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## 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*.



1 Gerhard with Pedrell, 1921, beneath a portrait of Pedrell as a young man.

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*

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)



7 Gerhard in his studio at home, c.1955.

Lexicon example 2:

Sym. No.1, I, fig. 4: as new material is introduced.

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.

