University of Huddersfield Repository

Walshaw, Trevor

Roberto Gerhard: The Growth Of Vocabulary

Original Citation


This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/4791/

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

• The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
• A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
• The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/
ROBERTO GERHARD: THE GROWTH OF A VOCABULARY

Born in Valls, Catalonia, in 1896, of French-Swiss-German parentage, Gerhard was born at a time when a distinct Catalan identity had been re-established by the Renaixença.

He studied piano with Granados (1914-16) and composition with Pedrell (1916-20) and Schoenberg (1923-28). In 1939 he and his wife left Spain and, after he was offered a fellowship at King’s College, settled in Cambridge, where he remained for the rest of his life, established by the Renaixença.

As an appendix to the thesis there will be a lexicon of the devices commonly applied by Gerhard alongside similar gestures used by his contemporaries such as Bartok, Webern, Schoenberg, etc.

Lexicon, example 1:

Don Quixote, b.1.

In many ways his music reflects the fact that he was brought up in a region which was both strongly nationalistic and also internationalist in outlook: his early works, such as Dos Apunts and 7 Haiku are fundamentally cosmopolitan in outlook, yet both incorporate Catalan folk-tunes.

Several of the works which he composed during the 30s, after he had left Schoenberg focus on Catalan folk music and folklore, using Catalan texts (Cantata), or drawing directly on Catalan folklore, as in Soirees de Barcelones.

Lexicon example 2:

In England his Catalan/Spanish pre-occupations continued, with his Ballets Pandora and Don Quixote, and the Piano Concerto. In the 1950s, however, his style underwent apparently radical changes with the First Symphony, in which Serialism becomes the primary method of organising pitch, but Gerhard now uses such features as timbre, texture, dynamics, tessitura as major structural resources. He also began to develop electronic compositional techniques, some of which were incorporated in his Third Symphony – probably the first major work to integrate electronics and live music in the score (the electronics in Varese’s Déserts are inserted).

Examination of his earlier scores, however, reveals that many of the devices used to construct his First Symphony (and later works) actually appear with increasing frequency prior to 1952. This thesis tries to trace their previous usage.

Trevor Walshaw
March, 2009.