

Quotation and Parody: Bringing the Past into the Present

Some Characteristics of Postmodernism in Music

- irony and self-awareness
- collage
- rejection of European and North American hegemony—embrace music and cultures of all people
- rejection of absolutes; enjoys enigma, plurality, and play; music may not “coherent”
- embrace traditional forms, styles; return to tonality
- Past music in quotation: makes familiar unfamiliar (hear old music in new light)



Robert Rauschenberg



Left: Portrait of Pope Innocent X (1650) by Diego Velazquez
Right: Francis Bacon's study after Velazquez (1953)

Luciano Berio (1925–2003)

- devoted to the orchestra—admired Ravel, Mahler
- interested in layering different sounds (esp. timbres); often divides orchestra into sound groups; frequently includes vocalists in orchestra



Sinfonia (1968-9)

for orchestra and 8 amplified voices; composed for “Swingle Singers”



Sinfonia (1968-9)

- I. Text from Claude Levi-Strauss *Le cru et le cuit*
- II. "O King": tribute to Martin Luther King Jr.
Breaks name down into phonemes
- III. *In ruhig fliessender Bewegung*: based on 3rd mvmt
Mahler Symphony 2

Sinfonia (1968-9)

- 3rd movement uses the Scherzo from Mahler's Symphony no. 2 as its foundation; superimposes:
- other "standards" of orchestral repertoire (Strauss, Stavinisky, Ravel, Bach, Beethoven, Ives, Debussy . . .)
 - newly composed "blocks" of sound
 - humorous remarks, names of singers, cliché phrases
 - passages from Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable*

- Relationship between quoted material:
 - Almost "stream of consciousness": a melodic or rhythmic motive in the Mahler source serves as a reminder or link to other material—purely subjective but also witty (puns) and disorienting
- Spoken word:
 - Comments on music as it occurs; phrases selected for relationship with music
 - Quotations from graffiti—in the context of the music, acts as a *musical graffiti*

Other pieces that engage "Postmodernity" and Quotation / Collage

- **Alfred Schnittke**: writes "in the style of" Baroque and Classical pieces, but with a twist (micropolyphony, chromaticism, clusters and canons)
- **Arvo Pärt** writes in a way that recalls Medieval chant and **Kaija Saariaho** evokes Medieval troubadour songs
- There are *lots* of others...Can we ever escape the past?