



Roberto
GERHARD

cantāmen

Piano Trio
Sonata for cello and piano
Chaconne for solo violin
Gemini for violin and piano



Roberto Gerhard (1896-1970)

Most people's awareness of Roberto Gerhard's compositional achievements tend to be partial, confined to one aspect of his music, or centered upon a particular phase in his career.

The Catalan perspective is of a composer rooted in local traditions - a pupil of Granados and Felipe Pedrell who subsequently gravitated towards the central European tradition, studying with Schoenberg in Vienna and Berlin during the mid-1920s. Certainly, in the early 1930s, Gerhard used his new-found experience and contacts to enrich and enliven the Barcelona contemporary music scene, before vanishing into exile with the rise of Franco. Catalonia (and Spain) has only lately begun to reclaim Gerhard, largely through the efforts of his composition pupil, Joaquim Homs, also through the support of Barcelona Radio and Television and financial subsidy given by the Generalitat towards a Gerhard archive on CD-ROM being compiled by David Albert.

The British perspective of Gerhard is of yet another refugee from strife-torn Europe, settling, as he did, in Cambridge in 1938 and remaining there for the rest of his life. At first he made his name mainly as a composer of incidental music for radio and of ballet scores such as *Pandora* (1944-45) and *Don Quixote* (1940-1, revised 1947-9). Largely through the influence of William Glock, Gerhard belatedly made his mark in the UK as a concert-hall composer with a succession of symphonies, concertos and chamber works. His reputation was consolidated - and spread to the USA - during his last decade, with an increasingly adventurous series of pieces (some involving electronics) that won him the admiration of numerous musicians of a younger generation.

The difficulty for any listener - whether ordinary music lover or scholar - is to synthesize these perspectives, to bring together all the different strands in his personality and understand Gerhard as a whole. It's worth bearing in

mind that this fragmentation of Gerhard is more apparent than real, a product of more of those many circumstances which, in the twentieth century, have shattered any remaining impression of cultural cohesiveness, of continuously unfolding traditions.

To varying degrees, other musical exiles such as Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Weill, and Krenek encountered a similarly partial appreciation of their worth. Gerhard himself died just as his true worth was being recognized. Having had his earliest works published in Barcelona and Paris, he had to wait until the late 1950s before his mature pieces started to appear in print. Likewise, recordings were beginning to be released only towards the end of his life. Even now, a hundred years after his birth, score of his are still coming to light and being published and premiered in their original format.

As with other artists of stature, Gerhard's principal works do not simply jump-cut from one style or musical mode to another: each one draws upon the sum total of the composer's musical and human experience to date. There are no gimmicks, only a constant desire to push back the frontiers of the musical imagination - "to liberate sound", as Edgar Varèse would have put it. The works on the recording exemplify different facets of this expanding vision.

Piano Trio (1918)

- 1 I *Moderé*
- 2 II *Tres calme*
- 3 III *Vif*

The seeds of Gerhard's cosmopolitan temperament are to be found as much in his early life as in his works: for he was not by blood a Catalan, but in fact Swiss-German on his father's side and French on his mother's. True, he discovered a great affinity with the independent spirit of Catalonia, its people, language and history, and retained this through into his years in England, producing arrangements and compositions base

directly on Catalan folk-music. Overt nationalism, however, he abhorred. As a pupil of Pedrell, the most influential composer and scholar living in Spain, Gerhard was exposed directly to musical nationalism. Pedrell advocated the beliefs of the eighteenth-century Jesuit theorist, Antonio Eximeno, most specifically that composers should base their musical systems on the basis of their own national folksong. Notwithstanding, Gerhard quickly emerged from this as a composer with an independent, individual voice.

His first published work, the song-cycle *L'infantament meravellos de Shaharazada* (1917) is replete with influences from late-romantic music, notably Strauss. Likewise, in his first extant chamber work, the *Piano Trio* (1918) - dedicated to Pedrell and published in Paris in 1921 - Gerhard seems to have stepped back from indigenous Spanish music to view it from a French standpoint. The two main thematic ideas of its first movement indeed imitate, on the one hand, Ravel and, on the other, Falla (especially in its metric scheme developing from a basic 7/8 rhythm). The Gallic impressionistic view of Spain, emphasizing sensuousness, warmth, light and colour is explored further in the central slow movement. Folk-song music references reappear in the fluctuating metric patterns of the finale, in its melodic flourishes and in the modal character of the main idea and its accompaniment. For a 22-year-old this was a very ambitious piece, particularly its finale.

Sonata for 'Cello and Piano (1956)

- 4 I *Allegro molto energico*
- 5 II *Grave*
- 6 III *Molto vivace*

Chaconne for Solo Violin (1959)

- 7 I *Risoluto*
- 8 II *Calmo con leggerezza*
- 9 III *Allegro con fuoco*
- 10 IV *Allegretto*
- 11 V *Veloce*
- 12 VI *Con Riposo*
- 13 VII *Allegro con brio*
- 14 VIII *Adagietto*
- 15 IX *Molto vivace, con impeto*
- 16 X *Andante sostenuto*
- 17 XI *Grazioso*
- 18 XII *Allegro assai*

These two works both demonstrate how the mature Gerhard had absorbed the ideas of Schoenberg, applying them in an entirely idiosyncratic manner. Although he wrote only one fully serial work soon after studying with Schoenberg - the Wind Quintet (1928) - Gerhard began to identify with serial procedures much later, using them fairly strictly in his Capriccio for solo flute (1949), his Harpsichord Concerto (1951), in the first movement of his Nonet (1956-7) and the two String *Quartets* (1955 and 1960-2 respectively). More often than not, however, he chose to intermingle serial episodes with other elements, e.g. folk-music or electronic components. Furthermore, all the note-rows in his works tend to be shaped and defined like scales.

Gerhard's *Cello Sonata* was to some extent a re-composition of his Viola Sonata (1946) and since its premiere (given by Florence Hooton and Wilfred Parry in a BBC radio broadcast on 10 October 1964) it has only been heard (and published) in its present form. Its three movements juxtapose serial passages alongside freely-written musical material. Folk-music references figure here, also, most notably in the highly ornate slow movement.

The *Chaconne* was written for Yfrah Neaman, who gave its premiere at a Macnaughten Concert in London in 1959. Its twelve sections are based on a typically 'scallic' note-row, at the same time exploring the technical potential of the violin to the maximum extent.

19 **Gemini for Violin and Piano** (1966)

Gemini was originally entitled "Duo Concertante" and maybe this will call to mind Stravinsky's eponymous work for the same medium. There is certainly an element of dualism in its conception. Written for two contrasted instruments, the work juxtaposes duo passages with sections in which one of the players has a cadenza, either played strictly or uninhibitedly (hence Gerhard's indication 'veloce a piacere', as fast as possible!). Again, the musical material is continually changing and differentiated in rhythm and texture: the only time Gerhard repeats material overtly is about two thirds of the way through, when the two instruments repeat passages together which they had previously played separately - and at this point in the score, the composer directs that the performers ignore each other!

Gerhard himself admitted to a weakness for astrology, but his eventual choice of "Gemini" for the title of the piece carried no specific connotations - unlike its two successors, "Libra" (1968) and "Leo" (1969), chamber works with zodiacal references to the composer and his wife, respectively. What is more important is that the three pieces - each one conceived in a single movement - astonish by their freedom of form and intrinsic power of organic development. Gerhard once wrote, "I prize wholeness above unity and versatility above consistency. I reject the traditional breaks between movements ... To my mind, the time gaps are extraneous to the whole." Within each monistic concept, here, there are contrasts and interactions of music, often linked to long-term changes of tempo or metre.

Gemini was composed in response to a commission from the American partnership Morris and Sylvia Hochberg and was given its premiere at the

Commonwealth Institute in London on 24 September 1966 by Yfrah Neaman and Susan Bradshaw. While its basic construction is serial, its character is free-wheeling, an exultant exploration of the sonic potential of the instruments, the violin combining sustained lines with percussive effects, and the piano making use of chord-clusters and harmonics obtained by playing directly upon the strings of the instrument.

A note in Gerhard's own score, read:

"The work consists of a series of contrasting episodes, whose sequence is more like a braiding of diverse strands than a straight linear development. Except for the concluding episodes, nearly every one recurs more than once, generally in a different context. These recurrences are not like refrains, and do not fulfil anything remotely like the function of the classical refrain. Rather might they be compared to thought persistently to some main topic."

Elsewhere, Gerhard wrote: "My favourite listener is the one who does not read explanatory programme notes. My ideal listener is the one who does not even read the score (during the performance) ... Understanding comes first, knowledge second, not the other way round ... I stand by the sound of my music. It is the sound that must make sense..."

©1996 Meirion Bowen

cantamen:

Caroline Balding - violin

Jo Cole - 'cello

Timothy Lissimore - piano

Publishers:

Piano Trio

Cello Sonata

Chaconne

Gemini

United Music Publishers Ltd.

Oxford University Press

Boosey & Hawkes Publishers Ltd.

Oxford University Press

ROBERTO GERHARD

cantamen



Piano Trio

1	I	Moderate	10:39
2	II	Tres calme	8:46
3	III	Vif	7:29

Sonata for 'cello and piano

4	I	Allegro molto energico	5:41
5	II	Grave	5:32
6	III	Molto Vivace	4:19

Chaconne for solo violin

7	I	Risoluto	1:55
8	II	Calmò con leggerezza	1:17
9	III	Allegro con fuoco	0:43
10	IV	Allegretto	1:02
11	V	Veloce	1:10
12	VI	Con Riposo	2:21
13	VII	Allegro con brio	1:25
14	VIII	Adagietto	3:17
15	IX	Molto vivace, con impeto	1:12
16	X	Andante sostenuto	3:04
17	XI	Grazioso	1:28
18	XII	Allegro assai	2:15

Gemini for violin and piano

19	Calmò - Vivace - veloce a piacere - Deciso - Largamente a piacere - Tempo presto	12:52
----	--	-------

Total Time 76:58

www.divineartrecords.com

Recorded in the Chapel of the Hospital of St Cross, Winchester, on 18, 20 and 21 July 1995.
Recording Producer / Engineer / Digital Editor / Cover design and booklet layout: David Lefeber

Cover photograph copyright, Erich Auerbach, supplied by Boosey and Hawkes



METIER
MSV CD92012

©1996 Original recording by David Lefeber, Metier Sound & Vision
©1996 David Lefeber, Metier Sound & Vision

