conservatory studies, he was employed as coach and accompanist for the classes of two famous opera stars, Aureliano Pertile and Carmen Melis. Before graduating in 1950, Berio gained a wider practical experience as pianist-coach, conductor (and occasionally timpanist) for a small touring opera company that played in northern Italian provincial cities and towns. The year after his graduation from the Conservatory, a Koussevitzky Foundation Fellowship enabled him to travel to the Berkshire Center at Tanglewood to study with his compatriot Luigi Dallapiccola.

On his return to Italy, Berio joined the staff of the Italian Radio, where in 1955 he established a Studio di Fonologia for study of and experimentation in electronic music. The following year he launched a series of concerts of contemporary music, which he called *Incontri Musicali*, and edited a progressive music magazine of the same name. He has also been active as conductor (chiefly of his music) at La Scala in Milan, the Teatro la Fenice in Venice, the Rome Opera, and he has conducted the Chicago Symphony. In 1965, Mr. Berio joined the faculty of the Juilliard School in New York City.

His compositions include chamber music for a great variety of instruments, orchestral works, vocal works for solo and chorus, and for magnetic tape. He has also written for the theatre and at present is working on three theatrical projects, one for the opera workshop of the Juilliard School, another for the Teatro Massimo in Palermo and a third for the Italian Radio.

—Edward Downes, reprinted courtesy of the New York Philharmonic.

When Luciano Berio's "Sinfonia" was given its world première by the New York Philharmonic on October 10, 1968, the music press gave it unprecedented attention. Here, briefly, are some critical reactions:

TIME: It is a white-hot musical experience that invokes the malaise of the times better than all the sit-ins, beards, beads and clubbings that wrench contemporary life. *Sinfonia* . . . is pure surrealism, voiced in sound. The words of its text are employed as much for their acoustic qualities as for their semantic meaning. The result is a kind of anti-opera in which verbal and musical ideas constantly dissolve into one another, yet are finally apotheosized into a grand, compelling musical sonorama. . . . In one sense, the words do not matter; Berio is not interested in making a song. He is communicating a kind of life attitude that shrinks at the prospect of some unnamable terror. It is a musical collage of headlines persistently giving a warning of holocaust.

THE NEW YORK TIMES: It is a wild, four-movement work and shows the new direction music is taking. Gone are the strict constructions and parameters of serialism. Instead there is a concentration on pure sound—orchestral sound, vocal sound, amplified sound, sound. . . . With the Swingle Singers grouped around microphones, breaking the language (French and English, mostly) into bits of sound components, and with the orchestra often blasting away with fortissimo chords that contained all 12 notes of the scale, there was not a dull moment anywhere. . . . It is one of the musics of the future.

—Harold C. Schonberg

NEW YORK MAGAZINE: His new score, which a great many Philharmonic subscribers warmly applauded (to their own great astonishment, I am sure) strikes me as a kind of milestone. It is, at once, a work that seems to pull together a great deal of what is concerning and interesting composers today: a broadening of the sound spectrum within non-electronic means to include both instruments and voices within a unified concept of orchestration, a sense of the musical experience as part of an over-all unity among the arts, a reaching-out to embrace within a musical framework elements of both popular and "sophisticated" culture. It is this, and also a big, exhilarating, moving (as in the second-movement threnody to Martin Luther King in which the singers pass back and forth the bare syllables of his name, nothing more) and communi-

cative piece of music that can strike a listener immediately as both logical and exciting. . . . I can only urge upon you attention to Berio and the thing he is doing.—Alan Rich

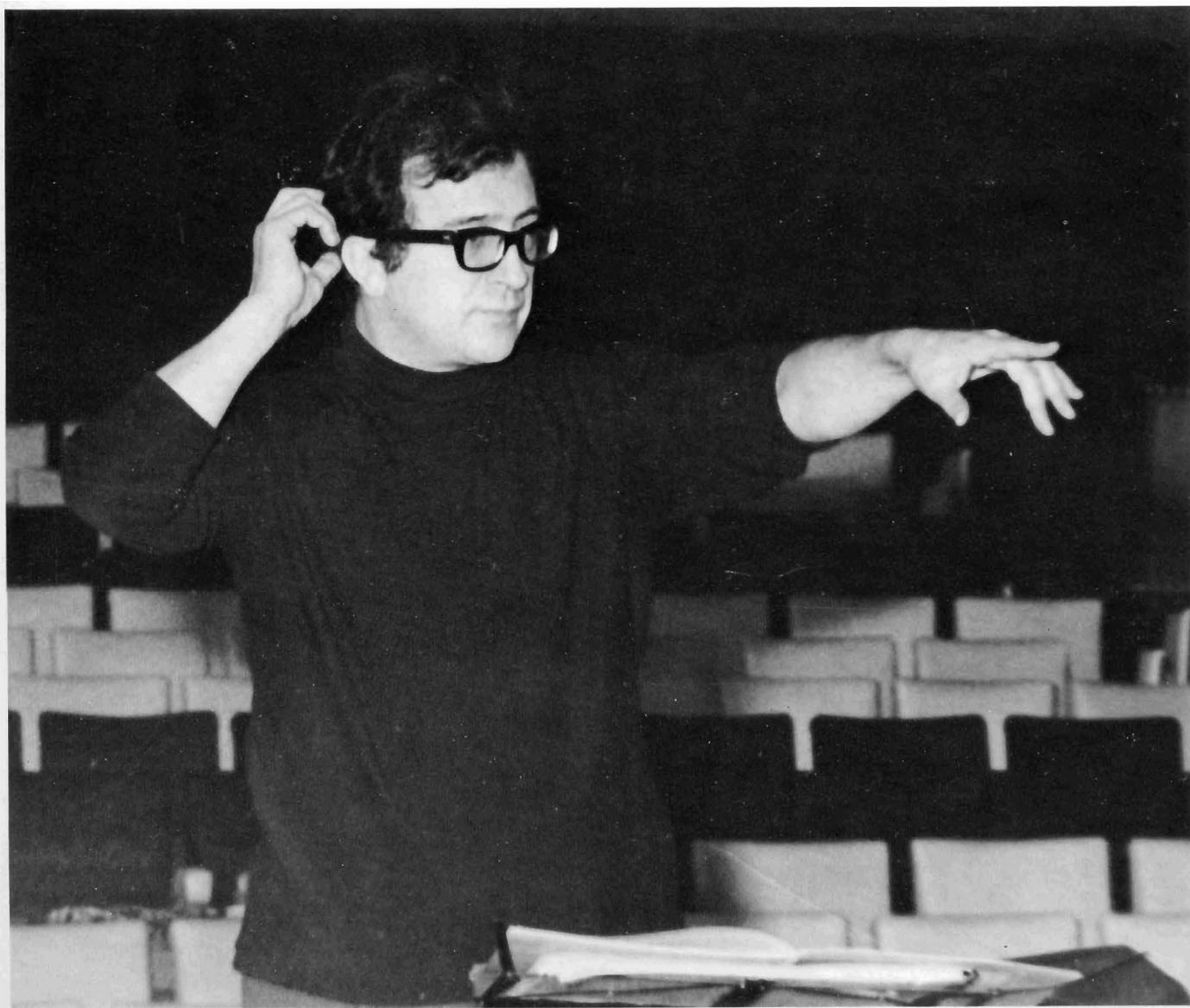
THE NEW YORK POST: The New York Philharmonic's program for this week is not listed as a "happening" but it would almost certainly win first prize in a contest for the most sophisticated such event. And because of one piece: Luciano Berio's "Sinfonia," music as jauntily complex as its title is simple. . . . The style is

irreverent, and yet Berio, being a highly trained and experienced composer, the effect is disarming but not offensive. He makes sense out of nonsense. . . . For a more seasoned judgment, I can only quote several anonymous Philharmonic musicians. They have practiced and played "Sinfonia" and they like it. They performed it with a brilliance and gusto that said as much.—Harriett Johnson

Engineering: Fred Plaut and Ed Michalski

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Luciano Berio



In Italian an *epifania* (plural: *epifanie*, with both forms accented on the second ("i")) indicates a sudden spiritual manifestation. Luciano Berio composed his **Epifanie** between 1960 and 1963; the revised version recorded here dates from 1965. Berio stipulates the possibility of performing the seven short orchestral pieces and the five vocal pieces in ten different sequences. When the American premiere of *Epifanie* took place in Chicago on July 23, 1967, Berio had this to say about it:

"*Epifanie* is, in essence, a cycle of orchestral pieces into which a cycle of vocal pieces has been interpolated. The two 'cycles' can be combined together in various ways; they can also be performed separately. The texts of the vocal pieces have been taken from Proust (*L'Ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*), Antonio Machado (*Nuevas Canciones*), Joyce (*A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* and *Ulysses*), Edoardo Sanguineti (*Triperuno*), Claude Simon (*La Route des Flandres*), and Brecht (*An die Nachgeborenen*).

"The significant connection between the vocal pieces can thus appear in different lights according to their position in the instrumental development. The chosen order will emphasize the apparent heterogeneity of the texts or their dialectic unity. The texts are arranged in such a way as to suggest a gradual passage from a lyric transfiguration of reality (Proust, Machado, Joyce) to a disenchanting acknowledgment of things (Simon; for this text the voice speaks and becomes gradually nullified by the orchestra). Lastly, the words of Bertolt Brecht, which have nothing to do with the epiphany of words and visions. They are the cry of regret and anguish with which Brecht warns us that often it is necessary to renounce the seduction of words when they sound like an invitation to forget our links to a world constructed by our own acts."

The score calls for an unusually large orchestra: 16 woodwinds; 6 horns, 4 trumpets and 4 trombones plus tuba, full strings, including *three* violin sections, and a percussion section calling for a number of performers who address themselves not only to glockenspiel, celesta, vibraphone and marimba but also to spring coils, tam-tam, tom-tom, temple blocks, wood blocks, *caisse claire*, bongos, timpani, cowbells, chimes, *claves*, *guiro*, *censerros*, cymbals, snare drum, tambourine, etc., etc.

Folk Songs

In this suite those who know Berio as an avant-garde composer ranking with Pierre Boulez, Luigi Nono and Karlheinz Stockhausen will discover him in an unaccustomedly light mood. Berio made these arrangements as "a tribute to the extraordinary artistry" of the American singer Cathy Berberian, a specialist in Berio's music whose musicality, intelligence and perhaps unique virtuosity and range of tone color have made her world famous as an interpreter of the most difficult works of the avant-garde.

One cannot really classify either the first song, *Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair*, or the second, *I Wonder As I Wander*, as a genuine folk song. In fact, John Jacob Niles, the Kentucky-born singer and scholar, whose educa-

tion included classes with Vincent d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, composed them in Elizabethan modes and made them famous by singing and recording them. Berio's suite opens with a viola, free of bar lines and rhythmically independent of the voice, evoking a country fiddler. Harmonics from the viola, cello and harp contribute toward the "hurdy-gurdy sound" Berio wanted to accompany the second song.

Armenia, the country of Miss Berberian's forebears, provided the third song, *Loosin yelav*, which describes the rising of the moon. In the old French song *Rossignolet du bois*, introduced by antique finger cymbals, the nightingale advises an inquiring lover to sing his serenades two hours after midnight, and identifies the "apples" in his garden as the moon and the sun. A sustained chord colored by the striking of automobile spring coils bridges this song to the next one, the old Sicilian song *A la femminisca*, sung by fishermen's wives as they wait at the docks.

Like the first two songs, the sixth, *La Donna ideale*, and the seventh, *Il Ballo*, come not from anonymous folk bards but from a trained composer—in this case Luciano Berio, who wrote them in 1949 at the age of 24 for a Fulbright Fellowship voice student in Italy named Cathy Berberian. The old Genoese-dialect folk poem *The Ideal Woman* says that if you find a woman at once well-born, well-mannered, well-formed and with a good dowry, for God's sake don't let her get away. *The Ball*, another old Italian poem, says that the wisest of men lose their heads over love, but love resists the sun and ice and all else.

Motettu di tristura comes from Sardinia and apostrophizes the nightingale: "How you resemble me as I weep for my lover . . . When they bury me, sing me this song."

The next two come from perhaps the most famous of all folk-music arrangements, Joseph Canteloube's *Chants d'Auvergne*, in *auvergnat* dialect. *Malurous qu'o uno fenno* poses the eternal marital paradox: he with no spouse seeks one, and he with one wishes he had none. A cello echoing the improvisation at the opening of the suite introduces *Lo Fiolairé*, in which a girl at her spinning wheel sings of exchanging kisses with a shepherd.

Miss Berberian discovered the last song, here called simply *Azerbaijan Love Song*, on a 78-r.p.m. 10-inch disc from the Soviet Asian republic of Azerbaijan, sung in that nation's language except for one verse in Russian, which a Russian-speaking friend told her compared love to a stove. Miss Berberian here sings, purely by rote, the sounds she transcribed as best she could from that scratchy old record. She knows not one word of Azerbaijani, and she assumes no responsibility for any Azerbaijani sides that may split over her whimsical version of their language.

—PAUL MOOR

Mr. Moor, Berlin correspondent for CBS News, has written extensively about the European musical scene for the past decade as a contributor to High Fidelity and other publications.