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Aspects of Compositional Process in Luciano Berio's *Circles*

Charles H. Stratford

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Aspects of Compositional Process in Luciano Berio's *Circles*

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Luciano Berio (1925-2003) was one of the most innovative composers of vocal music in the European avant-garde. His composition for female voice, *Circles* (1960), marks an important stage in his collaboration with his wife, singer Cathy Berberian (1925-1983). Berio was attracted to Berberian's exceptional talents as a performer, and their work together created new avenues of expression for the solo voice, as Berio explored the relationship between music and language. Drawing upon archival documents, this thesis is a study of the materials and methods that make *Circles* one of Berio's pivotal works for voice. My interpretation of these sources engages with Berio's approach to pitch and setting a poetic text, as well as with the nature of his collaborations with Berberian.

Keywords: Luciano Berio, Cathy Berberian, *Circles*, extended vocal technique

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter 1. Berio, Berberian, and <i>Circles</i>	4
Chapter 2. Berio's Treatment of Cummings's Text	15
Chapter 3. The Pitch Sketches	34
CONCLUSION	56
APPENDIX	57
BIBLIOGRAPHY	84

TABLES

2.1	Five groups of percussion instruments used in Movement V	27
2.2	Groups of fricative and affricative consonants matched with specific percussion instruments in Movement V	29
2.3	Groups of plosive consonants matched with specific percussion instruments in Movement V	30

Introduction

On February 10, 1970, *Billboard Magazine* published an advertisement for the Mainstream record label.¹ Oddly, it depicted Luciano Berio in a catcher's outfit. The banner of the ad read: "If someone asks you what Berio played and you say catcher for the Yankees... brother, you're losing business!" The ad continued, "Berio... Luciano Berio... conceived and played many of the new electronic forms that have influenced students of modern music for the past decade."² But the work of Berio's at the center of Mainstream's new music catalogue was not an electronic one, but *Circles*, a chamber piece scored for female voice, harp, and percussion. For years it was not Berio's electronic music, but *Circles* that was arguably his most celebrated work—until it was eclipsed by his *Sinfonia* (1968).

Premiered in 1960, *Circles* marks an important stage in Berio's collaboration with Cathy Berberian, powerfully developing the use of extended vocal techniques (e.g., humming, whispering, speech-song, and onomatopoeia). Moreover, with *Circles*, Berio systematically matches Berberian's distinct vocal colors and techniques with unpitched sound (via percussion). Setting three poems to music, *Circles* shows how Berio and Berberian were more interested in the sound of the words and their visual layout on the page, rather than the poems' semantic features. This focus on the phonetic and spatial aspects of a text makes *Circles* stand out from other contemporary works for the voice.

Eminent scholars of contemporary music such as Robert Morgan, Paul Griffiths, and Bryan Simms underscore *Circles*' vital role in the progression of vocal music, and mark its place

¹ See Appendix 1 for a copy of the advertisement.

² Mainstream Records, "Luciano Berio," advertisement *Billboard*, February 21, 1970, 37. This advertisement was included in a presentation by Michael Hicks: "Mass Marketing the American Avant-Garde, 1968-1971," an unpublished paper delivered at Society for American Music 35th Annual Conference, 24 March 2009, Denver, Colorado.

at the height of Berio and Berberian's work together, deeming it "ground-breaking,"³ and "Berio's first important theatrical work."⁴ Simms, in *Music of the Twentieth Century*, notes, "works such as *Circles* opened the way for many related works of the 1960s and 1970s;"⁵ its influence can be traced in pieces like György Ligeti's *Aventures* (1966), Jacob Druckman's *Animus II* (1967-8), and George Crumb's *Ancient Voices of Children* (1970). Over the years, *Circles* has been celebrated as one of the twentieth century's great chamber works for solo female voice, occupying a place of prominence alongside Pierre Boulez's *Le marteau sans maître* and even Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*.

This thesis uses extant archival documents in an attempt to reconstruct aspects of Berio's creative process in *Circles*. It mainly draws upon materials held at the Paul Sacher Foundation Archive in Basel, Switzerland, the world's largest repository of materials related to the life and works of Berio. A two-week stay there provided access to the following set of materials: the original sketches of *Circles*; the final autograph copy of *Circles* that was sent to Universal Edition; two unpublished lectures, "On Vocal Gesture" and "Language and Music;" letters exchanged between Berio, Aaron Copland, and poet E. E. Cummings; an array of concert programs, fliers, and newspaper clippings.

The present work comes at an exciting time in Berio and Berberian research. More articles, conference papers, and dissertations related to these two figures are being produced now than ever. Two recent dissertations represent the current state of such scholarship. Released in May of 2011, Kate Meehan's dissertation, "Not Just a Pretty Voice: Cathy Berberian as

³ Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1991), 443.

⁴ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: A Concise History*. Rev. ed. (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1994), 173.

⁵ Bryan R. Simms, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Schirmer Wadsworth Group/Thomson Learning, 1996), 361.

Collaborator, Composer, and Creator,” is the first large-scale work to fully address Berberian’s influential and multifaceted career. Completed in September of 2011, Tiffany Kuo’s dissertation, “Composing American Individualism: Luciano Berio in the United States, 1960-1971” contextualizes Berio’s work in the US, as influenced by Cold War politics. Nevertheless, there is plenty of work to be done with these two musicians. What follows is my small contribution.

Chapter 1 provides a historical context for *Circles*: it addresses the nature of Berio and Berberian’s collaborations, tracking their creative development together from the early 1950s through the genesis of *Circles*. The prehistory, commission, and premiere of *Circles* are treated in detail, and the aftermath of the work—as related to Berio and Berberian—is also considered. Chapter 2 deals with Berio’s treatment of the three poems by Cummings that he set in *Circles*. A close reading of Berio’s annotated sketch of Cummings’s poem “stinging” is applied to its musical realization in Movement V. Based upon the archival holdings of the Paul Sacher Foundation, Chapter 3 reconstructs Berio’s creative process with respect to the organization of pitch in the vocal line of Movement I. Taking these things into account, this thesis addresses the following questions: What was the nature of Berio’s collaboration with Berberian? How did he interact with Cummings’s texts in *Circles*? And how did he begin to organize pitch in the work?

Chapter 1

Berio, Berberian, and *Circles*

Luciano Berio grew up in music, but sheltered from modernism. His family had been busy professional musicians in the region of Liguria, Italy. For many years his grandfather, Adolfo, and his father, Ernesto, composed and played the organ. Both of them gave Luciano early musical training, as did his grandfather, who taught him the fundamentals of harmony and counterpoint. This family training helped lead to young Luciano's first two attempts at composition, a *Pastorale* for piano (1937), and a *Tocatta* for piano duet (1939). But the fascist national government of those years had kept all challenging contemporary music well out of his hearing.

In autumn 1945, after the collapse of Mussolini's regime, Berio entered the Milan Conservatory. His first year there was revelatory and exciting, as he first heard the works of Bartók, Milhaud, Hindemith, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg—including the latter's *Pierrot lunaire*, which, according to David Osmond-Smith, "left him baffled."¹ But soon, Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern would all exert a strong influence on his compositional style.

Meanwhile, to supplement his income, Berio began accompanying singers at the conservatory. In his hometown of Oneglia, he had kept in constant contact with singers, since his father regularly taught local vocalists. Now, in Milan, Berio encountered a singer who would deeply alter his musical path: Cathy Berberian.

¹ David Osmond-Smith, "The Tenth Oscillator: The Work of Cathy Berberian 1958-1966," *Tempo* 58 (January 2004): 4. This chapter relies heavily on the work of David Osmond-Smith, who was a personal acquaintance of both Berio and Berberian. Osmond-Smith's scholarship on both figures is groundbreaking and invaluable, and the author is indebted to him for his contributions to the secondary literature on Berio and Berberian.

An ethnic Armenian raised in the United States, Berberian had grown up in a close-knit community of immigrants. From a young age, she showed strong interest in Armenian folksong and dance, even performing as a soloist in an Armenian dance troupe. Her devotion to her familial culture would persist well into adulthood.

Still, she enjoyed a rich and diverse formal education. In 1937, her family moved to Queens, where Cathy attended the prestigious Julia Richman High School for girls in Manhattan's Upper East Side. She initially focused on literature, but also trained as a performer—acting, studying voice, and singing in the school choir. After graduation she enrolled at New York and Columbia Universities, where she took courses in opera, voice and diction, stagecraft, and pantomime.

Although her parents did not support her professional ambitions, they let her travel to Paris in 1948 to study with the famed soprano Marya Freund.² A year later, she moved to Milan to study at the famed Conservatorio di Musica Giuseppe Verdi on a Fulbright scholarship. In need of an accompanist for her audition tape, she contacted a young composition student skilled at accompanying.

Despite language barriers, Berio and Berberian hit it off immediately—in fact, their musical connection fueled their relationship from the outset as, according to Berberian, “he spoke no English and I spoke no Italian. We had no contact but music.”³ While they rehearsed together just once, Berberian produced a successful audition tape and got funding to continue her

² Freund was known for her expertise in 20th century vocal literature, the works of Schoenberg in particular. She premiered the Wood Dove role in Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* in 1913, and was the first to sing *Pierrot lunaire* in French translation. She also worked with composers such as Satie, Milhaud, and Poulenc.

³ Rebecca Young-Hie Kim, “Biography,” Cathy Berberian: The Official Website, <http://www.cathyberberian.com> [accessed May 9, 2012].

studies at the conservatory. It was this initial connection between the two that soon evolved into some of their most celebrated collaborations.

Soon after marrying on October 1, 1950, Berio and Berberian got to work on several projects. In 1951, they collaborated in a performance of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Porto Maurizio, a port town not far from Oneglia. Berio conducted the orchestra, while Berberian directed and sang the role of Alisa.⁴ After this performance, Berberian focused on music written for her by her husband, resulting in three Milan premieres: *Deus Meus*, for voice and three instruments (1951), *Quattro canzoni popolari*, for voice and piano (1952), and *Opus No. Zoo*, (1952). In *Opus No. Zoo*, Berio took advantage of Berberian's talents as an elocutionist—the text was to be spoken, not sung—while she, in fact, composed the work's English text.

At the time, Berberian did not have the same affection for twentieth-century music she later would. Osmond-Smith, who had personal contact with both Berberian and Berio, wrote that “She did not at first find it easy to share her new husband's enthusiasm for the more challenging reaches of twentieth century music: the famous performance of *Wozzeck* at La Scala left her part fascinated, part perplexed.”⁵ Nevertheless, Berio kept writing adventuresome works for his wife, to which she gradually became attracted.

In the summer of 1952, the Koussevitzky Foundation offered Berio a fellowship to study composition with Luigi Dallapiccola at the Berkshire Music Festival in Tanglewood. This summer of study resulted in *Chamber Music*, a work that was “the first tailored to the range and

⁴ Kate Meehan, “Not Just a Pretty Voice: Cathy Berberian as Collaborator, Composer, and Creator” (PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 2011): 17. The present chapter draws heavily on the historical facts presented in Meehan's chapter on *Circles* in this unpublished dissertation.

⁵ Osmond-Smith “The Tenth Oscillator,” 3.

timbre of [Berberian's] voice – and to her choice of verse.”⁶ Setting three poems by Joyce, the work premiered in the spring of 1953.⁷ It would be the last piece Berberian performed live before giving birth to their child Cristina on November 1, 1953. She discontinued stage performance for the next five years, opting to stay at home and take care of their daughter. Still, Berio and Berberian undertook some important non-public creative projects.

Berio had first encountered electronic tape music at the Museum of Modern Art in New York circa 1953. Upon returning to Milan, Berio envisioned a music studio that utilized the latest recording technology. He aggressively pushed for an institute of electronic music at RAI—Italy's largest radio broadcasting company. It was at this time that Berio formed a relationship with compatriot and fellow composer Bruno Maderna. The two eagerly discussed plans for a studio in Milan, with particular interest in creating soundtracks for radio shows, as well as *musique concrète* and electronic music. The RAI management took a strong interest in their proposals and commissioned their first collaborative work together: *Ritratto di città*. *Ritratto*, featuring Berberian's narration of a text by Roberto Leydi, first broadcast in 1954.

The center for their work together would become known as the Studio di Fonologia, with Berio at its head. Its private setting proved ideal for Berberian to continue her work with Berio, attending to the needs of their daughter yet still making music without the pressures of concertizing. Meanwhile, through the RAI management, Berio met a young medievalist named Umberto Eco. The two quickly formed a symbiotic friendship: Berio introduced Eco to the world of structural linguistics, while Eco introduced Berio to the works of James Joyce. Eco, Berio, and Berberian met frequently at the Berio apartment in Milan, where they discussed plans

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

for a collaboration that used the works of Joyce and exploited the capabilities of the Studio di Fonologia. Osmond-Smith comments on their first project:

Berberian read a passage from *Ulysses* in English, and Eco followed with the same passage in French (there was as yet no reliable Italian translation). They were fascinated by the onomatopoeic qualities of the ‘overture’ to the Sirens chapter – and decided to try for a radio programme on onomatopoeia in English literature, scripted by Leydi, and concluding with Berio’s electronic elaborations upon Joyce’s text, read in several languages.⁸

The fruit of this collaboration, *Onomatopea nel linguaggio poetico* (“onomatopoeia in poetic language”), involved literary works by Edgar Allen Poe, Dylan Thomas, and W. H. Auden.⁹ The program was never broadcast in its entirety, but an initial version finalized by Berio, *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)*, was broadcast in Naples on June 14, 1958.

At this point, Berio gave his wife an ultimatum, compelling her to “decide between babies and singing.”¹⁰ Eager to return to the stage, she chose singing. In 1957, Berio and Maderna established a new music concert series, *Incontri Musicali*, with concerts slotted in Milan and Naples and broadcast on RAI. In Naples on June 17, 1958, Berberian performed works by Stravinsky and Ravel. This concert affirmed her instinct and aptitude for twentieth century repertoire.¹¹ At about the same time, John Cage sparked Berio’s interest with his lectures at the Darmstadt *Ferienkurs*. Berio offered Cage the opportunity to come to Milan to use the facilities of the Studio di Fonologia. The result was Cage’s *Fontana Mix*. That work later spawned a work by Cage tailored to Berberian’s talents, *Aria*, which drew upon Armenian,

⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹ David Osmond-Smith, *Berio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 61. Berio’s work *Nones* was inspired by Auden’s poem of the same name that represented the Passion of Christ, as well as the agony of modern man.

¹⁰ Osmond-Smith, “The Tenth Oscillator,” 4.

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

Russian, Italian, French, and English texts. This latter piece called for a variety of vocal styles (e.g., jazz, *Sprechstimme*, coloratura, lyric contralto, to name a few).¹² The premiere of both works in Rome in the spring of 1959 left the Italian audience baffled. However, when Berberian took *Aria* to Darmstadt that summer, the attendees were enthralled—and, as Osmond-Smith mentions, “many young composers went away with enlarged perspectives on what might be demanded by the human voice.”¹³

Since Berberian’s performances of *Aria* in 1959 created a stir in the avant-garde community, more and more composers wanted to write specifically for her—in the following months alone: Sylvano Bussotti’s *Voix de femme* (1959), Franco Donatoni’s *Serenata* (1959), Angelo Paccagnini’s *Brevi Canti* (1959), and Bruno Maderna’s *Dimensioni II* (1960). But Berberian’s fame as an interpreter of contemporary music paradoxically drove a wedge between her and her husband. He now, in effect, had to get in line to have her premiere his new compositions.

Berio was invited back to Tanglewood for the summer of 1960, this time to teach courses in composition. Presented with the opportunity to write a new work for voice, Berio eagerly accepted the invitation, foreseeing it as a chance for Berberian’s American debut—featuring his music. In January 1959 he had received a letter from Aaron Copland, then serving as the Tanglewood Music Festival’s director. Writing on behalf of the Fromm Foundation, Copland offered a commission that appealed to Berio:

I assume that you have had a letter from the Fromm Music Foundation offering you a commission to write a work for performance, summer 1959, at Tanglewood. These commissions have been offered for some years past to composers who have formerly been members of the Composition Department at Tanglewood. The School and I personally would be greatly pleased if you could see your way clear to accepting this

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 6.

commission offered. May I suggest a work lasting approximately ten minutes, for an ensemble of not more than four performers, one of which may be a singer if you so wish. Last year we performed at one of our concerts your songs for voice and small ensemble, including harp. These were much appreciated. Would you be good enough to send me an early answer. Yours sincerely, Aaron Copland.”¹⁴

Berio responded that he did not have sufficient time to finish the work by that time, but he offered to have it ready by the following year, to which Copland agreed.¹⁵

From the beginning, Berio crafted *Circles* with Berberian in mind. In a letter to Universal Edition in September of 1960, Berio explicitly states that Berberian “is the only one who could sing ‘Circles.’”¹⁶ In particular, he geared the use of extended vocal techniques (e.g., humming, whispering, *Sprechstimme*, and onomatopoeia) to Berberian’s unique talents, and he systematically matched her distinct vocal colors and techniques with un-pitched sound via percussion (addressed in detail in Chapter 2). But Berio also needed instrumentalists capable of “jazz type” spontaneity. Copland wrote Berio to support the involvement of Berio’s wife and to vouchsafe the availability of the performers Berio wanted:

The Fromm Foundation looks forward to receiving your new work and so far as I know there is no reason why your wife should not be the singer. The two percussion players would be drawn from the Boston Symphony personnel. As you probably know, we now have a quite different type of young percussionist from those in European orchestras. Many of our symphonic percussion players have begun their training as jazz players. For that reason, I don’t think there will be any trouble in securing the “jazz type” of performer you have in mind, who nevertheless is familiar with symphonic requirements.¹⁷

By mid-July 1960, the deadline for the performance loomed. Berberian had only a few weeks to prepare for the Tanglewood performance, since Berio had not yet finished the piece.

¹⁴ Aaron Copland to Luciano Berio, January 22, 1959, Berio Collection, Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel.

¹⁵ Copland to Berio, February 5 1959, PSS, Berio collection.

¹⁶ Berio to Universal Edition, September 13 1960, PSS, Berio collection.

¹⁷ Copland to Berio, September 23 1959, PSS, Berio collection.

The work was finished on July 16. Berio mentions that, in the brief time that they had to rehearse, “Cathy is doing it beautifully.”¹⁸ For the rest of the ensemble, two weeks of rehearsals had to suffice.

By nearly every account, the premiere was a resounding success. Berio notes that the concert was “splendid” and that “*Circles* was performed beautifully: Cathy and the Boston Symphony musicians were great. I am very happy with this work.”¹⁹ Moreover, the premiere got a wonderful review by critic Jay C. Rosenfeld in the *Berkshire Eagle*:

The work that was the peak of the evening was the ‘Circles’ of Luciano Berio . . . The vocalist was Cathy Berberian, the composer’s wife, and no limit should be imposed on the credit due her for the deep impression the performance made. . . . Miss Berberian is a master of graphically conveyed expressiveness. . . . [she] dominated the performance by her personal magnetism. . . . The audience gave the artist and the composer spontaneously enthusiastic acclaim.²⁰

In a letter to Leonard Stein, Berberian offered her own commentary on how *Circles* was received that summer:

Frankly, as much confidence as I have in Luciano’s music, and in “Circles” I certainly never expected that here in America, and in particular this conservative Boston Symphony Orchestra environment, we would have gotten the enthusiastic ovation that we got. . . . I guess, more than anything else, it’s lack of confidence in an American public, this one up here in particular, which is so unused to works of this kind and which might easily have reacted in a grossly negative way.²¹

Clearly, Berberian had come a long way from that uncomfortable encounter with *Wozzeck* at La Scala some ten years earlier. She was now a champion of the vocal avant-garde, to whose repertoire *Circles* and later collaborations with Berio—especially *Visage* (1961), *Epifanie* (1962),

¹⁸ Berio to Schlee, July 16, 1960. PSS, Berio collection.

¹⁹ Berio to Schlee, August 3, 1960. PSS, Berio collection.

²⁰ Jay C. Rosenfeld, “Wild Night at Tanglewood,” *Berkshire Eagle*. Houghton Library Archive, Harvard University.

²¹ Berberian to Stein, 5 August, 1960, Stein Collection, PSS.

and *Sequenza III* (1966)—would richly contribute.

After the premiere, *Circles* enjoyed a brief, but powerful aftermath. For the next few years, Berio organized an aggressive touring and broadcast plan for *Circles*. A massive tour in Europe and the US came in early 1961: concerts in Hamburg and Paris in January, followed by a concert in New York on February 5th, and an American tour during the rest of February. In late March the ensemble returned to Europe, with concerts in Stockholm, Brussels, London, and Venice. In early 1961 Hessischer Rundfunk in Germany broadcast *Circles*. By spring, broadcasts were underway at the WDR in Cologne, Germany. That October, Berberian's performance at the Donaueschingen Musiktage was well received and promoted more interest in the work. In confirmation of Berberian's popularity, 1962 Mainstream Records released the first commercial recording of *Circles*.²²

But two years later Berberian learned of her husband's infidelity. While Berio was teaching composition at Mills College in Oakland, California, he had begun an affair with a young psychology student named Susan Oyama. (They ended up having a child together two years later.) The affair devastated Berberian. While the Italian government at the time did not allow for an official divorce, Berberian was able to file for a declared separation in the fall of 1964; their marriage was eventually annulled in 1972.

Still, Berberian kept close ties with *Circles*. Although her legal rights to *Circles* expired in 1962, she still clung to her "ownership" of the work. In 1964 she maintained that the piece (along with *Epifanie*) was still "partly mine."²³ By the mid 1960s Berberian was pursuing an

²² The personnel were as follows: Jean-Pierre Drouet and Jean-Claude Casadesus (percussion), Francis Pierre (harp), Berberian (voice), and Berio conducted. No other recording appeared until Wergo re-released a compact-disc of the Mainstream recording in 1993. Two years later Christine Schadeberg and Musicians' Accord released the only other commercially available recording of *Circles*.

²³ Berberian to Haubenstock-Ramati, received October 29, 1964, PSS Depositum Universal Edition.

independent career, fostered by collaborations with composers such as Igor Stravinsky (*Elegy for J.F.K.*, 1964), Sylvano Bussotti (*La Passion selon Sade*, 1965), Henri Pousseur (*Votre Faust*, 1966) John Cage (*Song Books*, 1970), and Bruno Maderna (*Ausstrahlung*, 1971). The development of her autonomous career included performances of *Circles* without Berio's participation. She performed the work in Paris in June 1964 in a set of avant-garde theatrical works directed by French director Jean Marie Serreau.²⁴ As Meehan notes, this event marked a new stage in Berberian's career, as she began to add strong visual elements to her concerts, guided by her use of theatrical gesture and interesting costumes.

Though their personal lives continued to diverge, Berio and Berberian maintained a fruitful professional relationship into the early 1970s. But, by the end of the decade, Berberian's health started to deteriorate. She put on a significant amount of weight and her vision began to fail. In spite of her declining health, she continued to travel and concertize, giving nearly 21 performances in 1982.²⁵ But during a trip to Rome to record a performance of *The Internationale* for the RAI, she died of a heart attack on March 6, 1983, at the age of 57.

To commemorate the one-year anniversary of her death, Berio premiered a partially finished piece²⁶ in 1984 dedicated to Berberian, aptly entitled *Requies*.²⁷ Written for chamber

²⁴ Berberian described the experience in her letter to composer and friend Roman Haubenstock-Ramati: "It is a new venture with a combination of all kinds of superior level spectacles: the evening opens with a play (short) by Becket [sic], then a film on Borjes [sic], then avant garde marionettes – after the intermission, we did *Circles*, then there was a film on Dubuffet and finally a wild performance of the Spanish anarchist playwright Valle-Inclán." Berberian to Haubenstock-Ramati, June 28, 1964. PSS, Depositum Universal Edition.

²⁵ Meehan, "Not Just a Pretty Voice," 20.

²⁶ Meehan provides some background information on this work: "The Chamber Orchestra of Lausanne premiered the work, entitled *Requies*, in an incomplete form in March 1984. Berio completed the composition in 1985. The early performance, almost exactly a year after Berberian's death, suggests that Berio rushed to have the work ready as a memorial to her." Meehan, "Not Just a Pretty Voice," 271.

²⁷ "*Requies*" translates to "rest" or "place of rest," as related to "*requiem*," or "mass for the dead."

orchestra, it has no part for voice. Meehan speculates on this: “Perhaps Berio thought that a singer could not pay proper tribute to another.”²⁸ Moreover, after Cathy's death, Berio might have been hesitant to openly eulogize her memory in many words. But *Requies* stands as a final echo of their lives of making music together. In his program notes to the premiere, Berio writes, “An orchestra plays a melody. Or rather, it describes a melody: but only as a shadow can describe an object, or an echo a sound. Unremitting yet discontinuous, the melody unfolds through flash-backs and digressions around a mobile and distant centre, perhaps indecipherable for the listener.”²⁹

²⁸ Meehan, “Not Just a Pretty Voice,” 271.

²⁹ Berio, program notes for *Requies*. Website of the Centro Studi Luciano Berio, www.lucianoberio.org [Accessed May 10, 2012].

Chapter 2

Berio's Treatment of Cummings's Text

Edward Estlin Cummings, a.k.a., “e.e. cummings” (1894-1962), wrote nearly 2,900 poems, two autobiographical novels, four plays, and a series of essays. His themes range from love and nature to violence, the surreal, and the erotic. Known for his unconventional approaches to grammar and syntax, Cummings also experimented with the visual structure in many of his poems, via punctuation, parentheses, capitalization, and spacing.

Norma Pollack notes that nearly 168 of Cummings's poems have been used in 370 compositions by approximately 143 composers, most of them American.¹ Consider a few examples of the latter. One of the earliest settings of Cummings's works is Aaron Copland's “Poet's Song,” for voice and piano (1927). John Cage wrote three works that used poems by Cummings—his “5 Songs for Voice and Piano” (1938), as well as two works intended for dance: “Forever and Sunsmell,” for one voice and two percussionists (1942), and “Experiences No. 2,” for solo voice (1948). Scored for soprano, cello, and piano, Morton Feldman's “4 Songs to e.e. cummings” (1951), sets four poem by Cummings: “air,” “!blac,” “moan,” and “(sitting in a tree-).” Other works (contemporaneous to *Circles*) were Peter Schickele's “3 Choruses from Cummings” (1960) and Ned Rorem's setting of Cummings's “in the rain,” in his song cycle, “Poems of Love and the Rain” (1962-63). Composer/conductor Leonard Bernstein (who premiered the revised five-movement version of Berio's *Sinfonia* in 1970) completed his “Songfest” for six solo voices in 1973, which included a poem by Cummings titled “If you can't eat you got to,” scored for tenor solo.

¹ Norma Pollack “Poems of Cummings Set to Music,” *The Journal of the E. E. Cummings Society* 4 (Spring 1995): 121.

While individual motivations differ, the majority of the composers, in Pollack's words, tended to "avoid transforming into music poems that are satirical, political, polemical, graphically sexual or violent in content . . . and those that lack musical qualities and visual imagery." Rather, they opted to "gravitate toward the traditional subject matter of lyric poetry, such as nature, love, subjectivity, and the cycle of life and death, and toward those poems that communicate significance and effect via intense sensory means—kinetic, visual, aural."²

Berio's relationship with Cummings is neither clear nor well documented. There are three extant letters that chronicle Berio's correspondence with Cummings in the fall of 1960. The first letter, now in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, is dated October 21, 1960, reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Cummings,

I am deeply sorry that in spite of all my efforts, I was not able to contact you personally while I was in the States working on "Circles", my composition based on your poems (# 25, 76, and 221 of the "Collected Poems"). I cannot believe that you really know how difficult it is to get in touch with you. My friend Edgar Varese also tried, but in vain.

I understand that you are in Europe at present. In the hopes that this letter of mine will reach you, I would like to ask you if there is any possibility of meeting you. Since I shall be travelling extensively in Europe within the next two months, it is possible that our steps may cross somewhere.

The reason I would like to meet you is not merely a musical one: in these last few years, that is, since my knowledge of the English language has become more substantial, I have finally been able to approach that which interests me most in contemporary literature – your works and those of James Joyce. In consequence, I have developed several ideas and projects which I would like very much to discuss with you.

As you know, I would also like to have your kind permission for the use of your poems in "Circles". Since numerous performances of the piece have been requested in Europe, as well as in the States, this season, it would be advisable to have your clearance on this matter as soon as possible in order to confirm performing dates with the necessary advance notice.

² Pollock, "Poems of Cummings," 129.

Concerning the performance of “Circles” at Tanglewood, I should like to clarify the matter. It was a performance by invitation only, not for a paying public. The fact that it was reviewed was unexpected and incidental. As you may know, however, I did try my best to contact you before the performance but without any result.

My wife, who performed in “Circles” at Tanglewood, joins me in hoping to meet you soon, and encloses a review of that performance which may be of interest to you.

Looking forward to hearing from you, I remain – Sincerely, Luciano Berio.³

While noting Cummings’s notorious elusiveness, Berio appears civil in asking to set Cummings’s poem to music, even though *Circles* had already been premiered by Berberian at Tanglewood that summer.

Cummings’s response, November 16, 1960, is mostly businesslike, specifying some of the corrections that he wanted Berio to honor in his published version of *Circles*. Yet the letter also includes an invitation:

Dear Mr. Berio—

herewith my permission, as requested in your letter of October 21; which greeted me on my return from Europe.

please understand that whenever someone "sets" a poem of mine I insist on seeing his score simply as a means of making sure he hasn't miscopied or otherwise mangled my work. (Manglers, as you're doubtless aware, are legion). As for the score of your Circles, I find no miscopyings except on sheet 29--where "dream send" should be "dream-send", "moan loll" should be "moan-loll", "mist flower" should be "mist-flowers", & "ghost" should be "ghosts". Kindly make these corrections (pencilled by me in this sheet's margins) & also change the footnote on the 1st sheet to read "from Poems 1923-1954, published by Harcourt, Brace; NewYorkCity" (the above book having luckily superceded my miscalled Collected Poems).

I hope that, when you're next hereabouts, you'll telephone ORegon 5-5374; & arrange with Marion to drop in, with your wife, some afternoon for a cup of tea or a drink (or both). Sincerely, E.E. Cummings. [P.S.] am returning the sheets of *Circles* to Miss McCarthy, who has generously undertaken to forward them to the proper address.⁴

³ Berio to Cummings, October 21, 1960, Houghton Library Archive, Harvard University.

⁴ Cummings to Berio, November 16, 1960, Paul Sacher Stiftung, Berio Collection.

In spite of his concerns that Berio might have had “miscopied or otherwise mangled [his] work,” Cummings extends a hand of friendship to Berio and his wife Cathy—a feeling that is reciprocated in Berio’s response dated November 24th. In this third letter, Berio expresses how he is “deeply grateful” for his correspondence and that he will honor the necessary revisions that Cummings specified. Moreover, Berio invites Cummings to a performance of *Circles* on February 5th at The New School in New York City, and thanks Cummings for his inspiring work.

Dear Mr. Cummings,

I am deeply grateful to you for your letter. I was aware of the missing hyphens you had mentioned in your letter, as well as the “s” in “ghosts” and had already corrected them. Now I am revising a few more things: in the development of poem #224, increasing musically its “work in progress” qualities (the “open form”, I’d say). I am also revising musically the second appearance of poem #25. My wife and I will be arriving in New York at the end of January and we will start our tour which is based on “Circles” with 2 performances at the New School around February 5th. I hope that you will be able to attend at least one of these 2 performances and I hope that in hearing it you will get back musically at least a part of what I received from your poems, for which I am indebted to you. Naturally, Cathy and I will be delighted to meet you at your home. Soon after we arrive in New York we will call and arrange for it,

Our very best wishes to you,
Sincerely,
Luciano Berio.⁵

The archives at the Houghton Library and the Paul Sacher Foundation do not contain any other correspondences between Berio and Cummings. Whether or not Berio and Cummings had any conversations regarding the “several ideas and projects” that Berio expressed excitement about in the October 21 letter is unknown. From this documentation, it appears that their friendship and collaboration was rather short-lived, particularly since *Circles* was finished just two years before Cummings’s death in 1962.

⁵ Berio to Cummings, October 21, 1960. Houghton Library Archive, Harvard University. See Appendix 2.1 and 2.2 for photocopies of these letters.

Berio credits his ongoing interests in the English language to Italian semiotician and author Umberto Eco (ca. mid-1950s).⁶ Berio, Eco, and Berberian collaborated on a radio program entitled, *Onomatopoea nel linguaggio poetico* (“onomatopoeia in poetic language”), which involved literary works by Edgar Allen Poe, Dylan Thomas, and W. H. Auden.⁷ This collaboration evolved into a more fully-fledged work—one that typifies Berio’s interests in English texts at the time—his *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)*, a work featuring Cathy Berberian’s voice, finished in 1958.⁸

As an outsider to the English language, Berio confessed that in *Thema*, his attraction to Joyce’s work was primarily for its onomatopoeic properties, mentioning how “*Ulysses* is a triumph of onomatopoeia.”⁹ In *Thema*, Berio’s use of Joyce’s text centers on the “Sirens” chapter in *Ulysses*, whose content is itself centered on music. David Osmond-Smith, in his monograph on Berio, comments on the composer’s approach to *Thema*:

Joyce had extracted from his musicalized narrative a mosaic that developed its own semantic and musical potentials. Berio now extracted from that mosaic purely musical

⁶ Luciano Berio, *Two Interviews with Rosanna Dalmonte and Bálint András Varga*, translated and edited by David Osmond-Smith (New York: Marion Boyars, 1985), 142. Berio, in this interview states, “I met Eco in Milan in the mid-fifties. We soon discovered that we took a similar interest in poetry and within it, onomatopoeia: I introduced him to linguistics and he introduced me to Joyce. . . . Without Eco *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* wouldn’t exist. Both of us were fascinated by onomatopoeia in poetry and after having gone through Italian literature, we addressed ourselves to Joyce.” Berio, *Two Interviews*, 142.

⁷ David Osmond-Smith, *Berio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 61. Berio’s work *Nones*, was inspired by Auden’s poem of the same name which represented the Passion of Christ, as well as the agony of modern man. This collaboration is also addressed in Chapter 1.

⁸ Berio used the work of James Joyce for many vocal works in the 1950s and early 60s—resulting in compositions like *Chamber Music* (1953), and *Epifanie* (1959-1961), both of which are based on texts by Joyce. Osmond-Smith comments on the genesis of *Thema*: “All three [Berio, Berberian, and Eco] would gather at the Via Moscatti apartment for supper, then get to work. Berberian read a passage from *Ulysses* in English, and Eco followed with the same passage in French (there was as yet no reliable Italian translation). They were fascinated by the onomatopoeic qualities of the ‘overture’ to the Sirens chapter – and decided to try for a radio programme on onomatopoeia in English literature, scripted by Leydi, and concluding with Berio’s electronic elaboration upon Joyce’s text, read in several languages.” David Osmond-Smith, “The Tenth Oscillator: The Work of Cathy Berberian 1958-1966,” *Tempo* 58 (January 2004): 3. (see Chapter 1 for more discussion of this).

⁹ Berio, *Two Interviews*, 142-43.

elements, and used them to explore the borderline where sound as the bearer of linguistic sense dissolves into sound as the bearer of musical meaning: a territory that over the next decade he was to make very much his own.¹⁰

By dealing with an English text primarily in the terms of its acoustic properties, Berio treats a text as, what Osmond-Smith calls, “a quarry for phonetic materials.”¹¹

In his letter to Cummings dated October 21, 1960, Berio admits that since his facility with the English language had much improved, he was able to engage more directly with the works of Joyce and Cummings.¹² Thus, Berio’s early experiences with these two authors opened the door to subsequent pieces that drew upon more work by English-language authors: James Joyce again in *Epifanie* (1961), Samuel Beckett in *Sinfonia* (1968), and W.H. Auden in *Un re in ascolto* (1984).

In *Circles*, Berio (with Berberian’s assistance) chose three poems by Cummings (the only works by Cummings that he set to music): “stinging,” “riverly is a flower,” and “n(o)w.”¹³ The two poems “stinging” and “riverly is a flower” both appeared in a collection of works entitled *Tulips and Chimneys*, published in 1923.¹⁴ The poem “n(o)w” comes from a later collection, called *Viva* (1931). While Berio’s selection of Cummings’s poems was largely based upon their acoustic qualities, semantics still played a role.

¹⁰ Osmond-Smith, *Berio*, 62.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹² This passage from the letter reads: “The reason I would like to meet you is not merely a musical one: in these last few years, that is, since my knowledge of the English language has become more substantial, I have finally been able to approach that which interests me most in contemporary literature – your works and those of James Joyce. In consequence, I have developed several ideas and projects which I would like very much to discuss with you.” Berio to Cummings, October 21, 1960. Houghton Library Archive, Harvard University.

¹³ See Appendix 2.3 for complete poems.

¹⁴ “Stinging” come from one half the collection, from a subchapter of “Tulips” called “Impressions,” while “Riverly is a Flower” come from the second half “Chimneys,” under the heading “Sonnets-Realities.”

“Stinging” appears in the first and fifth movements of *Circles*. Its original title was actually “Sunset,” first published in an earlier collection of poems titled *Broom*, dated July of 1922. It later appeared in a set of five poems named “Impressions,” all of which capture city imagery related to changes of light in the course of a day (e.g., the late afternoon sky, sunsets, twilight settings—all part of what Milton Cohen calls a “diurnal cycle.”¹⁵ Appearing as the concluding poem in this set, the imagery of “stinging” functions as the last link in this description of a process. Cohen nicely observes how “‘stinging’ overlaps the nightfall of ‘the hours’ by moving from the late-afternoon gold on church spires, through the sunset rose of the bells, to the “dream / S” of night.”¹⁶ Berio’s use of a poem that deals with “cyclical motions of nature”¹⁷ clearly befits a piece like *Circles*.

Set in Movement III of *Circles*, “n(o)w” is part of a series of seven poems whose content is centered on sky, weather, and landscapes. In this collection, the poem that immediately precedes “n(o)w” deals with the transition from autumn to winter, while the one that follows describes a sunrise or moonrise.¹⁸ Emphasizing phases of transition, the context and the content of “n(o)w” make it strongly akin to “stinging.” Offering an evocation of a thunderstorm, the imagery of “n(o)w” portrays the darkness before the storm, the ensuing lightning and thunder, and the disintegration of the storm as the sky clears. Indeed, these turbulent qualities present in “n(o)w” are mirrored by the volatile character of Movement III, a climactic point in the work characterized by its cacophonous percussion and the disintegration of its text.

¹⁵ Milton A. Cohen, *Poet and Painter: The Aesthetics of E. E. Cummings’s Early Work*. (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 176.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁸ Rushworth M. Kidder, *E. E. Cummings: An Introduction to the Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) 93-95.

For Movements II and IV, *Circles* uses “riverly is a flower,” which fluctuates between water imagery (e.g., “riverly,” “rain,” “cloud-gloss,” “mist-flowers”) and ruminations on death and the macabre (“tomb,” “morte carved smiles,” “moan-loll,” “ghosts”).¹⁹ While the poem’s language does not echo the nature-cyclical imagery in the other two poems, its focus on death and the metaphysical probably project the “circle of life” as it relates to transition and process.

Aside from the themes of cyclical change in these poems, two broader dimensions to the poems held great appeal for Berio (and Berberian): the visual and the phonetic.

Cummings’s use of typographical space set him apart from most of his literary peers. This clearly interested Berio. In an interview with Bálint András Varga, Berio explains in detail why he was attracted to Cummings’s work when composing *Circles*.

V: *Circles* is indeed a unique alloy of music and poetry. I felt while listening to it that the music influenced the poetry, gave it new meaning and raised it on to a different plane.

B: That was precisely my objective. Sometimes the visual aspect of the cummings poems reminds me of a battlefield, you could also say that the different elements of the words copulate with one another to form new words. It is all very expressive and forceful, and naturally it conditions the musical realization. I grouped the instruments around the text, reflecting the phonetic families so that the sound is sometimes short-circuited and explodes.²⁰

As mentioned above, the visual aspect of “n(o)w”²¹—the least typographically conventional of the three—provides the best example of how “the words copulate with one another to form new

¹⁹ An anonymous online source offers some elucidation: “The text offers us an odd grouping of watery imagery coupled with thoughts of death. These “riverly” ideas (riverly means, you guessed it, like a river) are musically painted by little trills that mimic the sounds of a babbling brook or river and continue through most of the movement. The only time these trills cease is on the mention of death and/or pain. Words like “tomb,” “anguish,” “moan-loll,” “morte carved smiles,” and “ghosts” all cause the end or at least temporary pause of these water sounds. The last line “sly slim gods stare” (stare is sung spookily without vibrato) brings a quiet, pensive section that evokes the idea of someone being watched. This line is repeated and quietly closes the movement.” <http://www.angelfire.com/mac/encheeze/circles.html> -- [accessed April 24, 2012].

²⁰ Berio, *Two Interviews*, 144.

²¹ See Appendix 2.3 for complete poem.

words.” Sentences and individual words are chopped up, reordered, and assigned oddly placed parentheses and capitalizations. New meanings necessarily emerge.

The final sentence from Varga’s interview excerpt suggests the other key facet of Cummings’s poems that inspired Berio—the phonetic. In particular, the phonetic properties of Cummings’s text shape Berio’s use of instrumentation. In the interview with Varga, Berio makes his intentions clear: “I did not write a piece for solo voice with instrumental accompaniment, but rather one where there is a very strong connection between the phonetic quality of the text and the musical texture.”²² In *Remembering the Future*, a recently published collection of lectures delivered by Berio at Harvard University in 1993-94, the composer gives even more detail:

The three cummings poems take on the role of generators of musical and/or acoustical functions. . . . The choice and use of the percussion instruments and of the harp are dictated by specific phonetic models: the instruments play, so to speak, the voice and the words. They play different modes of attack, vowels and consonants (fricatives, sibilants, plosives, and so on). The instruments translate and prolong the vocal behaviors, insisting upon them, in a sort of onomatopoeia or, rather, vocal-instrumental bilingualism.²³

Cathy Berberian’s own comments on the genesis of *Circles* confirm Berio’s assertions. It was her initial reading aloud of Cummings’s poems that influenced how Berio correlated the

²² Berio, *Two Interviews*, 144. Berio elaborates upon this in the interview, “Certainly, *Thema* was of basic significance in my work because through it I experienced the text not as a closed, unchangeable object but as one whose meaning and sound both allow the proliferation of new functions. *Circles*, written two years later, is in many ways related to the basic idea of *Thema*. Here, too, I worked with an English text -- three poems by e.e. cummings which form a transition from the simple to the complex. I did not write a piece for solo voice with instrumental accompaniment, but rather one where there is a very strong connection between the phonetic quality of the text and the musical texture. The poems generate or determine innumerable musical events and the vocal part often seems to be generated by the instrumental ones. That is how I was able to explore the intrinsic quality of the poetry. The musical material was so complex that I felt I had to return to the same poems a second time, in the following order: 1-2-3-2-1. However, the second time round the second poem is linked to musical material from the first setting of the first poem.” Berio, *Two Interviews*, 144.

²³ Luciano Berio, *Remembering the Future*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 118.

instrumentalists with her voice; here Cathy's voice influenced the use of percussion, as well as vice versa:

Luciano picked out three poems by Cummings and asked me to read them as I wanted to, paying attention to the particular distribution of the text, the unusual word breaks, and the capital letters that emphasized certain sounds. Then he wrote out the relationship between me and the instrumentalists, who were to produce sounds similar to the word that I was pronouncing, and I was to adjust the sound of the spoken word to the sound of the instruments. For example, the word "sting-" at the beginning corresponds exactly to the sound of the harp. This was a completely new kind of interaction for me, a kind of permanent exchange, an extraordinarily stimulating challenge.²⁴

While Berberian apparently read the poems in a way that suited her, she took cues from their visual arrangement (e.g., "the distribution of the text" etc.). Moreover, the fluid exchange between instrument and voice that Berberian describes supports Berio's aforementioned notion of how "vocal-instrumental bilingualism" is essential to the piece.

The limited amount of relevant archival materials makes it difficult to trace the influence that Cummings's typography directly had on Berio's compositional process in *Circles*. However, a close reading of "Document S" (i.e., the "stinging" document) substantiates the relationship between the text's phonetic dimension and the work's instrumentation in Berio's setting of "stinging" in Movement V.

"Document S" is the only surviving sketch housed at the Sacher Foundation Archive that documents Berio's work with Cummings's poem "stinging." In this document, Berio groups words according to their phonetic makeup, not their actual meaning. Document S also lays out all of the creative options that these 31 words offer. Berio exhibits his sensitivity to the sounds of the words in this poem in three ways: (1) he realigns words according to their shared phonetic

²⁴ Universal Edition Website: http://www.universaledition.com/Luciano-Berio/composers-and-works/composer/54/work/1619/work_introduction [Accessed May 17, 2012].

properties; (2) he color codes specific vowels and consonants; and (3) he underlines and enumerates certain vowel sounds.

Berio begins by taking the fifteen-line original²⁵ and arranging it into thirty lines, with almost every word given its own line.²⁶ In order to vertically align words, Berio expands and condenses their typographical space, resulting in four columns. This new alignment groups words according to their shared phonetic properties.²⁷

Column One only contains consonants. Most of these consonants are sibilant fricatives (e.g., /s/ in “swarms”), while some are sibilant affricatives (e.g., /ch/ in “chants”). All of these consonants are in first position (i.e., they begin a given word), and the most popular sibilant found in Column One is /s/, appearing six times.²⁸ Column Two aligns consonant clusters. Some begin with fricatives (e.g., /st/ in “stinging”), and others begin with affricatives (e.g., /th/ in “the”).²⁹ Every word aligned and circled in black in Column Three contains plosive consonants. Some occur at the beginning of a word (e.g., “gold,” “bells,” and “tall”), while others occur in the middle of a word (e.g., the first /g/ in “stinging” and the /t/ in “litanies”). In Column Four, four words are aligned according to their vowel sounds, and all four of these words in Column Four end with consonants.³⁰

²⁵ See Appendix 2.3 for original poem.

²⁶ The exception to this is “fat bells” in line 20 (refer to Appendix 2.4 for full sketch of Document S).

²⁷ See sketch of Document S in Appendix 2.4.

²⁸ The fricative /s/ appears in the first word of the poem, and in isolated form at the conclusion of the entire poem.

²⁹ The one exception of a word that has a consonant cluster made of a plosive consonant is the /d/ in “dragging.”

³⁰ It appears that Column Four of Document S was an afterthought, since the typed appearances of “with,” “lewd,” “wind,” are crossed out, and their subsequent placement in Column Four is hand-written.

Berio uses black, blue, red, and green pencil to identify the different families of consonants and vowels in this poem. He tallies their frequency in the left-hand column of the sketch using Arabic numerals. Black is reserved for consonants, usually in first position. Blue is only used for consonants that are found in final position (e.g., the final /s/ in “spires,” “chants,” and “bells”). Green and red only apply to vowels. All vowels circled in green represent more or less the same vowel sound (e.g., “the” and “bells,”³¹ with the exception of “fat” and “and”). Only five vowels are circled in red. Three of the five share one vowel sound (“swarms,” “upon,” “tall”); the other two share a different one (“gold” and “rose”).

Almost every remaining vowel in Document S that has not been circled in green is underscored in black and red. Each underscore is also assigned a number, starting with the two “i’s” in “stinging” (labeled numbers 1 and 2), and ending with “dream” (labeled number 17). Moreover, almost all of these underlined vowels are either long “ē” or short “i” sounds. While the meaning of this enumeration is not immediately apparent, it seems that Berio is thinking in terms of serial operations by applying a series of numbers to a set of related vowel sounds.

Overall, Document S shows Berio’s systematic interpretation of the phonetic makeup of Cummings’s poem.³² Berio’s spatial rearrangement of the poem’s words clearly differentiates

³¹ The equating of the two vowel sounds in “the” and “bells” in Document S suggests some imprecision in Berio’s mental pronunciation. This demonstrates some of the awkwardness that Berio probably encountered in setting a text that was not in his native tongue.

³² Berio’s written annotations in Italian on Document S are cryptic. While I had no previous encounter with Berio’s cursive handwriting, I made every attempt to translate his notes here with the generous help of Kate Meehan, who had already been at the Sacher Archive for several months. A fragmented translation of these annotations amounts to the following (untranslatable words are in italics): “harp and close to the presence of sound, suggestion of (articulation, *armisme*, etc.) voice and articulation always less and less sound, then the three instruments repeat in short *steno* for last of gradual unification.” At the bottom of the poem, Berio writes: “voce – arpa uguale” “voice and harp equal”). To the right of the poem (next to “lewd”) reads: “sempre + simili (sulla stesso piano)” – “always the same and on the same plane.” The remaining annotations in English and Italian are fairly discernable, self-explanatory, and do not have a strong bearing on the interpretation of this document. Since the Sacher Foundation does not furnish photocopies of archival documents to researchers until a paper is ready to be bound or published, further work in this area will be pursued once a photocopy is in hand, and when I have had more contact with Berio’s handwritten script.

between what Berio calls the “phonetic families”: Column 1 groups only sibilant fricative or affricative consonants, while Column 3 aligns only plosive consonants. Moreover, Column 1 shows that Berio is particularly attracted to sibilants, as half of the fourteen consonants that are circled in black and aligned in Column 1 are sibilant consonants.

* * *

In Movement V, Berio employs 22 different percussion instruments. How systematically does he utilize them in relationship to Cummings’s text? Moreover, how does Berio (as stated in an interview) “group the instruments around the text, reflecting the phonetic families”³³ of the words in the poem? These are questions I hope to answer, at least in part, in what follows.

Based upon the varying rates of decay and levels of fixed pitch, I group the twenty-two instruments into five categories: (see Table 2.1)

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Un-pitched Quick Decay	Un-pitched Prolonged Decay	Semi-Tuned Quick Decay	Pitched Slower Decay	Pitched Prolonged Decay
Mexican bean Hi-hat (closed) Maracas	Chinese gong Tam tam Suspended cymbals Hi-hat (open)	Log drum Clap cymbal Tom tom Large bongos Snare drum Tamburo basco Foot pedal Bass drum	Marimbaphone Unpedaled vibes Lujon Cencerros	Chimes Glockenspiel Vibraphone Harp Celesta

At the far right of Table 2.1, we see that the chimes, glockenspiel, vibraphone (without damper pedal), harp, and celesta all represent one extreme of pitch specificity and prolonged decay. At the opposite extreme, the Mexican bean, closed hi-hat, and maracas are all un-pitched percussion

³³ Berio, *Two Interviews*, 144.

instruments characterized by their quick rate of decay. In between these two categories are three groups of instruments: “Group 4” has all pitched instruments but with a slower rate of decay (marimbaphone, unpedaled vibraphone, lujon, and cencerros); “Group 3” are all semi-tuned instruments with a quicker rate of decay (log drum, clap cymbal, tom tom, large bongos, snare drum, tamburo basco, foot pedal, bass drum). “Group 2” has un-pitched instruments but with a more prolonged decay (Chinese gong, tam tam, suspended cymbals, open hi-hat).

Taking into account Document S, one sees in Movement V Berio concertedly aligning fricative, affricative, or plosive consonants with specific instruments—instruments whose timbre, type of attack, and/or rate of decay aim to match the quality of a particular consonant sound. This deliberate alignment of consonants with the percussion and harp is a prime illustration of how “the instruments translate and prolong the vocal behaviors”—what Berio calls, “vocal-instrumental bilingualism.”³⁴ In the case of fricative consonants, the frictional quality of the consonant /s/, for example, is meant to correlate with the timbre of the suspended cymbal. With the case of plosive consonants, the aspirated and sharp attacks found in plosives like /b/ and /t/ are matched with accented harp attacks, and short, accented, mallet-struck percussion (e.g., marimbaphone, damper pedaled vibraphone, and lujon). By immediately following their corollary phoneme(s), the instrumentation is meant to *prolong* the quality of a certain phoneme; in other, more limited cases, by preceding their corollary phoneme(s), the sonority of the instrumentation is translated into a “vocal behavior,” thus *anticipating* the timbre of a part of a word.

Berio is very attracted to the sibilant consonants in the text, and as we have seen, notes their placement within a given word. He aligns thirteen sibilant consonants in Column 1 of

³⁴ Berio, *Remembering the Future*, 118.

Document S. From this array, Berio selects a set of six sibilants and matches them with a set of percussion instruments in Movement V.

Berio matches the frictional quality of the fricative and affricative consonants /s/, /th/, and /ch/ with the timbres of the Mexican bean, maracas, hi-hat, and/or suspended cymbal (see Table 2.2).

Fricative/Affricative Consonants		Prolonged Decay		Quick Decay	
		A l l		U n - p i t c h e d	
		Suspended Cymbal	Hi-hat	Maracas and Mexican Bean	
fric.	/s/ “stinging”		X	X	
	/s/ “swarms”	X			
	/s/ “dreams”	X			
affr.	/th/ “the spires”		X		
	/th/ “the litanies”		X		
	/ch/ “chants”	X			

There are two cases where the fricative consonant sound /th/ is directly accompanied by the hi-hat: in “the” before “the spires” (see Appendix, 2.5 - full score, p. 67), and in “the” before “the litanies” (full score p. 67). In the first case, the hi-hat precedes the utterance of /th/, and in the second case, the hi-hat follows it. Also, /s/, the fricative consonant that begins Movement V, is immediately preceded by the Mexican bean, hi-hat, and maracas (as well as large bongos and harp, see p. 66 of full score). Moreover, there are three instances where the suspended cymbal prolongs the timbre of the sibilants /s/ and /ch/: (1) the /s/ that ends “swarms” (see Appendix full score, p. 66); (2) the /ch/ that begins “chants” (full score p. 67); and (3) at the very close of the piece—the /s/ that terminates the word “dreams.”

There are twelve plosive consonants aligned in Column 3 of Document S. From these, Berio selects seven plosives and groups them with a set of percussion instruments (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3					
Plosive Consonants	All hard mallet struck, quick decay				
	Harp with accent	Cencerros	Lujon	Vibraphone (dampened)	Marimba
/g/ “stinging”	X		X		X
/g/ “gold”	X	X			
/g/ “great”	X	X	X	X	
/b/ “bells”(p. 67)	X			X	X
/d/ “lewd”	X		X	X	X
/b/ “bells”(p. 68)	X		X	X	X
/t/ “tall”	X			X	X

There are three instances where the plosive /g/ is matched with mallet-struck, quickly decaying percussion, and short, accented attacks in the harp. For example, the first /g/ in “stinging”³⁵ is met with the marimbaphone, lujon, and harp, as well as the simultaneous striking of the tamburo basco, snare drum, and foot pedal bass drum by the second percussionist (see full score p. 66). The two /g/’s in “gold” and “great” show a similar approach. The plosive /g/ in “gold” correlates with the mallet-struck cencerros³⁶ and the sixteenth notes in the harp, while the /g/ in “great” is similarly met with cencerros, accented harp attack, as well as accented, hard mallet attacks in the lujon and vibraphone.

The remaining four instances show how the plosives /b/, /d/, and /t/ are treated in a similar manner. The timbre of the plosives that begin “tall” and “bells” (first appearance, p. 67) are both met by the timbre of the marimbaphone, harp, and vibraphone. In the case of the word “bells” (first appearance), all three instruments use accented attack, with the marimbaphone and pedaled vibraphone in quick decay. With “tall” all three of these instruments also have accented attack, but with a comparatively longer rate of decay (see Table 2.3).

³⁵ Cathy Berberian’s performance definitely accentuates the plosive quality of this /g/, rather than let it be obscured as a mere part of a consonant blend “-ng.”

³⁶ This is a Spanish name for cowbell.

Berio treats the remaining two plosives in a like fashion. In particular, the /d/ in “lewd” and the /b/ in “bells” (second instance, full score p. 68) present an interesting case. Here, an instance of accented, hard mallet-struck instruments with rapid decay (coupled with accented, short notes in the harp) is inserted between two plosives: the /d/ that ends “lewd,” and the /b/ that begins “bells.”³⁷ The set of percussion instruments employed here closely resembles those used in the other five plosives discussed above: i.e., here Berio uses the marimba, lujon, and pedaled vibraphone, as well as short, accented notes in the harp. In this way, the “translation” of the “vocal behaviors” is fluid: the choice of percussion *anticipates* a related timbre stated by a plosive in the vocal line, which then leads to the subsequent timbre of the percussion—creating in effect, what Berio calls, “vocal-instrumental bilingualism.”

In his musical setting of “stinging,” clearly Berio does not take advantage of every consonant identified in his annotation of this text. Of the eight appearances of /th/ in the poem, it appears that only two of them are intended to match the timbre of the percussion (e.g., the hi-hat). Contrastingly, of the twelve plosive consonants presented in Column 3 of Document S, seven of them are deliberately matched with the appropriate percussion. With the case of the vowel sounds colored and enumerated in Document S, it is difficult to ascertain how systematically these sketched ideas play out in the finished score. Perhaps missing documentation and actual sketches of the musical setting used in Movement V could provide some useful clues.

Berio’s treatment of vowels proves more elusive. If plosives tend to be met by short, accented, mallet percussion, and if fricatives tend to be matched with frictional-sounding, un-pitched instruments like the suspended cymbal, one might suspect that certain long vowel sounds would be met with instruments characterized by a comparatively longer rate of decay (and a

³⁷ It must be mentioned that while the /t/ from “fat” does qualify as a plosive, due to the fact that it is neither circled, nor aligned as being related to the plosives in Columns 3 and 4 of Document S, it appears that Berio ignored this plosive, and that it did not serve his creative needs.

greater level of fixed pitch). The most plausible examples of such treatment appear in the setting of the last few words in the poem. The extended melisma on the long vowel sounds of *ē* in “sea” is prolonged by the first appearance of the chimes, as well as sustained half notes in the harp and the un-dampened vibraphone. The final vowel to close the work, the long *ē* in “dreams,” is prolonged by slowly decaying notes in the chimes, vibraphone, and harp. This switch towards chimes and sustained vibraphone at the end of the movement represents a shift toward one extreme of the instruments laid out in Table 2.1 (“Group 5”). Here, the instrumentation used to close the work is characterized by its sense of fixed pitch and prolonged rate of decay—quite different from the instrumentation used to begin the movement (i.e., “Group 1” in Table 2.1). Thus, in the course of Movement V, Berio’s instrumentation runs the range of the percussion laid out in Table 2.1—from quickly decaying un-pitched percussion, through final statements of pitched percussion using a comparatively slower rate of decay.

But, after such close inspection of momentary effects, one should note the larger implications: the techniques employed here by Berio draw upon his work in the electronic studio. For example, the way that a vocal timbre is deliberately preceded and followed by a specific set of percussion timbres resembles echo and pre-echo in works that employ magnetic tape.³⁸ Moreover, in *Remembering the Future*, Berio specifically explains how his approach to *Visage* (a 1961 tape piece featuring Berberian’s voice) and *Circles* was quite similar: “I was particularly involved in developing different degrees and modes of continuity between the human voice, instruments, and a poetic text, or between vocal sound-families and interrelated electronic sounds.

³⁸ The Audio Engineering Society (AES) aptly defines the phenomenon of “pre-echo.” “Print-through is the undesired low level transfer of magnetic fields from one layer of analog tape to another layer on the tape reel. Preprint, also known as pre-echo, is the print-through signal that is on the outer layer of tapewind, thereby preceding the recorded signal. Postprint, or post-echo, is when the print-through signal follows the recorded signal.” The result of this process is a “shadow” presence of an audio artifact that precedes its actual completed appearance. <http://www.aes.org/aeshc/docs/3mtape/printthrough.pdf> [Accessed May 10, 2012].

Circles . . . and *Visage* . . . were the result of this development.”³⁹ Overall, Berio shapes vocal sounds in *Circles* according to their proposed relationship to other non-vocal, often un-pitched, complexes of sound. As we have seen, the opposite is also true, since these complexes of sound can affect the vocal line. He accomplishes all of this in a manner similar to how he creates “modes of continuity” between the voice and “interrelated electronic timbres” in a work like *Visage*.

In the case of *Circles*, the intentions illustrated in Document S make this document akin to the sketches analyzed in the following chapter (Documents A-G). In every sketch, Berio lays out an array of materials and options at the outset of his creative process. However, as we shall see, when compared to Documents A-G, Document S offers far less from which to infer. Nevertheless, this one page—the only extant document that deals with the treatment of the text in *Circles*—serves as an outline of the phonetic possibilities that made Cummings’s poem appealing to Berio. From this outline, Berio, in a liberal, yet reasonably systematic fashion, develops a multi-layered amalgam between text and timbre, voice and instrument.

³⁹ Berio, *Remembering the Future*, 18.

Chapter 3

The Pitch Sketches

Some observers note Berio's early "rejection" of serialism.¹ But one should not oversimplify either Berio's opinions or their context. He did indeed reject the "scholastic" nature of textbook serialism and its fixation with "controlling" musical parameters. He criticized serialism for tending to become "an immobile, static world revolving around itself." But he also saw "the serialist's means [as] fundamental," and serial technique an important "spiritual situation of the early fifties" that one could not ignore in composing.

In some ways, serialism had died almost as soon as it was born. Its pioneer, Pierre Boulez, used principles from Messiaen's *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités* to construct his hyper-serialized *Structures Book I* for two pianos (1952). But, he said, "my serial period was a couple of months only . . . because I saw immediately that such a strict technique does not favor, really, imagination."² We witness a similar ambivalence in other composers best known as serialists. By the mid-1950s, as Berio would later say, the technique was "fundamental," but one had to always adapt it into something more flexible—as Boulez did in his best-known work of the period, *Le marteau sans maître* (1955), Stockhausen did in his *Kreuzspiel* (1951), and so forth.

So where does that leave the scholar trying to understand Berio's use of pitch? He had a "serial period,"³ to be sure, though even that had a certain flexibility. The major work of that

¹ David Roth, "Luciano Berio on New Music: an Interview with David Roth" *Musical Opinion* 99 (Sept. 1976): 548. All of the citations in quotations in this paragraph are drawn from this interview.

² Pierre Boulez, interview on *Overtones* (syndicated radio series), KBYU-FM, January 13, 1989.

³ Christoph Neidhöfer, in his article "Inside Berio's Serialism" chronicles Berio's ten major serial works: *Due pezzi* for violin and piano (1951, rev. 1966); *Study* for string quartet (1952, rev. 1985); *Cinque variazioni* for piano (1952-3, rev. 1966); *Chamber Music* for female voice, cello, clarinet and harp (1953); *Variazioni* for chamber

period, written six years before *Circles*, was *Nones*, the best example of Berio's flexible adaptation of integral serialism. In this piece, the four essential musical parameters (pitch, rhythm, dynamics, and mode of attack) are all subjected to serial procedure. In his discussion of an analytical sketch from *Nones*, Christoph Neidhöfer identifies that Berio devised a series of 13 pitch classes, and assigned a numerical value between one and five to the individual parameters of duration, dynamics, and attack.⁴ The governing organizational principle functions as follows: for any event, the numerical values of the four parameters must always add up to nine or more (hence the title, *Nones*); however, if the sum exceeds nine, the event must be followed by an eighth note rest.⁵ As Neidhöfer mentions, this approach couples systematization with flexibility:

Berio's preparatory materials and governing rule define a type of integral serialism which permits the composer a good deal of freedom. Not only are there multiple ways of balancing the numerical values among the four parameters, but there are frequently multiple choices for a particular value. This allows Berio to influence the outcome of his serial process more directly and to a degree unavailable in more rigid serial structures.⁶

Thus, we see that Berio, even in devising one of his most systematic compositional schemes, exercises a degree of liberty within a set of clearly defined rules.

But what pitch methods did Berio use by the time he arrived at *Circles*? Based upon the analysis of archival documents, this chapter attempts at least a partial answer.

There are five extant sheets of sketches that show Berio's pitch process in *Circles*. These five sheets are manuscript paper and strictly deal with Berio's treatment of pitch in Movement I.

orchestra (1953-4); *Nones* for orchestra (1954); *Quartetto per archi* (1955-6); *Allelujah I* for six instrumental groups (1955-6); *Serenata I* for flute and fourteen instruments (1957); *Allelujah II* for five instrumental groups (1956-8). See Christoph Neidhöfer, "Inside Berio's Serialism" *Music Analysis*, 28 (2009).

⁴ The durations are given the values 1 to 4, with the option of two durations for each of the values 2 to 4. Dynamics are listed with values 1 to 5, while modes of attack are assigned the values 1, 2, or 3, with numerous options for each of them (see Appendix 3.1 for Neidhöfer's print of Berio's analytical sketch).

⁵ Neidhöfer, "Inside Berio's Serialism," 305.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 306.

According to their order in the folders of the Sacher Foundation Archive, these five sheets yield nine pages (numbers refer to sheets, letters are sides of sheets): 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 5a (there is no 5b).⁷

Page 1a consists of three systems that include chromatic cells of material enclosed by brackets.

The image shows three systems of musical notation. The top system is a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The middle system is a treble clef staff with a melodic line featuring chromatic intervals, marked with brackets and an 'X' above a slur. The bottom system is a treble clef staff labeled 'voce' and 'Timp.' (timpani), with a melodic line also featuring chromatic intervals, marked with brackets and 'X's above and below notes.

Page 1b is the only sketch that deals with chords of more than three pitches.

The image shows a musical sketch with two staves, treble and bass clef. The treble clef staff contains several complex chords with multiple notes, connected by lines to other chords. The bass clef staff also contains complex chords with multiple notes, also connected by lines. The sketch is highly detailed and complex.

Page 2a appears to be one of the most completed sketches in the set and is the only sketch to bear the work's title.

⁷ All documents labeled with a "b" represent the opposite side of its predecessor, as found in the folder of the Sacher Archive: e.g., 1b appears on the back of 1a, 2b on the back of 2a, etc.

Circles

The musical score for "Circles" consists of six systems of piano accompaniment, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The notation includes various notes, rests, and accidentals, with some notes circled or boxed to highlight specific intervals or patterns. Vertical bar lines are present throughout the score. The first system is labeled 'a' and features circled intervals of a minor second and a major second. The second system is labeled 'b'. The third system is labeled 'c'. The fourth system is labeled 'd' and 'e'. The fifth and sixth systems continue the melodic and harmonic development of the piece.

Page 2b includes sketches of a single twelve-tone row.

voice

The bottom right corner of Page 2b reads:

parlato

a

pp

Page 3a includes almost all of the pitches of the vocal line in Movement I.

do ri re me mi fa fa# sol si# la te ti 10 n 10 m
 1 1 1 2 3 2 3 2 1 3 1 1 12 do# # 12

sol?

voce

Arpo

(Page 3a continued)

The first system of music features a piano accompaniment line at the top and a vocal line below it. The piano part consists of a single melodic line with various accidentals. The vocal line is written in a treble clef and includes several slurs and fingerings: a '2' under the first measure, '4+' under a slur in the second measure, '4' above a slur in the third measure, '4' above a slur in the fourth measure, '5' above a slur in the fifth measure, and '4+' under the final note.

Two empty musical staves, one above the other, consisting of five lines each.

The second system of music features a vocal line in a treble clef. It begins with a '4' above the first note. The line contains several slurs and fingerings, including '4+' under a slur in the second measure and '4' above a slur in the third measure.

The third system of music features a vocal line in a bass clef. It includes several slurs and fingerings: '4+' under a slur in the second measure, '4' above a slur in the third measure, '4+' under a slur in the fourth measure, and '4 5 4' above a slur in the fifth measure.

Two empty musical staves, one above the other, consisting of five lines each.

The fourth system of music features a vocal line in a treble clef. It includes several slurs and fingerings: '4+' under a slur in the first measure, '5' above a slur in the second measure, '4+' under a slur in the third measure, '4' above a slur in the fourth measure, '4+' under a slur in the fifth measure, and '5' above a slur in the sixth measure.

Page 3b is the only sketch to include a series of tone rows.

1) C_4 D_4 E_4 F_4 G_4 A_4 B_4 C_5 B_4 A_4 G_4 F_4 E_4 D_4 C_4

2) C_4 D_4 E_4 F_4 G_4 A_4 B_4 C_5 B_4 A_4 G_4 F_4 E_4 D_4 C_4

3) C_4 D_4 E_4 F_4 G_4 A_4 B_4 C_5 B_4 A_4 G_4 F_4 E_4 D_4 C_4

4) C_4 D_4 E_4 F_4 G_4 A_4 B_4 C_5 B_4 A_4 G_4 F_4 E_4 D_4 C_4

5) C_4 D_4 E_4 F_4 G_4 A_4 B_4 C_5 B_4 A_4 G_4 F_4 E_4 D_4 C_4

6) C_4 D_4 E_4 F_4 G_4 A_4 B_4 C_5 B_4 A_4 G_4 F_4 E_4 D_4 C_4

7) C_4 D_4 E_4 F_4 G_4 A_4 B_4 C_5 B_4 A_4 G_4 F_4 E_4 D_4 C_4

8) C_4

9) C_4

(Page 4a continued)

The image displays three systems of musical notation for harp. Each system consists of a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).
The first system features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with accompaniment. Fingering numbers (circled) are placed above and below notes. A large slur spans across the first two systems. Annotations include: 2 5 7 9 11 12 (above treble staff); 4 3 4+ (below bass staff); 5 6 2- (below bass staff); 3 4+ 4 5 (below bass staff).
The second system continues the melodic line in the treble staff, with a circled note labeled 'mov't sol (1a)'. The bass staff has a circled note labeled '2+2-'.
The third system shows a more complex melodic line in the treble staff. Annotations include: 4+/3/5 (below bass staff); 2- 4+ 4 3 (below bass staff).

Scored for voice and harp, Page 4b is the briefest sketch of the lot.

The image shows a musical score for voice and harp. The vocal part (v.) is written in a treble clef and consists of a series of notes with a descending contour. The harp part (a.) is written in a bass clef and consists of a few notes, including a double bar line and a sharp sign.

Lastly, Page 5 consists of four chromatic cells grouped by brackets.



This ordering does not appear to be the one Berio used in sketching his ideas. While the policies of the Sacher Foundation stress preserving the order found in the folders, the policies are not enforced; patrons might have reordered them, if indeed Berio himself had left them in a logical order. For example, one would expect Berio to start with bits of material, building up to sketches that more closely resemble his finished product. Therefore, Page 2a, with its title, clear instrumentation, and level of completion, should appear later than Page 5, which is very fragmentary and specifies no voice or instrument. This is not the case. The fact that Pages 1a through 4b have sketches on each side suggests two things: (1) it is unlikely that Berio referred to the reverse of a page while tackling his task at hand; (2) certain documents were created in related sittings. For example, Berio likely referred to 4a while completing 3a (arguably one of the most completed sketches). In this sense, by looking at one side of a double-sided sheet (e.g., 1a/1b, 2a/2b), I doubt that its reverse represents an immediately previous or subsequent step in Berio's compositional process. All these factors make the found order problematic. I propose an alternative approach to understanding the order of Berio's compositional process.

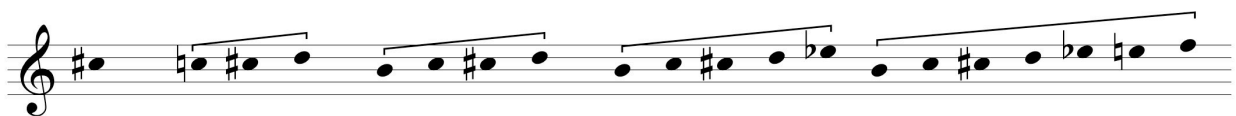
Of the nine extant pages that deal with the treatment of pitch in Movement I, only seven are useful in tracing Berio's creative process.⁸ I argue for a linear approach in Berio's

⁸ Bearing no instrumentation, Document 1b includes sketches of three different chords, the only appearance of chords containing more than three pitches in all nine of the documents. The emphasis here is on the pitch C#; black diagonal lines are used to connect C#'s in three different registers. Due to their spacing and tessitura, these chords are not performable by harp, and could have been intended for the percussion ensemble. A comparison between this document and the final score reveals little connections between the chords in Page 1b and any of the chords found in Movement I. Page 4b is clearly scored for voice and harp, but the sketch is so

compositional process in *Circles*: i.e., that he begins with certain raw materials that, when combined, ultimately formulate the fabric of the completed work. By addressing the following, we can better understand how Berio conceived this piece: (1) the length and level of detail in a sketch; (2) the use of brackets to indicate intervals, adjacent intervals in a series, and/or the intervallic span in a cell of material; (3) the emergence of certain essential series of pitches; (4) the subsequent interpolation of these series. Based upon these issues, I propose the following reordering: 5, 1a, 2b, 3b, 4a, 3a, 2a. For ease of discussion, I rename these seven pages (in their respective order) as Documents A, B, C, D, E, F, G.

Document A (old page 5) stands out as the potentially earliest sketch. Occupying just one system, it is the briefest sketch in the set of seven. Also, it does not indicate any instrumentation, while almost every other sketch specifies this. However, the use of the G clef and the tessitura of the pitches sketched here—which fit well with the vocal line in Movement I—suggest that Berio might have had the female voice in mind from the outset.

Document A shows the first evidence of a technique that pervades many of these sketches: the use of brackets to identify an interval, and the filling-in chromatically of that interval.



At the beginning of this sketch, Berio notates a C#, and then introduces four bracketed cells of pitches. These cells expand outward from this C# chromatically.⁹ The cells contain three, four,

fragmentary that, when compared with the other sketches, it has little or no bearing on the work's compositional process.

⁹ While the chromatic expansion begins downward from the C#, and then halts upon reaching B natural, the upward expansion covers more space, reaching up to F natural.

five, and seven pitches (respectively), and the intervallic span of each individual cell outlines intervals of a major second, minor third, major third, and a tritone.

Consisting of three systems, the comparatively more detailed Document B (old page 1a) represents the next potential step in the creative process, and, in certain ways, relates to Document A. Both A and B begin with the same isolated C#5, and both sketches have brackets that identify an interval and enclose chromatic cells of pitches.

The image shows three systems of musical notation. The first system is a single treble clef staff with a sharp sign. The second system is a treble clef staff with four bracketed groups of notes, each containing a plus sign (+) and an 'x' above it. The third system is a vocal line labeled 'voce' and a timpani line labeled 'Timp.' with notes and 'x' marks.

At the second system in Document B, these four bracketed sets outline the following intervals: a major second, major third, perfect fourth, and a tritone. Taking this into account, Document B complements Document A: the intervallic spans in B exclude a minor third (an interval included in A), while those in A exclude a perfect fourth (an interval included in B).

The instances examined here show that, from the outset, Berio organizes pitch according to the unfolding of a single melodic line—not chords, or as Osmond-Smith calls them, “pitch fields.”¹⁰ Moreover, the calculated arrangement of intervals in a segment of material is a

¹⁰ For examples, see David Osmond-Smith, *Berio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 24-27.

principle that Berio develops even further in these sketches, as Documents C and D are both constructed with this in mind.

Document C (old page 2b) is the earliest indication that Berio considers pitch¹¹ in terms of the twelve-tone row.¹²



The first system of Document C starts with a fragmented shape (just six pitches), and, retaining the first three pitches (D-A-C), it expands upon this shape, resulting in a twelve-tone row in the third system, known as “Series 1.”

In Document D (old page 3b), Berio has written nine systems of pitches, labeling them 1-9.¹³ Made up of twelve tones each, the first four systems classify as tone rows, and are labeled

¹¹ Berio’s treatment of pitch vs. pitch class in Movement I presents some complications. In certain cases (Documents E and F), Berio is dealing with a fixed sense of pitch. In other cases, pitch does not matter as much as pitch class, since Berio would write a pitch in one document (e.g., the rows and pitch series in Document D), and then transpose it up an octave in a subsequent sketch. When I put together the large diagram showing the interpolation of multiple pitch sets and series (Diagram 1), there are several instances of pitches being brought up an octave, or using enharmonic equivalents (e.g., D# for Eb, etc.).

¹² Also, the specification of instrumentation in Document C makes it more advanced than a previous sketch, Document A (which bears no instrumentation).

¹³ The fact that the appearance of Row 1 in Document C is notated for the voice, its reappearance in Document D implies that this sketch was intended for the voice.

“Series 1-4.”¹⁴ The pitch series in the following three systems have less than twelve tones, but continue this method of labeling, “Series 5-7.”¹⁵

Document D expands upon the material explored in Document C: here Series 1 is set as the first of four rows in one corner of Document D and as the first of seven series in its opposite corner (see pp. 40 and 41 for complete sketch). Viewed together, Documents C and D illustrate a process of gradual progression in the development of pitch series: the third system of C expands upon its first system, akin to how the series labeled “1-9” in D are an expansion of the other four series in that same document.

In Series 1, Berio’s use of brackets shows that he constructs this row as a series of dyads, each of which uses a different interval.



Here he brackets dyads to identify each adjacent interval in the series: perfect fifth, major sixth, minor second, major second, major third. He then omits a bracket between the sixth and seventh pitches, since a major second has already occurred. Berio uses the final bracket in Series 1 to signal the remaining interval, the tritone.¹⁶

Berio uses brackets and circles in Series 2 to indicate the presence of two separate trichords.

¹⁴ On the lower right hand side of Document D are four series of pitches (called Series 1A-Series 4A) that resemble Series 1-4; Series 1A exactly matches Series 1, while Series 2A, comprised of ten pitches, is a fragment of its corollary Series 2. With the exception of a few register shifts, Series 3A closely matches the pitch content of Series 3, and Series 4A is a reordered fragment of Series 4 (see Document D).

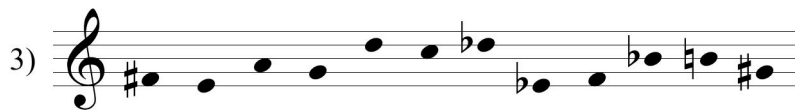
¹⁵ Series 5 is made of eleven tones, Series 6 of six tones, and Series 7 of five tones. Containing a single pitch only (A4), the remaining two systems (Nos. 8 and 9) are not technically classified as “series” per se. For ease of discussion they continue with the labeling of the preceding seven systems, “Series 1-7” (see Document D for the complete sketch).

¹⁶ By inverting every interval greater than the tritone bracketed in this row, the final interval to be bracketed, a tritone, completes the array of remaining intervals.

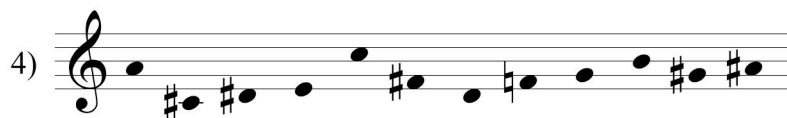


Brackets enclose the first and fourth trichords (026). He circles the two inner cells to identify the trichord 012. The third trichord (pitches B-C#-C) is a transposed retrograde inversion of the second one (pitches F-E-F#). The intervallic span of the outer two trichords is a tritone, while that of the inner two is a major second. Taking this into account, Series 2 is the most symmetrical row of the first set of four.

Since the intervallic spans of the four trichords found in Series 2 are confined to a tritone and a major second, the span of the four trichords implied in Series 3 represent three of the four remaining intervals (which are less than a tritone): perfect fourth, major third, minor third. In this sense, Series 3 complements Series 2.



Series 4 begins with A4, a point of centrality, since the remaining six systems on Document D all begin with this same pitch.



Series 5, 6, and 7 differ from Series 1-4 in length.



A close inspection of *Circles*, Movement I, reveals that Berio does not subject any of these series (in their entirety) to standard twelve-tone operations. Rather, the composer thinks in terms of interpolating multiple series. The pitches sketched in Document D are the raw materials that Berio draws upon in devising the vocal line in Movement I. In Documents E, F, and G, we see that the vocal line is derived from interpolations of Series 1-7, and the two remaining A4s found in Document D.¹⁷ This process is illustrated in the author’s schematic, “Diagram 1” (see Appendix 3.2).

Document E (old page 4a) stands as the next step in Berio’s compositional process (see pp. 41 and 42 for complete sketch). It is longer, more detailed, and more developed than any of the documents examined thus far. Moreover, Document E interpolates material explored in its predecessors A, B, C, and D.

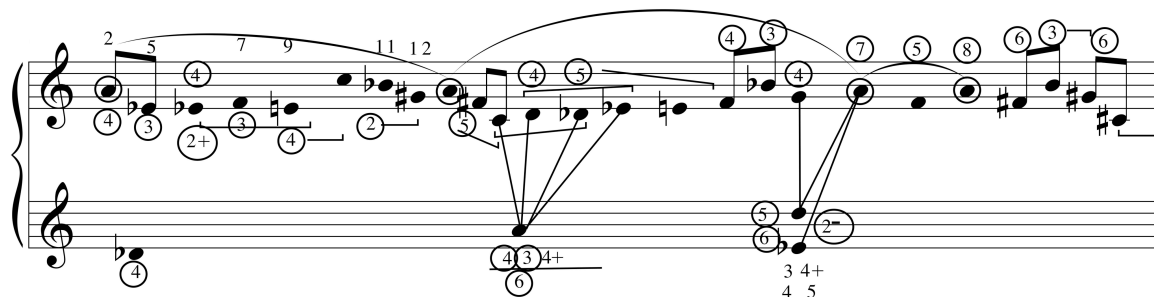
The methods used in Document E show how Berio organizes pitch in Movement I. In the second system, Berio uses numerals without circles to indicate pitches from Series 1, and uses

¹⁷ While these two remaining pitches (A) do not classify as “series” per se, for ease of discussion of their use in Documents E and F, they continue with the labeling used for Series 1-7.

circled numerals to identify from which series in Document D subsequent pitches are being drawn. The non-circled pitches are fixed—they represent their counterpart pitches in Series 1. Berio interpolates pitches drawn from Series 1-9 in Document D with chromatic figures from Document A and B. When compared with the final score, this process in Document E results in the first sixty-two pitches of the vocal part in Movement I (see Appendix 3.2, Diagram 1; compare with published score, Appendix 3.3 - Full Score of Movement 1, pp. 2-4).

The first ten pitches of Series 1 are presented by the voice (D, A, C, Db, Eb, G, F, E, F#, or nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10) and the harp (B or 9). Berio encloses the vocal pitches (nos. 2-10) with brackets. Following pitch number 10 (F#) are the first six pitches of Series 2, initiated by the circled “2” (D#), and enclosed by parentheses and a bracket. The first instance of a circled “3” (F#) initiates material from Series 3, which happens before the presentation of Series 2 is completed. Here, two pitches from Series 3 are stated—F# in the voice, and E natural in the harp. Before Berio proceeds with more pitches from Series 3, he reverts to Series 1 by stating the last two notes that complete the twelve-tone aggregate of this series. This is signified by the circled “1” above the Bb that indicates a reversion to Series 1, as well as the “11” (without circle) that indicates that the eleventh pitch of Series 1 is being stated. As this G# signals the last pitch from Series 1, the next circled “3” indicates a return to Series 3 (A natural), which is then followed by a return to Series 2 (B natural). Diagram 1 shows the interpolation of these different series (see Appendix 3.2).

This close examination of system 2 in Document E prepares us to understand Berio's compositional procedure at this point. Berio uses numbers without circles to indicate the pitches of Series 1. The appearance of a circled number can mean one of two things: (1) the appearance of the first pitch in a new/unused series, or (2) the reversion to a particular series in order to expose previously unstated pitches.¹⁸ The third system of Document E continues to interpolate material from D, until the eleventh pitch is stated in the upper voice.



Beginning here on ‘C’, instead of interpolating material from Series 1-9, Berio turns to the chromatic cells that first appeared in Documents A and B; their interpolation here is a key instance that illustrates how Document E combines material from each of the prior four documents.

Taken as a whole, this method of organization accounts for the first sixty-two pitches of the vocal part in Movement I (see Appendix 3.3 for published score). The sketches for this segment terminate at the middle of the fourth system on Document E, where Berio notates “mov’t sol 1a.” The series of pitches that remain comprise a closing segment of the vocal line in Movement I (as discussed in Document F).

¹⁸ The only exception to this rule of circled pitches, is the case of a number with a plus that is circled. This notation is simply used to specify the interval class between a pitch in the voice and a pitch in the harp.

Document F (old page 3a) is the most developed sketch.¹⁹

do ri> re me> mi fa# sol si# la te> ti 10 n 10 m
 1 1 1 2 3 2 3 2 1 3 1 1 12 do# # 12
 sol?

The musical score consists of several systems. The first system shows a twelve-tone row with solfège syllables and numbers above it. Below this is a piano arpeggio. The next system shows a vocal line with notes circled and grouped. The following system shows a vocal line with notes circled and grouped. The next system shows a vocal line with notes circled and grouped. The final system shows a vocal line with notes circled and grouped.

The material in systems 2-6 accounts for all 148 pitches of the vocal line in Movement I (including pitches 63 through 95, which were omitted in Document E). Moreover, while

¹⁹ At the top of Document F, Berio has sketched a series of 26 pitches. Twelve of these pitches are numbered 1-12, forming a twelve-tone row. The remaining 14 pitches, which are interspersed within this row, are enclosed by parentheses. A comparison between this row and Series 1-4 reveals no apparent connection. Whatever the source or intention of this series at the top of F, it is still apparent that Berio follows a similar method of operations explored in E: i.e., the combination of a twelve-tone row with pitches extraneous to that particular row. Some of these combinations are brief (e.g., the two parenthetical 'Ds' between pitches '4' and '5,' and '6' and '7'), while others are lengthy (e.g., the eight pitches in parentheses between pitches '10' and '11'). Also at the top of F is a listing of solfège symbols, under which a tally of pitches is kept. A comparison between this tally and series at the top of F (or any content of E) reveals no connections.

Document E circles and numbers pitches, Document F leaves these specifications out. Thus, since Berio probably devised and recorded his interpolations in Document E before moving on to F, he found it unnecessary to relabel these pitches in this next sketch.

Document G (old page 2a) resembles the completed work more than any other document.

Circles

The musical score consists of six systems of piano music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system is labeled 'a' and features several notes circled in the treble staff. The second system is labeled 'b'. The third system is labeled 'c'. The fourth system is labeled 'd' and 'e'. The fifth system has vertical lines above the treble staff. The sixth system has a double bar line. The notation includes various accidentals and note values.

Accounting for the first three pages of the finished score, it is the only document discussed here to bear the work's title. While earlier documents tend to focus only on pitches in the vocal line, Document G is clearly scored for voice and harp, and the harp is given its own line in each system. This page lacks the numberings, bracketings, and detailed annotations that we find in Documents A-F. This suggests that, in preparation for the final autograph, Berio copied out in G the materials sketched in Documents E and F.

The compositional process analyzed in these materials reveals Berio's methods in composing *Circles*: systematic design is coupled with an empowering flexibility. Piero Santi puts it aptly: "Berio's fantasy does indeed always create a plan, but this is in order to play within its limits, to vary it without invalidating it, to enrich it without obscuring it beneath a mass of dovetailings and superstructures."²⁰

The sketches examined here represent an array of materials Berio laid out for himself—akin to the palette held in a painter's hand. These sketches show that Berio thinks in terms of linear intervals, adjacent intervals in a series, and/or the total intervallic span of a group of pitches. The ubiquity of horizontally arranged pitches in these sketches supports the following notion: Berio conceived Movement I according to the unfolding of a single, melodic line. Virtually all of the sketches surveyed here support the primacy of the vocal line. Also, in these sketches, the harmonic underpinnings offered by the harp are scant and are subservient to the vocal line.²¹

By 1960, Berio had abandoned normative serialism, but the twelve-tone sensibility that imbued many of his works from the 1950s endured to a certain degree in *Circles*. These

²⁰ Piero Santi, "Luciano Berio," *Die Reihe* 4 (1958): 102.

²¹ In the sketches, the harp rarely sounds more than two tones at a time (see Appendix 2 for published score).

sketches—as a whole—suggest that he thought of the twelve-tone row only as a starting point for organizing and merging pitch series. A close comparison between the finished score and the sketches reveals that Berio did not subject Series 1-9 to standard serial procedures (e.g., retrograde, inversion, etc.). Also, there is no evidence to support the notion that parameters outside of pitch (e.g., duration, mode of attack, dynamics) are subjected to the organizing principle of the pitch series. Apparently, in *Circles*, Berio saw a potential in the series that suited his own designs at the time—i.e., the opportunity to interpolate numerous series of differing length, in order to come up with large segments of pitch material for the voice.

This interconnection of various pitch groupings helps us understand—to some degree—Berio’s only published comments on the pitch structures in *Circles*: “There is a continual oscillation between periodic figures, bounded by specific constellations of intervals, and complex gestural events characterized by a notable degree of indeterminacy.”²² The diverging lines drawn in Documents E and F²³ connect individual pitches, forming constellations—even in a way that our imaginations create unseen lines to connect stars as constellations. This fascination with connecting individual points of sound is one sense in which “the serialists means are fundamental;” as Stockhausen hinted when he called Messiaen’s *Mode de valeurs et d’intensités*, “the fantastic music of the stars.”

²² Luciano Berio, *Remembering the Future*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 118.

²³ See examples in Document E, second and third systems, as well as Document F, systems 2 and 4.

Conclusion

Among Berio's papers is a curious hand-written document in English. Bearing no author, this document is listed in the Sacher archival catalogue simply as, "Text über 'Circles' von Luciano Berio."¹ Just over eight pages long, the essay discusses a wide array of issues, e.g., structuralism, vocal gesture, Gestalt psychology, and (Adornian) visions for a utopic civilization. One passage reads:

By now it is well known, that whoever has "seen" a performance of Circles knows much more of what is going on than one who is limited to hearing a phonograph record or radio broadcast. ... The phenomenological complex upon which a performance of Circles is based can be conceived as neither an organization of sound nor of visual action; it does not concern itself with one more than the other, ... rather it deals with a total perceptive faculty, understood as multipolar and yet strongly unified. ... Circles is a work clearly woven in living structure; we may say in a certain sense organic, as even the listener's perception is taken into consideration.

An appraisal of the work's pitch structures and its treatment of text is crucial to understanding Berio's *modus operandi* ca. 1960; however, we must remember that what makes *Circles* the intriguing work that it is, is how it *looks* and *feels* on a phenomenological level, and not just how it sounds and was written on an academic one. My paper aims to illuminate the compositional process of this work, but I am also aware, as any reader should be, that any further work on *Circles* (and indeed, there needs to be much more), should always maintain a certain understanding—i.e., that beneath its surface, *Circles* will always retain its identity not just as fodder for analysis but rather, as a living, mobile work of art.

¹ See Appendix: Conclusion for the complete document. A calligraphic study of this unattributed essay has revealed that it is neither penned by Berio nor Berberian. The references to Paul Klee and "Utopian" issues suggests that the essay could have been penned by Theodor Adorno; however, a comparison of the essay with an excerpt of Adorno's handwriting makes it appear that it was not written by him. See Appendix 3 for the entire document.

APPENDIX

If someone asks you what Berio played and you say catcher for the Yankees...

brother, you're losing business!

Berio... Luciano Berio... conceived and played many of the new electronic forms that have influenced students of modern music for the past decade.

Berio, Stockhausen, Cage, Maderna, Boulez, Earle Brown, and perhaps two dozen other disciples of change recorded a historic series of explorations and experimentations that have become cornerstones in the libraries of major music schools everywhere. These names... and the music... are legendary for everyone who studies, follows or just digs modern classical music. This is where the electronic sound began. It's become the framework for the rock, jazz and pop sounds you're selling today.

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-  MS/5005 Circles Frammento, Aria With Fontana Mix.
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-  MS/5007 Durations, Music For Violin, Cello and Piano, Music For Cello and Piano, Hologram I.
-  MS/5011 Concert Percussion For Orchestra.
-  MS/5012 Nirvana-Symphony.
-  MS/5013 Concord Sonata.
-  MS/5014 Proporzioni, Sequenza, Somaksha, Gymel, Meris Nbr, Honeyreves.
-  MS/5015 Carriage Music, Summer For String Quartet, Duo For Violist and Pianist, Duet II For Horn and Piano.

APPENDIX 2

October 21, 1960

Mus NN16

Dear Mr. Cummings,

I am deeply sorry that in spite of all my efforts, I was not able to contact you personally while I was in the States working on "Circles", my composition based on your poems (# 25, 76 and 221 of the "Collected Poems"). I cannot believe that you really know how difficult it is to get in touch with you. My friend Edgar Varese also tried, but in vain.

I understand that you are in Europe at present. In the hopes that this letter of mine will reach you, I would like to ask you if there is any possibility of meeting you. Since I shall be travelling extensively in Europe within the next two months, it is possible that our steps may cross somewhere.

The reason I would like to meet you is not merely a musical one: in these last few years, that is, since my knowledge of the English language has become more substantial, I have finally been able to approach that which interests me most in contemporary literature - your works and those of James Joyce. In consequence, I have developed several ideas and projects which I would like very much to discuss with you.

As you know, I would also like to have your kind permission for the use of your poems in "Circles". Since numerous performances of the piece have been requested in Europe, as well as in the States, this season, it would be advisable to have your clearance on this matter as soon as possible in order to confirm performing dates with the necessary advance notice.

Concerning the performance of "Circles" at Tanglewood, I should like to clarify the matter. It was a performance by invitation only, not for a paying public. The fact that it was reviewed was unexpected and incidental. As you may know, however, I did try my best to contact you before the performance but without any result.

My wife, who performed in "Circles" at Tanglewood, joins me in hoping to meet you soon, and encloses a review of that performance which may be of interest to you.

Looking forward to hearing from you, I remain

Sincerely

Luciano Berio
BERIO

Luciano Berio
Via Moscatti 7
Milano

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L. BERIO
Via Moscatti 7
Milano
Nov. 24, 1960

Dear Mr. Cummings,

I am deeply grateful to you for your letter. I was aware of the missing hyphens you had mentioned in your letter, as well as the "s" in "ghosts" and had already corrected them.

Now I am revising a few more things: in the development of poem #224, increasing musically its "work in progress" qualities (the "open form", I'd say). I am also revising musically the second appearance of poem #25.

My wife and I will be arriving in New York at the end of January and we will start our tour which is based on "Circles" with 2 performances at the New School around February 5th. I hope that you will be able to attend at least one of these 2 performances and I hope that in hearing it you will get back musically at least a part of what I received from your poems, for which I am indebted to you.

Naturally, Cathy and I will be delighted to meet you at your home. Soon after we arrive in New York we will call and arrange for it. Our very best wishes to you,

Sincerely

L. Berio

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stinging
gold swarms
upon the spires
silver

chants the litanies the
great bells are ringing with rose
the lewd fat bells
and a tall

wind
is dragging
the
sea

with

dream

-S

n(o)w

the
how
dis(appeared cleverly)world

iS Slapped: with;liGhtninG
!

at
which(shal)lpounceupcrackw(ill)jumps

of
THuNdeRB
loSSo!M iN
-visiblya mongban(gedfrag-
ment ssky?wha tm)eani ngl(essNessUn
rolli)ngl yS troll s(who leO v erd)oma insCol

Lide.lhigh
n, o ; w :
theraIncomIng

o all the roofs roar
drownInsound(

&
(we(are like)dead
)Whoshout(Ghost)atOne(voiceless)O

ther or im)
pos
sib(ly as
leep)
But llook—
s

U

n: starT birDs(IEAp)Openi ng
t hing ; s(
—sing
)all are aLl(cry aLL See)o(ver All)Th(e grEEEn

?earthH)N,ew

riverly is a flower
gone softly by tomb
rosily gods whiten
befall saith rain

anguish
of dream-send is
hushed
in

moan-loll where
night gathers
morte carved smiles

cloud-gloss is at moon-cease
soon
verbal mist-flowers close
ghosts on prowl gorge

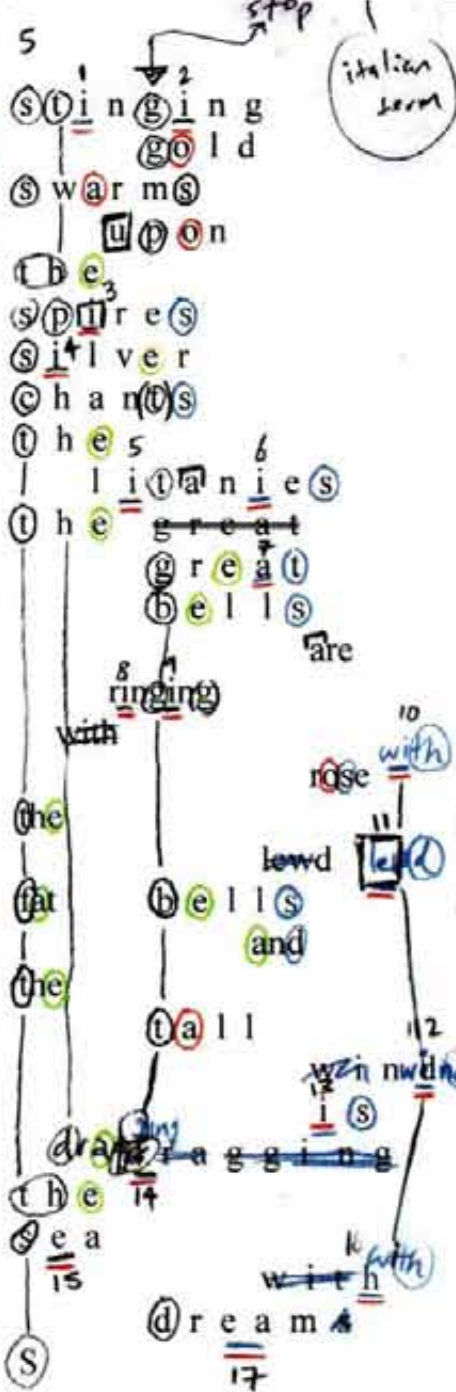
sly slim gods stare

sibilant (with or without assimilate) = s or ch (effricative?) ch

fricative (or effricative) = th it

Attack >
S T I M G
TRANS. decay
prep.

R=H
F=Z
O=S
A=2H
u 2



infloranta di "sting"

anacrusi, tempo, forte, stress

* | | termination
> | | feminine

attacco di ~~arpa~~
il ~~mezzo~~ meglio

sempre + simili (sulla stesso pieno)

arpa (di) in evicina alla presenza di rumori proposta della S (antic., w, arpesma, etc.) voce sempre + articulation articole sempre meno rumore (rumore)

Poi i 3 strumenti

ripetono in brevi lo stano 'per caso' di (stano?) (scaso?)

unificazione ~~fravuti~~ graduale

(Dec.)²
Den. l. da
voce arpa
(uguali)²
uguale = equal

III = cluster/

thespires sil-ver chants the li-ta-nies the great bells are

motor off
pad. sempre
fff

is drag-ging the sea with

Clap-symb. (2.2.)
Glock. (4)

f ped. *ff* *mf* *pp ped.*

(4) *mf*

(4) *mf*

(4) chinese peng

b2

#

dream

Sempre ppp

Voice

vibrando ma OB.

(piu p ancora)

crescendo

p

mf

ppp

ped. sino alla fine

Voice

ppp

APPENDIX 3

Appendix 3.1

Translation of Berio's analytical note for *Nones* (Berio 1985, plate 4, second page)

pitches	+		
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	
		[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [6] [5] [4] [3] [2] [1]	
durations	+	[a]	
		choice	
dynamics	+	[a] <i>p</i> <i>mf</i> <i>f</i> <i>ff</i> <i>fff</i>	all values beyond 9 become a quaver rest
		[b] <i>pp</i> <i>ppp</i>	
mode of attack	+	[a] free <i>legato</i> [a] trill [= no ind.] [b] <i>frull[ato]</i> [b] <i>tenuto stacc.</i> [c] <i>tremolo</i>	

The pitches will be realised always keeping in mind that the sum of the individual elements reaches and also surpasses 9 – every unit exceeding 9 is worth a quaver rest.

Appendix 3.2 - Diagram 1

A musical score diagram with ten staves. The top staff is labeled 'Voice' and contains a complex melodic line with many accidentals. The second staff is labeled 'Harp' and contains a sparse line of notes. Below these are nine staves labeled 'Series 1' through 'Series 9'. Each series staff contains a few notes, and vertical dashed lines connect the notes in the series staves to the notes in the Voice and Harp staves, indicating harmonic relationships. The notes in the series staves are mostly whole notes and half notes, with some accidentals. The overall layout is clean and professional, typical of a music manuscript.

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CIRCLES

♩ = 58.6680

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is for the voice, labeled 'I voice', and the lower staff is for the harp. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 58.6680. The lyrics are 'stin.', 'ging', and 'gold'. The harp part includes the publisher's name 'L. ROCA VERDINE, ROMA'.

I voice

stin.

ging

gold

harp

L. ROCA VERDINE, ROMA

swarms (ms) U- pon the spires (rs)

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff contains the vocal line with lyrics: "swarms (ms) U- pon the spires (rs)". The lower staff contains the piano accompaniment. The score includes various dynamic markings: *fff* (fortississimo) at the beginning and end, *mf* (mezzo-forte) in the middle, and *f* (forte) at the end. Performance instructions *(ms)* and *(rs)* are placed above the notes for "U-" and "spires" respectively. The music features a melodic line with some grace notes and a piano accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

Musical score for a vocal line. The lyrics are: sil. ver chants (ts) the li. ta-ries (s) th. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *p*, and various musical notations including slurs and accents.

great bells are rin- ging with rose (s) the lewd fat bells

and a tall wind is drag-ging the sea

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is the vocal line, and the lower staff is the piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The music is in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a common time signature. The vocal line features a melodic line with various dynamics including *mf*, *ppp*, *f*, and *pp*. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The lyrics are: "and a tall wind is drag-ging the sea".

This musical score is for Appendix 3.3 and consists of three staves. The top staff is for the Sand Block, the middle for the Maracas, and the bottom for the vocal line. The Sand Block part starts with a 2/4 time signature, marked with a circled 'S' and '(continuo)'. It features dynamics of *ff* and *f*, and includes markings for 'Maracas' and 'Wood block'. The Maracas part also begins in 2/4, marked with a circled 'S' and '(continuo)', with dynamics of *ff* and *mf*. The vocal line includes the lyrics 'with dream' and features a 'Sopra vibr.' marking. The score includes various performance instructions such as '(RALL.)', '(Moto)', and 'clary'. Vertical dashed lines connect the three staves, indicating rhythmic alignment. The Sand Block and Maracas parts conclude with a 3/4 time signature. The Maracas part includes a 'Temple block' marking. The score is marked with a circled 'S' and '(continuo)' at the beginning of both the Sand Block and Maracas parts.

APPENDIX - CONCLUSION

“Text über ‘Circles’ von Luciano Berio”

Circles, for voice, harp, and 2 percussion players

A civilization's true power, invariably of a political or economic nature, is always found, even today, in the hands of others: persuaders of conformism, executives, public relations men, and bosses proprietors, to name a few among others, are in reality well bent on establishing what should be the final meaning of our music, or even of our existence. The historical conditions that, in the recent past, have forced artists to assume strongly controversial positions persist today in a state that is, to be sure, even more extreme than before; but, even so, the degree of ideological commitment remains the closest criterion for the assessment ~~judgement~~ of values.

Thus it is inevitable that our music lose its validity (~~legitimacy~~) when it reduces its scope to the mere linguistic level. Ultimately, the problem of the twelve-tone language, of the post-Webern, pointillist, or structuralist language is a matter neither of culture nor of ethics; to debase this language on the technical level is tantamount to depriving it of every plausible meaning or, [page break - 1 -] more exactly, to come once more to a proposition of "pleasing the masses" (to a compromise with the great industry of social appeasement).

In this light, we see immediately how Circles by Berio places itself, even formally, in that unique point resulting from the convergence of and friction between two mutually opposed tendencies: on one hand the demands of a constructivistic order as put forth, for example, in Germany by \ Stockhausen or in France (especially until a few years ago) by \ Boulez; and on the other hand a very new need that for some time now has been manifesting itself ever more clearly among the younger artists: the need to stress the most irrational and least logically classifiable dimensions of a phenomenon (whether sound or not) regarded as a Gestaltist whole (~~which, according to recent advances in~~ (of phenomenological psychology) ~~presents itself in any actual instance of sensual perception~~).

could read as:

. . . regarded as a Gestaltist whole (of phenomenological psychology).

Quite a few years ago, while teaching at ~~speaking from his chair~~ Weimar, Paul Klee had already spoken for all of us; but his propositions ("I would like to take into consideration those phases of the formative process that occur during the evolution of a work buried in the subconscious . . . one clings to theories because he is [page break - 2 -] afraid of live and uncertainty . . . We must render ~~that which is~~ fortuitous the essential.") have done nothing more than intensify that sporadic fear to the point that it has become the stubborn neurotic insecurity that characterizes the contemporary individual. This should testify well enough that only the clear, fearless acceptance of the irrational as a basis for human communication can preclude the way to the elusive images of Utopian abstractions; to unrealistically optimistic predictions concerning the state of affairs; to overcomplicated concepts of order without a concrete basis; in a word, to each and every new deceitful incarnation of the falsche Bewußtsein (false consciousness) just as false ~~precisely~~ as the cheap celestial triumphs ~~thrown~~ unveiled ~~open~~ by house painters ~~white washers~~ for the edification of the faithful flock of the church services. ~~are false~~

It may be said that the work of Berio at hand also concerns itself with this, and for the first time with such striking urgency -- the solution of an "expressive" conciliation between the provoked upsetting of timbres of indeterminate pitch and a fragmented and taut human voice, all the rest following through in a vein of modern tradition indicated even by the choice of text. (the text excludes

a priori, the possibility of easily perceived "harmonious" interrelationships) ~~such as occur in so many others, even in Italy~~); and at the same time of an acute accentuation, sometimes [page break - 3 -] almost primeval: a musical event determined not only by the act of composition, but also by that of performance.

By now it is well known, ~~at least in concept~~ that whoever has "seen" a performance of Circles knows much more of what is going on than one who is limited to hearing a phonograph record or radio broadcast. We believe that it is precisely in the need of a new humanism that Berio has elaborated this gesture, violent and complex at the same time, to oppose the preponderant objectivism (equivalent to ideological agnosticism) of the constructivistic tradition, which has figured so predominantly in his earlier works.

The phenomenological complex upon which a performance of Circles is based can be conceived as neither an organization of sound nor of visual action; it does not concern itself with ~~neither~~ one more than the other (one cannot, then, consider it a new version of the naive attempts of certain late Romantic works to link one or more of the other arts to music), rather it deals with ~~concerns~~ a total perceptive faculty, understood as multipolar and yet strongly unified.

We may gather from the Dionisiac power released in its passages of great rhythmic complexity, and even, strange as it may seem, in the extreme "simplicity" that opens the work, that it is no longer possible to classify a work as either totally rigorous in construction or totally unsystematic. [page break - 4 -]

Yet, there is the danger of finishing with a sclerosis of empty "craftmanship" ~~Musizieren totally-strictly artificial~~, as occurs among certain "avant-guardists" merrily seeking a new Arcadia, who, thanks to modern means of communication, have spread their sterility from Germany to Japan to Scandinavia to the most scattered universities of the new world.

The inert objectivism, the neue Sachlichkeit (new reality), the fetishism of the technical media characteristic of European Neoclassicism between the two wars, seems strangely enough, to have returned almost unchanged (Above all, ~~one considers~~, in patterns of human attitude) among certain of the younger technologists and theoreticians. These, despite their own intentions, are overcome by the acquisition of a "physiological" duration rather than [page break - 5 -] an ideal or "logical" one. Immediately from the performing act itself, one can create an instrument of exposé of incalculable range.

Thus Circles is a work clearly woven in living structure; we may say in a certain sense organic, as even the listener's perception is taken into consideration. In this sense, even if it is a little paradoxical, the outburst of the renewed possibility of periodic meters (which from parts of this score are materializing in some of the most recent European music) assumes a meaning very close to the disquieting "simplicity" in the most recent works of the leader of the post-informal painters, Mark Rothko. [page break - 6 -]

Visage

At least compared with Circles, Visage would seem to be a lesser work -- almost piquant, even if undoubtedly very skillful manipulation of sound.

It should first of all, be remembered that this is a work conceived not ~~so much~~ for concert presentation but for radio broadcast. It is in fact possible to think of this work as the composer's "farewell" to Radio Italiana, where he had been working in ~~for~~ the past few years. Yet it is a farewell made in a mood more teasing than regretful, as it uses an industrial apparatus for the mass production of a work systematically devoid of every conceivable meaning.

Actually this curious kind of divertissement almost like the sound track of a film that never existed (in which [page break - 8 -] we say in advance to the reader - no word of any language is pronounced except "parola" = "word") nevertheless hides aspects of great technical interest. ~~interest-~~

~~the aspects when uninteresting technically.~~ This experiment, albeit playfully mocking in intent, turns out to display in outstanding evidence a hitherto unknown whole world of expressive possibilities and metaphorical possibilities.

The vocal gesture, without any explicit relations (that is, relations settled in our subconscious and thus clearly legible, for example, the "autonomous" sound structure of crying and laughing) and consequently the pure interpretation, even if without an object to interpret, takes shape in a kind of onomatopoeia of emotions in an uninterrupted series of fleeting suggestions able to mime real meanings without actually having defined them.

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