

# Berio's interpretation and integration of Beckett's *The Unnamable* in *Sinfonia*

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**Abstract** - This literature and music approximation is a contribution to Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* for eight voices and orchestra understanding in relation with Samuel Beckett's novel *The Unnamable*. The content expounds how Berio use *The Unnamable* in his *Sinfonia*, how is this integrated and transformed in relation with other quotations from different arts like music: Beethoven, Berg, Mahler, Stravinsky, Debussy, Schönberg, Ravel, Berlioz, Hindemith, etc., Berio's article *Meditation on a twelve-tone Horse*, Paul Valéry's poem *Le cimetière marin*, Joyce's *Ulysses* novel, mythology from Claude Lévi-Strauss *Le cru et le cuit*, various programs from Mahler's *Second Symphony*, Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, Stravinsky's "Danse de la terre" from *Sacre du Printemps*, Berg's *Wozzeck*, etc., vocal techniques to "musicalise" Beckett's text and slogans from the 1968 French and American riots. There is also presented the *The Unnamable* as a different typed of musicality, and also modified and exposed as form of music. There is also the illustration of Berio's quotations choices, demonstrated through the analysis. It is evidenced which are the reasons that Berio uses Beckett's text, what is his purpose quoting *The Unnamable* and how he integrates, harmonizes and interrelates it with the rest of the quotations applied in *Sinfonia*.

Considering the dimension and the object of this paper, this labour would be only an approximation to the purpose mentioned above. The tasks are to compare *The Unnamable* and its meanings with Berio's music, quotations, programs and all other references that submerge in this versatile process of fusion.

**Keywords**—Berio's *sinfonia*, music and literature, music and meanings, theatre of the absurd.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE *The Unnamable* was written by the Irish writer, dramatist and poet Samuel Beckett, and published in 1952, being the third and last volume from the trilogy composed by *Molloy* (1950) and *Malone meurt* (1951).

This trilogy dissolves the traditional narration canons, so that in the last novel, there is nothing more than a performance poetry, a disjointed monologue from the perspective of an immobile protagonist that reminds of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, surrounded by voices that tries to create him a determinate form so to be recognisable: Mahood, the closed in a box near a restaurant or Worm, the one who is regarded with disgrace from the society. There is no fiction plot and whether

the other characters Mahood and Worm actually exist, may be the facets of the narrator himself. The other alter serve only for the dialogue genesis. The protagonist seems to play the part of the main characters also in the two previous novels of the Trilogy.

*Molloy*, *Malone dies* and *The Unnamable* are novels in name only; as the trilogy advances, the plot is contracting, the characters are ascertainable and so the space and time.

*The Unnamable*, so named because he does not know who he may be and hopes to find out: sits nowhere, nowhen, "like a great barn-owl in an aviary"<sup>1</sup>. The novel is a mixture of existential reflection of the narrator.

The Beckett's character is an anonymous who observes life from afar: what he sees and where he sees it from, without saying who he is, is never made clear. All that we can know is that he lives in a limbo, surrounded by a mysterious "they". The "unnamable" is one of the Beckett's characters who are condemned to speak forever. Speech is at once his damnation and salvation. Salvation that allows him to fill up the nothingness that surrounds him. There is no cry of despair and no conclusion. The novel does end but the final words - "I can't go on, I'll go on"<sup>2</sup> - only acknowledge the inevitable.

The other work, which it will be analysed in comparison with Beckett's *The Unnamable* is Berio's *Sinfonia*.

Luciano Berio was an Italian composer who had belonged to the avant-garde music, after World War II generation, influenced by that crucial moment of enslavement and disclosure. Aside his years of political and ideological obstructions and even imprisonment, his music was influenced by his father, Paribeni, Ghedini, Dallapiccola, Monteverdi, Verdi, Puccini, Mozart, Mahler, Stravinsky, Debussy, Berg and many other musicians, writers and poets like Alighieri, Joyce, Beckett, Calvino, Eco, Neruda, etc., the avant-garde groups, the Darmstadt school, the electro-acoustic music, Swingle Singers, the political position of France and Italy including the late 60s protests, made by his music a veritable syncretic collage and a brilliant expression and protest vehicle.

In the nineteen-sixties, Berio coordinates an experimental human voice group, that enlarge not only the articulation and timbre sphere, but investigate also new procedures to extract the phonetic source that contributes to the musical impact. He integrates eight singers, Swingle Singers in a complex project, *Sinfonia* which succeeded to fuse, with an unconventional approach, the amplified voices to the orchestra writings.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, Grove Press, New York, 2009, p.287

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pag. 407.

The *Sinfonia* is found on five movements that doesn't respect the classic symphony pattern. It's a melt of the words "syn" which means together and "phone" which is for sound, giving rise to the phrase "sing together".

The first part is build in reflexion of South America centre myths, collected by the illustrious French anthropologist – Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Le cru et le cuit* from *Mythologique* series. In *Sinfonia* the text is compose only by phrase beginnings and endings. This syncretism interwaves so tight that the voices confound with the orchestra; there are moments where the melodic lines are stringing simultaneously with the words. The initial *Sinfonia* moment presents the firsts work components and its basic elements. In the end, the narrative does not conclude, but is left in suspense.

The second part is completely discrepant from the first, it symbolize a tribute to Martin Luther King, the martyr assassinated in the same genesis year of *Sinfonia*, 1968. Thus, the text of this movement is build on the same name of Martin Luther King, name which contains all the vowels. In the work process, these dispersed vowels are regrouping like mercury, in a new initial compact shape. Another source that underlies this movement is the *O, King* chamber work written in 1967 by the composer, at the vocal ensemble Aeolian Players request. Thereby, Berio incorporated to *Sinfonia* and rearranged it for orchestra.

The third moment could be consider, musicaly, a tribute to Gustav Mahler<sup>3</sup>, and from the literary point of view, a tribute to Samuel Beckett. The different facets of this moment are jointed through a *Scherzo*, extract from the third part of *Symphony No. 2* by Gustav Mahler. As Berio used to say, Mahler's presence is like a river, sometimes you see it on the surface, sometimes passes under the earth are reappears. Berio decides to "spread" through *Scherzo* components that develop a various harmonic vocabulary. These flavors are extracts or quotes from *Sequenza III* for voice, Debussy's *Danse de la terre* and *La mer*, Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps*, Beethoven's *Ninth* and "*Pastoral*" *Symphony*, Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* and many others. The text is very complex; Berio main election is Beckett's *The Unnamable*, where he add Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* and *Ulysses*, the slogans written on the walls of Sorbonne during May 1968 Paris riots, and also the American civil rights protests.

The fourth movement resemble with fourth part of the same *No. 2 Symphony* of Mahler. In the first New York Philharmonic audition moment, this movement was the *Sinfonia* conclusive part. Only after audition, Berio introduce also the fifth part, the final. In this fourth motion returns the second part atmosphere; this time, the tribute is brought to Claude Lévi-Strauss.

The *Sinfonia* fifth moment borrow a similar texture from the initial part, and uses the harmonic vocal effect from the second part. The voices are more disciplined, synchronized and the entire orchestra produces a spiral sound effect, flowing from an instrument to other. The ceasing moment concludes the previous movements and bind them.

Being composed in the year of riots, 1968, *Sinfonia* includes the energy, the exuberance, the destructive load of that time and reflects a fragmentary world, diversified, expressing an important political moment.

## II. PROBLEM FORMULATION

### *The Unnamable in the Sinfonia*

Luciano Berio tries to assimilate the *The Unnamable* content, sustaining the death desire in his *Sinfonia*. In the novel, the character seems to be the one who directs his own role, making impossible a figure determination. Berio benefit of this circumstances and quotes all the non-sense fragments from the text; one are only images, powerful and independent and others are used for making commentaries in the concert-hall, commentaries like the long run-on-sentences: "Yes, I feel the moment has come for us to look back, if we can, and take our bearings, if we are to go on"<sup>4</sup>.

As I previously mentioned, *Sinfonia* is scored for large orchestra and eight amplified vocalists, both sing and speak. The third part, which it will be analyzed, rests upon a musical statement of the Mahler's *Ressurrection Symphony*, *Scherzo*.

The epic foundation of *Sinfonia*'s third movement is framed by Beckett's novel *The Unnamable*. The book is a "mise en scène" and interpretation of the argument; it is a "book turned into music", as Michael Hicks remarked<sup>5</sup>. Berio's music cooperate to illustrate Beckett's and Mahler's themes, including them like two equals that run side by side in their new musical environment – *Sinfonia*. Around both works, of Mahler and Beckett, interact other musical and textual quotations like Bach, Beethoven, Berlioz, Strauss, Debussy, Schönberg, Stockhausen, Hindemith and Boulez. Berio connects this quotations of past and present with his own modern language like passages and massive cluster chords. The spoken quotations draw upon Paul Valéry's *Le cimetière marin*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, a Berio article, student protests and slogan from the "Paris spring", happened just before this *Sinfonia*, the vocal articulation of this material, even if the major part is recited.

Beckett's work never really begins and is not with a definitive ending. As the protagonist said, he is not sure when he started speaking and less sure of when he will stop.

When asked if he finds anything "musical" in the Beckett's writings, Luciano Berio affirms that his musicallity consist in the ability to elude analysis:

I've always thought, even before working on *Sinfonia*, that Beckett's writing is very musical. But it's very difficult to describe what this "being musical" means. I suspect that, as with everything else in Beckett, this question also defines

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, p. 329. In his *Sinfonia*, Berio replace the first singular pronoun "me" from "the moment has come for me" and "if I can, ..., if I am to go on" with the first plural pronoun, "us".

<sup>5</sup> Michael Hicks, *Text, Music, and Meaning in the Third Movement of Luciano Berio's Sinfonia* in *Perspective of New Music*, 1981, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> As David Osmond-Smith sustain in *Playing on words*.

analysis, even on a purely metaphorical level. Maybe it's precisely this ability to elude analysis that makes Beckett's writing so musical. It constantly prompts interpretation but, at the same time, it refuses to provide any meaningful or useful instrument. Like music, Beckett's writing seems to say what cannot be spoken.<sup>6</sup>

Regarding Beckett's writings connection to music, Berio remarked that Beckett's characters are very often unknown and undefined and there is a mystery of what they think and to what public their conversation are addresses to, and this tragico-comic situation is very musical.

...there's one thing that is peculiar and "Beckettianly" musical: it's the fact that, most of the time, those Beckett pseudo-characters (from *The Unnamable*, *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, etc.) don't know who they're talking to: to themselves? To us? To another pseudo-character? To an audience? They don't even know what they're really talking about. This is why the laughing and the tears, the comic and the tragic, coexist in Beckett in a profoundly inextricable way: one which has never really been experienced before. That's an issue, and a very musical one, that music theatre should approach again soon, possibly with the blessing of Mozart but, more importantly, under the auspices of Samuel Beckett.<sup>7</sup>

As Martin Zenck<sup>8</sup> noted in Beckett's theatrical text *What is the word*, there is a melodicy regarding the lengthening of rhythmic time, the formal and semantic units, extended from a single word, the long length phrases altered with short phrases, the dynamics from the process of acceleration and retardation if every line is spoken in one breath. Using Zenck's principles of melodicy in Beckett's text, we could apply this in *The Unnamable* quotations in *Sinfonia*. For example, the tempo is accelerated when the phrase is recited in a single deep breath. Many of this kind of structures are divided in a few words separated by comma; through a single long exhalation the result is the performance effect *marcato* "...perhaps it's the air, ascending, descending, flowing, eddying, seeking exit, finding none,..."<sup>9</sup> These phrases are interpolated with short interventions that alters the recitation's dynamics like: "where now?" "when now?" "who now?" "and now?" "that what?" "oh, you know" "who you?" and the pressing "keep going". There are also short sentences with equal lengths, and repeated create an *crescendo* effect with a music sequence structure: "I must not forget this, I have not forgotten it. But I must have said this before, since I say it

now."<sup>10</sup> or "you can't leave, you are afraid to leave, you make the best of it, you try to be reasonable, you came too early, ..." <sup>11</sup>

It is interesting also how Berio is trying to "musicalise" Beckett's *The Unnamable* in a canon started by Bass in m. 106 and followed by Tenor after four measures in m.110 with "Yes, I feel the moment has come for us to look back, it we can, and take out bearings, if we are to go on". The second voice canon superimposed is made when the Bass soloist is reciting "and take..."

In *Sinfonia*, Beckett's writings interact with other elements that Berio includes in his work. Below, these structures will be classified to evince the way this interplay with the cardinal work, *The Unnamable*.

In a primary approach of work fundamentals, Berio uses some techniques that prepares for his *Sinfonia*, described below<sup>12</sup>:

#### 1) *Immagines*

The essential feature in this *Sinfonia* is inspired from a Mahler adaptation of his *Wunderhorn* song, "Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt". The text represents the sermon of Saint Antony where, after visiting the churches and finding them empty without disciples, begins to preach at the fishes, near a river. The main theme in this piece is the water, motive that Berio also associates with various aquatic elements like quotation from *La mer* of Debussy, *No.3 Op.16* of Schönberg, being described with *Farben* and associated with a moment of a lake at the sunset, the *Wozzeck* drowning scene and *Szene am Bach* (*Scene at the brook*) from the sixth *Beethoven Symphony*. The omnipresence of the water influences the entire *Sinfonia*.

#### 2) *Allegory*

Mahler's "human satire" is present in this work with the conclusion that the art will not change our behaviour. Even Berio introduces a contemporary satire version from his own article wrote in the same year with the *Sinfonia: Meditation on a twelve-tone Horse*.

Mahler proposes for his *Scherzo* two programs. The first is taken from a letter written by the composer:

When you awaken from the wistful dream of movement 2, to return into the turmoil of life again, it may easily happen to you that the ceaseless flow of life strikes you with horror – like the swaying of dancers in a brightly lit ballroom into which you happen to gaze from the outer darkness and from such a distance that its music remains inaudible... life appears senseless to you and like a dreamful nightmare from which you may start up with a cry of disgust.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Bryden, Mary, *Samuel Beckett and music: An Interview with Luciano Berio*, Published by Oxford University Press, 1998, p.189

<sup>7</sup> This citation is an interview to Luciano Berio in Mary Bryden, *Samuel Beckett and music*, Published by Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p.190.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Zenck, *Beckett after Kurtág: Towards a Theory of Theatricality of a Non-Theatrical Music* in *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, T. 43, Fasc. 3/4 (2002), p. 415, Published by: Akadémiai Kiadó.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, p.357.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, p. 329

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>12</sup> The ideas that will be exposed below could not have been possible without the study stimulation of David Osmond-Smith book, *Playing on words*

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in H.F. Redlich, *Bruckner and Mahler*, London, 1955, p.187.

This perspective transmitted by Mahler could have its implication to Beckett's text: the confusion that seems to be mirrored in *The Unnamable* of: Who are these character? What histories have they? When and where are this occurring and what is the meaning? And also the last trilogy volume itself left the preceding characters deprived of their identity, leaving "only the naked voice of the being who exists"<sup>14</sup>, uncanny like the person who sees his own world through a concave mirror.

The representation of Mahler of a non-sense dance seems to be connected also with *Dichterliebe* from *Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen*, which final measures accomplish the end of the third part of *Sinfonia*. The song's plot is about a marriage description from the lover's eyes which had been abandoned by the bridegroom. Berio brings to light this story introducing quotes from Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, "Le Bal" and Ravel's *La Valse*. As the lover is abandoned, *The Unnamable* character expose his own solitude: "In my live, since we must call it so, there were three things, the inability to speak, the inability to be silent, and solitude, that's what I've had to make the best of."<sup>15</sup>

Berlioz lover's sadness and ineptitude for his destiny appears to be shared with Beckett's hero: "his eyes can no longer close as they once could"<sup>16</sup> and start to weep endless tears "which flow all over my face, and even down along my neck"<sup>17</sup>. The "unnamable" knows quite about humans enough to despise them; his perception of love is a depressing tale of a man instability, like a consequence of lover's depression from Berlioz program:

They love each other, marry, in order to love each other better, he goes to the wars, he dies at the wars, she weeps, with emotion, at having loved him, at having lost him, yep, marries again, in order to love again... you love as many times as necessary, as necessary in order to be happy<sup>18</sup> and, in the end he winds up in a sudden outburst of emotion, feeling hatred for woman: "the one for ever accursed ejected me into this world and the other infundibuliform, in which, pumping my likes, I tried to take my revenge."<sup>19</sup>

The second Scherzo program is a tale written by Mahler in 1901 and has a similar subject which is a retrospective description of a dead hero's life, where, in denouement he loose his faith and the confidence in God and the world and life are disgusting him until he screams for desperation.

The spirit of unbelief and negation has taken hold of him. Looking into turmoil of appearances, he loses together with the clear eyes of

childhood the sure foot-hold which love alone gives. He despairs of himself and God. The world and the life become a whishes' brew; disgust of existence in every form strikes him with iron fist and drives him to an outburst.<sup>20</sup>

A similar picture of loosing his belief is being present in *The Unnamable* under a disappointment monologue starting from his repugnance living: "what have I done to God, what have they done to God, what has God done to us, and we've done nothing to him, you can't do anything to him, he can't do anything to us, we're innocent, he's innocent, it's nobody's fault..."<sup>21</sup>

All this imaginary programs seem to be related with the modern story of Samuel Beckett – *The Unnamable*, which Berio had chosen for his work. Even if the major correlation between words and music pertain to details, some features are used to announce various connections presented below.

### III. PROBLEM SOLUTION

#### *Music and text analysis*

Considering the vast complexity of this work, that could require a detailed note-by-note analyse, the purpose of the present paper is far away from such a profoundness. So I will abridge this examination, citing some of the principal fragments, ones that provide a basic comprehension and signification of the work drama.

The title of this movement "In ruhig fließender Bewegung" is Mahler's notation for tempo for his *Scherzo*.

Berio's *Sinfonia* form is inspired from Gustav Mahler *Second Symphony Scherzo*<sup>22</sup>:

M. 1-103	Scherzo (C minor)
M. 104-149	Trio I (F major)
M. 150-189	Scherzo (C minor)
M. 190-347	Trio II (C major; D major; E major; C major)
M. 348-406	Scherzo (C minor)
M. 407-544	Trio I and Trio II (F major and C major)
M. 545-581	Scherzo (C minor)

This movement is organized in Trios and in every Trio, Berio choose to create a "mirror" effect using voices which amplifies the soloist voice that recites the Beckett's text from "the show". The multitudes interrelatedness between music and text are presented in three areas:<sup>23</sup>

#### 1) *Mahler's Scherzo*

The progressive mahlerian Scherzo cancelling is related

<sup>14</sup> John Fletcher, *The Novels of Samuel Beckett*, Barnes and Noble, Inc. Publisher, New York, 1964, p. 179.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, p.389.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.294

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.298

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.399

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.316

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.213.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, p.379.

<sup>22</sup> David Joel Metzger, *Quotation and cultural meaning in twentieth-century music*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 131

<sup>23</sup> David Osmond-Smith, *Playing on words*, p. 86.

with Beckett's "I am here so little"<sup>24</sup>. When the mahlerian music is consolidated, some citations from *The Unnamable* are introduced: "Where now?", "when now?" (m.15 the *The Unnamable* debut) and in particular "keep going" announce when the main theme of Mahler's symphony is audible; "for the unexpected is always upon us" comes immediately after the amputee that Berio makes with Mahler's *Scherzo*, cutting ten measures.

The third Trio is also accompanied by the Beckett's text: "Yes, I feel the moment has come for us to look back, if we can, and take our bearings, if we are to go on"<sup>25</sup>.

Mahler's *Scherzo* turns back stronger in m.457, after a long period of silence, but is submerged by the self-quotation *Epifanie* in a twelve pitch-classed sound.

Before a briefly presentation of the singers and the Tenor 1 "We must collect our thoughts, for the unexpected is always upon us, in our rooms, in the street, at the door, on a stage" Mahler's *Scherzo* flows down to the final cadence.

## 2) Collage<sup>26</sup>

The quotations create in a collage manner is mostly used in *Sinfonia*. As a general rule, Beckett's quotations appears in the relative order that appears in the book, the earlier sentences in *Sinfonia* earlier in the book, the last are also the last in the book, and so on.

Tenor 2 introduces another quote from Beckett: "Keep going". This motto will become a refrain that appears also in m.56, 60, 62, 77, 87, 105, 143, 181, etc. which relates with Mahler obsession with "continuing existence".

M.46 presents the Beckett's quotations moved through the voices: "For through the silence here is almost unbroken, it is not completely so... I am not deaf, of that I am convinced, that is to say, half-convinced." This passage refers to the presence of other voices, from the beginning of the book.

Tenor 1 repeats the following phrase from Beckett at m.200: "But now I shall say my old lesson, if I can remember it. I must not forget this, I have not forgotten it. But I must have said this before, since I say it now." The "unnamed" is condemned in a cyclical repetition, like he admits in: "I have a pensum to discharge before I can be free – free to speak no more"<sup>27</sup>. At his third repetition, appears a self-quotation from Berio, *Epifanie*.

Until now, Beckett's text was fragmented and assigned to many voices contemporary. From now on, the narration will be given to Tenor 1 which will be the protagonist for two large monologues:

Well, I prefer that, I must say I prefer that oh you know, oh you, oh I suppose the audience, well well, so there is an

audience, it's public show, you buy your seat and you wait, perhaps it's free, a free show, you take your seat and you wait for it to begin, or perhaps it's compulsory, a compulsory show. You wait for the compulsory show to begin, it takes time, you hear a voice, perhaps it is a recitation, that is the show, someone improvising, you can barely hear him, that's the show, you can't leave, you are afraid to leave... you make the best of it, you try and be reasonable, you came too early, here we'd need latin, it's only beginning, it hasn't begun, he'll appear any moment, he'll begin any moment. He is only prelude, clearing his throat, alone in his dressing room, or it's the stage manager giving his instructions, his last recommendations before the curtain rises, that's the show waiting for the show, to the sound of a murmur, you try and be reasonable, perhaps it is not a voice at all, perhaps it's the air ascending, descending, flowing, eddying, seeking exit, finding none, and the spectators, where are they, you didn't notice, in the anguish of waiting, never noticed you were waiting alone, that is the show for the fools in the palace waiting, waiting alone, that is the show, waiting alone, in the restless air, for it to begin, for something to begin, for there to be something else but you, for the power to rise, the courage to leave. You try and be reasonable, perhaps you are blind, probably deaf, the show is over, all is over, but where then is the hand, the helping hand, or merely charitable, or the hired hand, it's a long time coming, to take yours and draw you away, that is the show, free, gratis and for nothing, waiting alone, blind, deaf, you don't know where, you don't know for what, for a hand to come and draw you away, somewhere else, where perhaps it's worse...<sup>28</sup>

For the first time, *The Unnamable* notify to the audience that his soliloque became a "public show", where the audience is also involved, it's their state of isolation, alienation, an inner perspective of their meaning for the existence, a search for an identity.

After the show, the pressing interrogation phrases appear again: "Where now? Who now? When now?" where possibly refers at the existence after the show, after the changing identities between audience and performer and for "keep going" with the "compulsory show" on continuing our existence.

Tenor 1 begins his second intervention, distinct from the first, regarding the modern music statement, especially the serialism:

There must be something else. Otherwise it would be quite hopeless. But it is quite hopeless. Unquestioning. But it can't go on, it, say it, not knowing what. It's getting late. Where now? When now? I have a present for you. Keep going, page after page. Keep going, going on, call that going, call that on.<sup>29</sup>

The text is accompanied by quotations from Boulez - *Pli selon Pli*, Webern – *Kantate, op.31* and Stockhausen – *Gruppen für drei Orchester*.; this note refers to the "Damstadt school", where Berio attend to; this institution represent an

<sup>24</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, p.357.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.329.

<sup>26</sup> The following ideas could not be developed without the study of John Fletcher's book, *The Novels of Samule Beckett*.

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, p.304.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.375.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.285.

important historical moment for the avant-garde music in the early fifties.

### 3) *Superposition*

Overlapping the materials is another criteria explored by Berio. For example, the review of Debussy's *La Mer* is performed when the poem of Valery *Le cimetière marin* is being recited: "La mer, la mer, toujours recommencée". Also, when Hindemith's *Kammermusik Nr. 4* is cancelled from the *Sinfonia*, the Tenor 2 recites from *The Unnamable* "nothing more restful than chamber music" (the original version is "nothing more restful than arithmetic") the Tenor 1 responds: "than flute" and Soprano 2 "that two flutes" because the Mahler's scherzo incipit; the Bass 2 and Tenor 1 interrupt with: "no time for chamber music... you are nothing but an academic exercise" is referring at Hindemith's *Kammermusik*. The ironic interventions will become a characteristic of this moments, as it will be remarked further.

At m.51 the Bass 1 realise that there was a calm period: "So after a period of immaculate silence there seemed..." completed by Beckett: "a feeble cry was heard by me..." This moment is interrupted by Berio's text, ordering "to be a violin concerto being played in the other room in three quarters". Immediately, the orchestra plays a musical correspondent which is Berg's *Violin Concerto*. When Alto 2 announce "two violin concertos" the orchestra superimpose another piece to Berg's *Concerto*, soon interrupted by Brahms's *Violin Concerto*.

At m.77 Beckett's quotation "This represent at least a thousand words I was not counting on. I may well be glad of them." The orchestra appear with *La Valse* de Ravel and the *Rosenkavalier* waltz and claim the correlation with Mahler's vision: "the swaying of dancers in a brightly lit ballroom".

There is almost a timing between the orchestra (m.87) and Tenor 1 (m.88), both expounding Ravel's *Daphne and Chloé*, words and music; the Tenor recites: "Daphne et Chloé written in red, counting the seconds while nothing has happened but the obsession with..."

At m.98 Tenor 1 quotes *The Unnamable* with "I am the air, the walls, everything yields, opens, ebbs, flows..." and soon after is followed by Berio's "like the play of waves" while the orchestra responds with "Jeux de Vagues" accompaniment.

At m.129, the orchestra plays the second movement of the *Ninth Symphony* of Beethoven, while the Bass is conducting it with "and the curtain comes down for the ninth time."

At m.170 Stravinsky's *Le sacre* appears with "Danse de la terre" accompanied by the Tenor 1 with: "it is as if we were rooted, that's bonds if you like... the earth would have to quake, it isn't earth, one doesn't know what it is." This is obviously remarked the reference to the earth. Beyond, there is Berio's intervention: "maybe a kind of competition on the stage, with just eight female dancers" and here the orchestra answer with Stravinsky's *Agon*, the dance for eight female in double "pas de quatre".

After the show, Berio's intervention warms up the death moment; after several German quotations to introduce Berg's

tragedy, and, in the end, the text "in a lake full of colours" conducted to the scene where the drowning of Wozzeck occurs. The death motive reach the suicide, evinced with the underwater sound of *La Mer* of Debussy.

At m.429, while the solo violin brings up the *Kammermusik*, Tenor 1 and 2 recite from *The Unnamable*:

If only this voice would stop for a second, it would seem long to me, a second of silence. I would listen, I'd know if it was going to start again, it's late now, and he is still talking incessantly, any old thing, repetition after repetition, talking unceasingly...<sup>30</sup>

Contrasting with the "academic exercise", the quote: "I shall never hear again the lowing cattle, the rush of the stream" is visualised with Beethoven's *Sixth Symphony*, as a tribute for this remarkable artwork.

When the tenor recites the sentence "counting the seconds", the keyboards and strings instruments start to make echoes being followed after by the flutes.

The text "Counting the seconds while nothing has happened but the obsession with" is followed by the howl of a person different that Beckett's Worm who is exploring his own limits, waiting his own yell's echoes.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Beckett's hero is a existential reflection of the human being, that does not know who he is and tries to find out. There is no space and no time in *The Unnamable*; the character is an anonymous that lives the live from the exterior, seeing it like a spectator, waiting to see what will happen. There is no plot or characters, he is surrounded by voices, that hears them with intermitence; and when it happens it's impossible to distinguish if is the main character or his imagination. When "the voices" appear are used to create the dialogue, varying his disjointed monologue. There seems to be a public or other characters, but there is no indication regard this subject; the fact is that "the voices" could be anyone, the listener, the reader, the audience and only our imagination could decide. The "unnamable" is one of the Beckett's characters who are condemned to speak forever, but speaking is also his salvation, which fills up the nothingness that surrounds him.

This is Berio's election for his *Sinfonia*. He takes entire quotations from *The Unnamable* to express a different point of view of our existence: the life as a show, the life in a mirror, to look our emptiness from afar, if we are alone, to see if something surround us, if the voices we hear, the persons we see are real or are only the fruit of our imagination.. We are condemned or not to "keep going", to continuing living, and turning back to our lives after the "show". Could be consider, that Berio, using his *Sinfonia* as a vehicle, transmits to his public, for the moment of actuation, an intrinsic view using the mind effort and induce the audience, during the "show

session”, to feel what he had felt..

To integrate these various and different forms of art: music, literature, poetry, Berio introduces *The Unnamable* text using some techniques:

#### A. The interrelatedness with Mahler's programs

He melt it perfectly, in a first moment, with the basic Mahler program, “the swaying of dancers in a brightly lit ballroom into which you happen to gaze from the outer darkness and from such a distance that its music remains inaudible...” is connected with the confusion statement that the “unnamable” presents; he cannot answer at fundamental questions about the voices that hear and cannot see, has the inverse problem, where always is missing the defying element for understand, and the second Mahler program “*The world and the life become a whishes' brew; disgust of existence in every form strikes him with iron fist and drives him to an outburnst*” share the lose of faith of Beckett's hero.

#### B. The Unnamable's “mise en scène”

This is made possible by Berio through his *Sinfonia* using the immagies: the Saint Antony story that predict to the fishes, the aquatic elements like *La mer* of Debussy, *No.3 Op.16* of Schönberg, *Farben*, a lake at the sunset, the *Wozzeck* drowning scene and *Szene am Bach (Scene at the brook)* from the sixth *Beethoven Symphony*, using allegory: the *Scherzo* program, the Berio's article: *Meditation on a twelve-tone Horse*, etc.

#### C. Use of the text in relation with the musical meanings.

##### 1) Anticipation

When Berio put the text before the music, anticipates a musical phrase with “signal” like: “Keep going” which always announce the Mahler's *Scherzo* entry; or “nothing more restful than chamber music” that announce Hindemith's *Kammermusik Nr. 4*. etc. Berio also use the anticipation for ending the musical phrases, normally ironically: the same example when the text in recited: “you are nothing but an academic exercise” announce Hindemith's *Kammermusik Nr. 4* ending or Berio's “two violin concertos” Berg's *Concerto* is interrupted by Bhrams's *Violin Concerto*.

##### 2) Commentary

When the composer put the text after the music, have a commentary role: Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* “Danse de la terre” is followed by: “the earth would have to quake, it isn't earth, one doesn't know what it is.”

##### 3) Significance expansion

When Berio accompanies the text with the music intent to enlarge the communication aim like in: *The Unnamable* “I am

the air, the walls, everything yields, opens, ebbs, flows...” where the orchestra responds with “Jeux de Vagues”.

#### 4) Irony

When Berio make use of the ironic elements dramatizes further the situation: the text “in a lake full of colours” succeed Wozzeck's death, from Alban Berg *Wozzeck's* opera. Or the appearance of *La Valse* de Ravel and the *Rosenkavalier* waltz claim the correlation with Mahler's vision: “the swaying of dancers in a brightly lit ballroom”.

The third movent of *Sinfonia* was always considered a unique fusion of artworks bounded in a solo masterpiece. The impressive fact is how is melted, how is it transformed to become a single piece of music. In 1986, Berio managed to create an unprecedented opera, putting together the music history geniuses, from Bach to Stockhausen in a modern style, using Joyce and Beckett as literature, and also eternal human been moments, like Mahler's and Berlioz's programs. Written in a transition post-war moment, *Sinfonia*, especially his third movement, expressed the conditions of its time, of a generation prompted for innovation, for the beginning of a new era; maybe *Sinfonia* represented also a political perspective, under its form of art.

This work rise up the musical barriers, binding the literature with music, and creating a “soundtrack” for a novel, *The Unnamable*.

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