An Analysis of Luciano Berio’s Sequenza VI for viola (1967) and a folio of nine Compositions

by

Spyridon Tsilimparis

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Arts
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Supervisor:

Dr. Thomas Armstrong

© Spyridon Tsilimparis 2016
Abstract

The present submission consists of an Analysis of Luciano Berio's Sequenza VI for Viola (1967) and a folio of nine Scores composed between 2009 and 2013, which are accompanied by their recordings and a Commentary on the Compositions.

Knowledge of the radical compositional trends of the avant-garde period and the more conservative and pluralistic creativity from the 1970s onwards is adapted to create coherent works of sophisticated and seemingly free forms.

The following research questions are addressed:

How can the serial and modal material be organized and combined?

In the folio the serial material is elaborated in various ways to shape lengthy melodic lines freely harmonized by tertian harmony. The modal material is harmonized according to its own aesthetic requirements. The transition from an area of serial material to an aesthetically different environment of modal material is prepared gradually by modulations in harmony, texture, rhythm, dynamic and tone colour.

How is the textural and rhythmic irregularity of Sequenza VI modelled in the folio?

Sequenza VI, written for a solo instrument, develops a great textural and rhythmic irregularity in line with a large-scale structural thought. In the compositions, written for ensembles, the music develops in a more consistent manner by constant transformations between seemingly free and open events which occur within a sophisticated
framework. A new event usually brings about a tempo and metric differentiation which is controlled by metric modulation.

How might the performance freedom implied by the rhythmic notation of Sequenza VI be transferred to compositions for ensemble?

In Sequenza VI the freedom in performance, implied by the unbarred conventional notation, mainly refers to the degree of rhythmic deviation which is allowed to the performer. In the compositions the sense of rhythmic freedom is obtained more by a variety of textures than by a rhythmic deviation in performance. The metric patterns are changed frequently in a consistent manner but not before a minimum aural comprehension. This approach requires writing with bar-lines for the best co-ordination. Broadly speaking the rhythmic parameter is exalted as the most important stylistic factor in both Sequenza VI and the Compositions.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my Supervisor Dr. Thomas Armstrong for his continuous, constructive, generous and manifold support during the time of my studies at the University of Surrey.

Besides my Supervisor, I would also like to thank Professors Stephen Goss and Stephen Davismoon, members of my thesis Committee, whose valuable suggestions gave me the incentive to widen my research.

Also I wish to express my appreciation to the violinist Darragh Morgan, the cellist Robin Michael and the pianist Mary Dullea members of the Fidelio Trio, the Conductor Thomas Kilworth and the members of the University of Surrey Orchestra as well as the pianist Marilena Elloul, who performed some of my compositions.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Dr. Maria Kamonachou and my daughter Lina for encouraging and supporting me spiritually during this long and time-consuming process.

Spyridon Tsilimparis