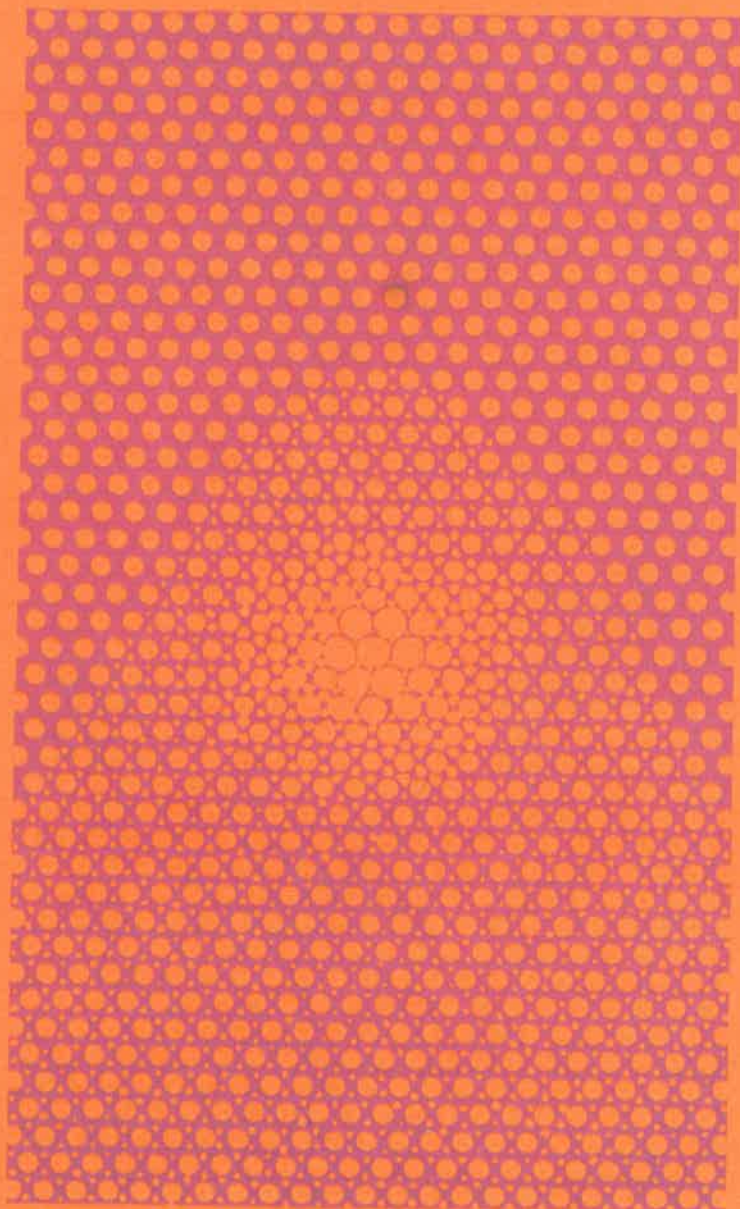
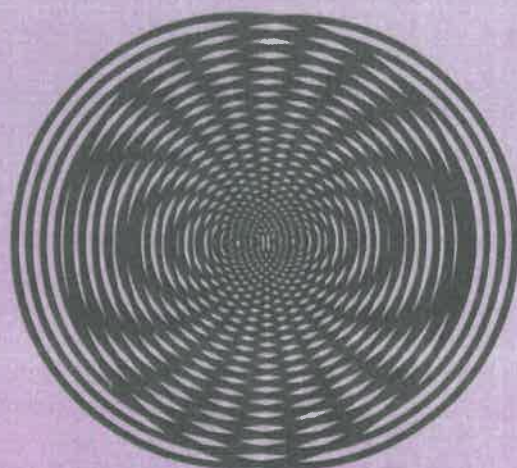


NEW MUSIC CONCERTS



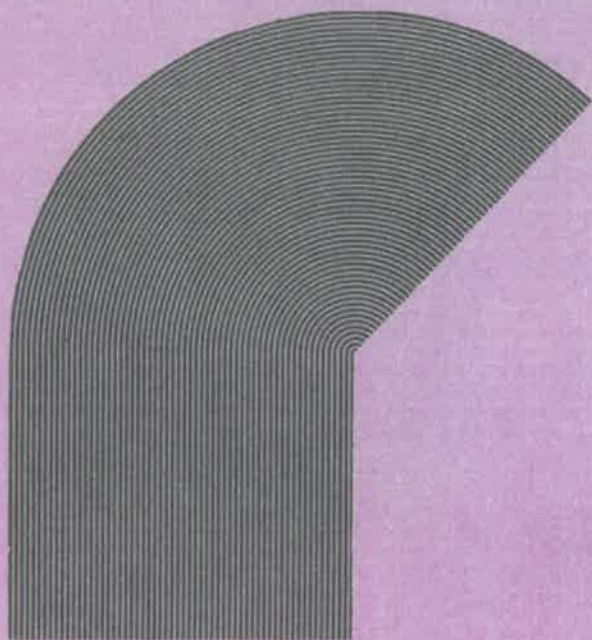


Programme Notes—Luciano Berio:
El Mar La Mar, Sequenza VII,
Differences, Air, Chemins II

“And Karlheinz and Luciano, steam-rolling old masters in full bloom then, tycoons of the lecture circuit and mainstay BMI classics now . . .”
—Stravinsky on music in the 'fifties

“A musical form is first of all an evidence, a testimony—not a mood to be felt, nor a *schema* to be analyzed, and not even a fixed system of communication through which men exchange sounds and meanings in the same way in which they exchange merchandise, on the basis of a conventional economic system . . .

“Certainly music always tended to formulate itself as a language and even to relate itself to the schemes of spoken language. But this seems today inevitably to degrade music to a code of conventional sensations . . . Music becomes a catalogue of signals—where, in the worst of cases (forgive the cliché), the trumpet means war, the oboe means a peaceful landscape, the twelve-tone row means anguish, and electronic music represents science fiction.



"Today . . . The literal reconstruction of the drama of the sonata form, which gave us so many classical masterpieces, leaves an impression of family theatricals. The audience which is carried away by the events of that drama, knowing from the very beginning that it will have a happy ending on a tonic chord, could very easily represent a society fundamentally oriented towards acquisition of a swimming pool . . .

"Today the composers refuse to continue representing what they justly consider to be an hypocrisy. The musical revolution of these last fifty years . . . has educated us to evaluate the musical experience no longer as a predisposed *schema*, but as a direct place where are formed, created and developed the elements of communication—that are never *ready-made*, but have always to *be made* . . .

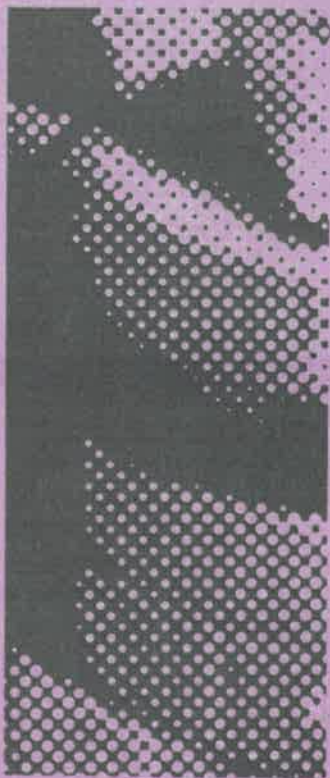
"There are now many works in which the performer is no longer a means, an intermediary, but a collaborator. He is given a plan of action, more or less precise, a certain number of structures which he can arrange in the way most convenient to himself. The composition . . . is no longer something *ready-made*, but something ready to be made . . .



"And in order for this to happen it must be very carefully planned, of course, in terms of musical composition. I should say that the more freedom that is given to the interpreter, and to the audience of course, the more the structure of the composition becomes complex and the more difficult is the composer's task. He must prevent chaos from destroying all the possible relationships. The most important procedure is to give a certain degree of redundancy to the texture that constitutes a kind of buffer state between chaos and the fields of possible meanings."

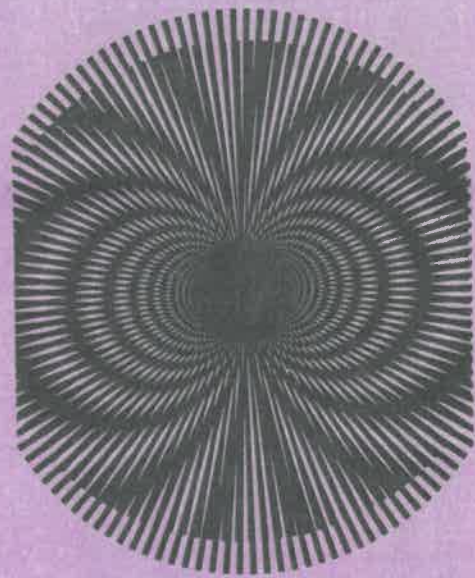
—Berio: extracts from a paper given at the 1960 International Conference of Composers, Stratford, Ontario

Probably the most striking feature of Luciano Berio—those of his works, at least, which we hear from time to time in the persistently narrow programme of our musical days—is his ability to disarm us and charm us in the old-fashioned way despite his earnest promise to make us work like the devil for every little bit of joy we get in listening to the new music. Like Stockhausen he scrubs up a daunting polemic. Unlike Stockhausen, he is not as grim as his word.



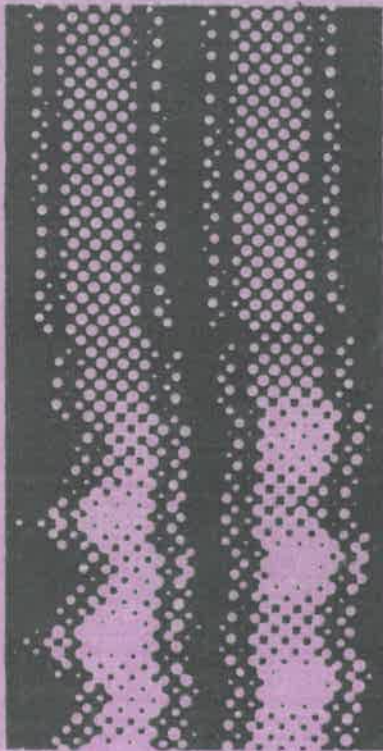
SEQUENZA VII is the most recent work on the programme—it is dated 1971—and probably the most taxing executively. It is scored for solo oboe and pre-taped oboe drone. The drone is a B-natural, recorded by the player ahead of time and then set sounding as a kind of undercrust to the elaborate filling and topping of the oboe solo.

The live oboe is the one with his work cut out for him. His part is written on a large rectangle containing 13 lines of music, each line divided into 12 bars. Each bar has its proscribed duration, and this is where the executant's prime problem arises. The bar durations are, respectively, (in seconds); 3, 2.7, 2, 2, 2, 1.8, 1.5, 1.3, 1, 1, and 1. This duration pattern—which is, you will note, a lapidary-type accelerando—is repeated for each of the 13 lines of score, making a kind of tempo-passacaglia—which, however, will probably not be recognized as such by the ear, due to the extreme variety of the notation from bar to bar.



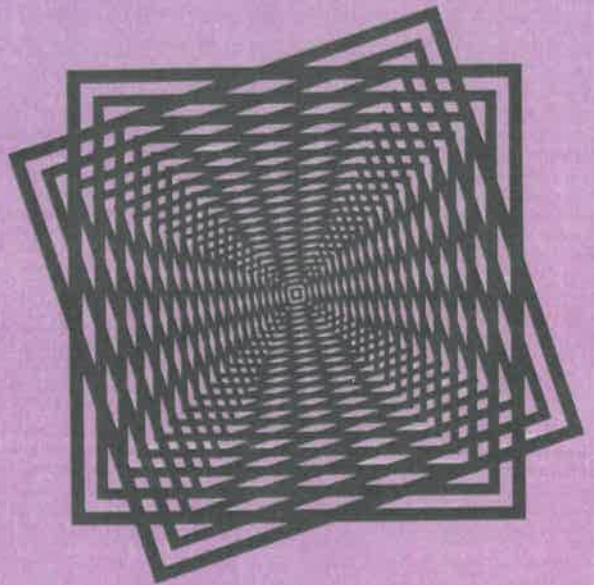
Apart from the tempo and complexities induced by the step-rising accelerando, there are timbre complexities induced by such rare effects—for an oboe—as double stoppings. There is a chart, accompanying the score, which suggests fingerings by which these effects may be achieved, but which cannot, of course, allow for variations (which can be wide) in oboes and reeds. Obviously a particular type of reed (“probably thin-scraped and very flexible”, says Melvin Berman) will be needed for the successful accomplishment of any performance of the work.

The work lasts about 8 minutes—the approximateness of that estimate taking into account the human factor. If the performer were a synthesizer, difficulties would probably vanish and the whole thing could be ‘dialed’ with precision and its outcome predicted to the smallest split of a second. Which makes you wonder whether—to quote Mr. Berman again—“the performer is not merely in the way.”



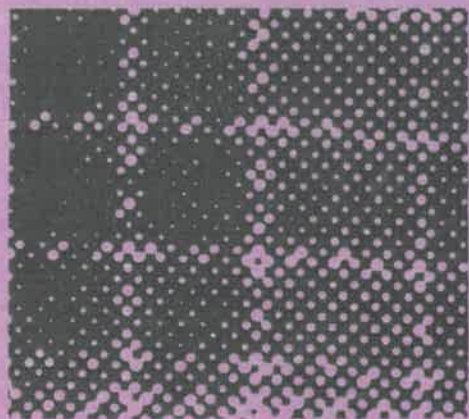
DIFFERENCES, for flute, clarinet, harp, viola, cello and tape, dates from 1958-60, and its established reputation may have been one of the contributing factors to Stravinsky's remark about "mainstay BMI classics". Berio's Belgian colleague Henri Pousseur described *Differences* this way:

"Sound materials—more elaborate or less so—played by all the instruments, are recorded to provide the substance of the accompanying tape, where they appear either in their original form or more-or-less altered by electro-acoustical means . . . The work's form—an elaboration of the rich possibilities implied by such a complex 'instrument'—brings to life, in its happy alternations of humour and gravity, garrulity and discretion, tenderness and virility, a modern music in the spirit of Comedia dell'arte".



Berio himself describes it this way:

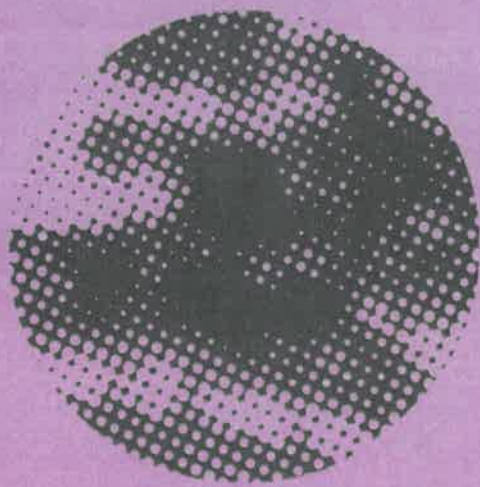
"*Differences* combines the live performance with a recorded one, not as a dialectic opposition between two different sound sources, but as a prolonging action of the five players in the specific field of recording. Thus, the recorded development reproduced through four loudspeakers is totally identified with the instrumental development assigned to the five soloists present in the hall".



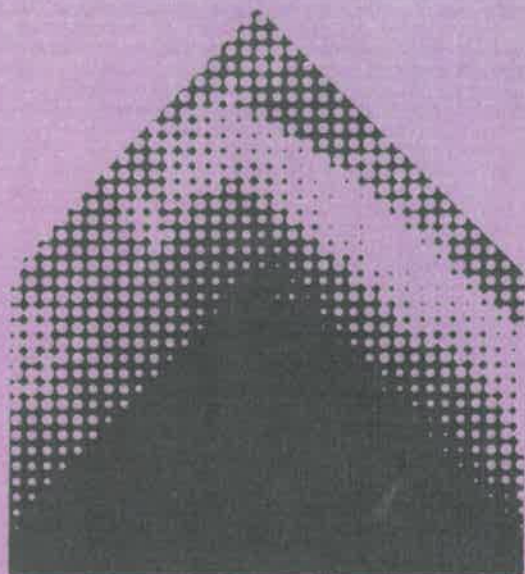
AIR, for voice, string trio and piano, dates from 1970 and is "a chamber version of the beginning of Section IV from OPERA. Voice, string trio and piano are treated as separate entities. The text is based on an English translation of a few fragments from Act I of Monteverdi's Orfeo:

"Now as the times change
Now gay now sad behold the
traveller
For whom only a short time ago
Sighs were food and tears were
drink,
Rose of the sky, life of the world,
When did you see a more joyful
lover.
Do you remember . . ."

This is the shimmering recent Berio, of the highly inflected vocal line and the textures like shot silk.



CHEMINS II (1970) is a work for viola and chamber orchestra, which 'contains' another (and autonomous) work of Berio called Sequenza VI, for viola alone; and is, in turn, 'contained' by still another autonomous work—Chemins III—for viola, chamber orchestra and large orchestra. The full sequence is like a nest of tables or, as the composer says, like the layers of an onion. Still another suggestion came from a review of the RCA recording, which likens the relationship of the three works to "laying a series of color transparencies over one another. The textures, even of the pulsating viola solo, are thick, and by the time the full orchestra is introduced, a heavy impasto of instrumental timbre expresses the musical sense of the work."



The rest of the review ("E.S.", writing in *Stereo Review*) is really too splendid to forego. It reads: "Only a moment or two of dramatic focus and a certain thinning out toward the end convey any sense of motion or arrival. As always in Berio's work, there is a sense of the multiplicity of meaning in any event—of strands, paths, *chemins*, weaving, unweaving, interweaving. Yet all this activity takes place in a whole that is remarkably static and, except for certain energy releases, highly contained. These pieces are like a closed energy system—extraterrestrial or subatomic—with a nuclear centre (viewed first), an orbiting planetary system (seen-heard next) and, finally, a surrounding galaxy".

Alas, we shall not have the full sequence tonight, only the 'orbiting planetary system.' Which suggests that the three distinct yet close-related brews may be not so much a profound atomic scheme as a practical kind of arrangement providing a version for any purse, any forces, any size of hall.

Chemins II employs solo viola, and flute, clarinet, trombone, two percussion, harp, electric organ, viola and cello.

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