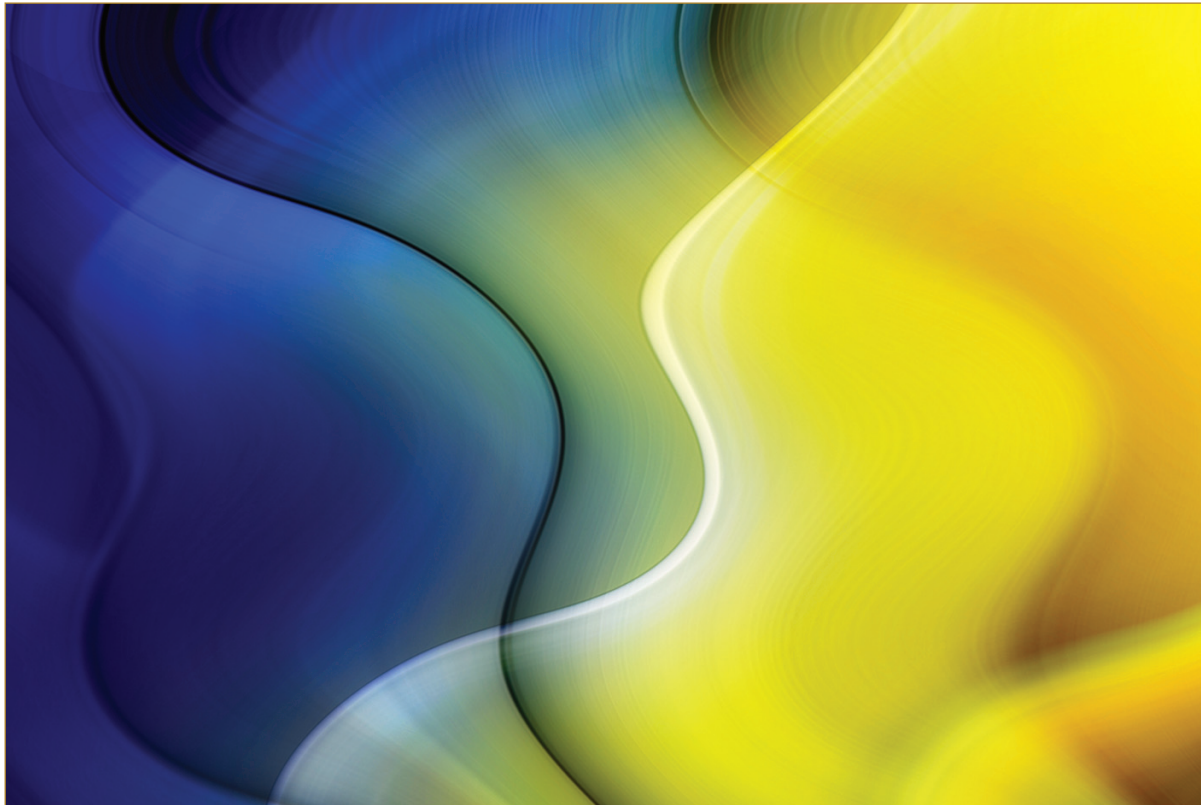


Roman
BERGER
Pathetique

Epilogue (Omaggio a L.v.B.)
Sonata No. 3 'da camera' • Impromptu
Allegro frenetico con reminiscenza

The Berger Trio



Roman Berger (b. 1930)

Pathétique • Sonata No. 3 'da camera' • Allegro frenetico con reminiscenza Impromptu • Epilogue (Omaggio a L. v. B.)

The composer, theoretician and writer Roman Berger was born in 1930 in Cieszyn, on the Czech-Polish border, to the family of a Lutheran priest. Following his school graduation, he was enrolled in the State Academy of Music in Katowice, to the north of his home town, where he studied piano and music theory. Following the 1948 communist coup in Czechoslovakia, Berger's father was put under pressure to move his family to the Slovak capital Bratislava. There Berger continued his studies at the VŠMU (Academy of Performing Arts), taking piano classes with Friso Kafenda (1883-1963) and Štefan Németh-Šamorínsky (1896-1975). Following his graduation, he joined the teaching staff at the Academy; and from 1959, decided to devote himself to composition. Although he wished to return to Katowice to study with the leading Polish composer Boleslaw Woytowicz (1899-1980), he was not granted permission to travel; and therefore enrolled again at VŠMU, where he attended the class of Dezider Kardoš (1914-1991). He completed his studies with distinction in 1965 with the cycle *Transformations, 4 Pieces for Large Orchestra*. After a successful performance at the ISCM Festival in Prague in 1967, *Transformations* was to be included in the programme for the Warsaw Autumn Festival. However, on hearing of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the so-called Warsaw Pact armies (Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany and Poland), Berger refused to send the score of his work to Warsaw, in protest.

From the late 1950s, Berger began to involve himself in avant-garde Slovak music – first as a pianist, and then as a composer. He published a number of papers in scholarly journals, at first concerning music theory, and later also writing campaign articles which sought to defend the professionalism, freedom and responsibility of the composer-intellectual. During the Prague Spring, in 1968, he was appointed secretary of the Composers' Section of the Union of Slovak Composers. Following the Warsaw Pact invasion he refused to cooperate with the new leadership of the Union and was expelled from the organisation in 1972, condemned as “an anti-Soviet, anti-

socialist and anti-state element”. This also meant the end of his teaching work at VŠMU. Following eight years of unemployment, and exclusion from cultural life, he was finally offered a two-year residence at the Art Scholarship Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. This led Berger to doctoral study, and his thesis *Logical Foundations of the Harmonic System*; but he never completed the degree since he refused to take the obligatory subsidiary exam on Marxist-Leninist thinking. From 1984 he was one of the organisers of a series of unofficial seminars on Mathematics and Music. From November 1989, he became a member of the advisory committee of the Slovak Ministry of Culture.

Berger's works have been heard regularly at festivals at home and abroad, particularly since the late 1970s. A selection of his writings has also been published, combining earlier and more recent articles on music theory and philosophy, analysis and interpretation, which are characterised by their broad scholarly outlook and non-traditional approach. He holds a number of awards for both his compositions and publications, including the University of Vienna's Herder Prize (1988), the Honorary Cross for merit of the President of the Polish Republic (2011), the Prize of the Union of Polish Composers (2012), and the Diploma of the Papal Council for Culture (2013).

Berger's early compositions were influenced by a range of European music from the first half of the twentieth century – Béla Bartók, Paul Hindemith, Karol Szymanowski, the members of the Second Viennese School – as well as the work of contemporaries such as Olivier Messiaen, Witold Lutosławski and the Polish Compositional School. His student works were largely based on twelve-tone compositional techniques and used unconventional instrumental combinations as a means of exploring new expressive and formal patterns. This led Berger from relatively short piano works to the *Suite in the Old Style for Strings and Drums* (1963), and finally to his graduation piece, *Transformations*. He later became interested in drawing on the models and processes of information theory

and cybernetics in the structuring of his music, techniques which can be seen in the triptych *Convergences* for solo string instruments (violin, 1968; viola, 1970; cello, 1975) and the orchestral *Memento After the Death of Miro Filip* (1974), written in memory of the Slovak musicologist. He has also written a number of electroacoustic pieces, including *Epitaph for Nicolaus Copernicus* (1972); and throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a number of his works were heavily influenced by developments in Polish contemporary music, including the choral cycle *Litany to the Trees* (1975), *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1983) and *De profundis* for solo bass, cello and piano (1985), written to the antiwar poetry of Tadeusz Różewicz (1921-2014). This is not to say, however, that Berger's music is without lyricism: aspects of the dramatic and the meditative can be found in pieces such as the two *Adagios* for violin and piano (1987, 1989), *Requiem da camera* for piano trio (1998),

Composer's Note

My compositions *Pathétique* (2006) and *Epilogue, Omaggio a L. v. B.* (2010), where the beginning of Beethoven's *Sonata Pathétique* breaks free from rigid metronomic time, are all concerned with the character and manipulation of time. Following the premiere of *Pathétique*, a friend remarked to me that "This is music about our departure"... and he was right. The work came into being at a time when my wife's state of health dramatically worsened. I composed *Epilogue* two years after her death; it contains a sort of Bergmanesque "Cries and Whispers", a "Death Knell", and a meek chorale.

My "adventure" into writing for a trio of clarinet, cello and piano began with a suggestion by Ján Slávik. He told me: "In your *De Profundis* (which is exceptionally demanding to play) there is a cello conclusion which ought to be played independently. Do something with it!" So I framed this quasi-Baroque cantilena within a series of virtuosic segments that

Soft November Music for piano (1989), an organ cycle *Exodus* (1982–1997), and several vocal-instrumental (*Korczak in memoriam*, 2000; *Missa pro nobis*, 2010; *Tennebrae*, 2011) and orchestral works (*Musica pro defunctis*, 2004; *Post scriptum*, 2004; *Improvisation sur Herbert*, 2007). Berger strongly believes that, even in a time of political stability, it is the duty of the composer-intellectual to draw attention to the flaws in society – in particular abuses of freedom (including the increasing pressure of commercialism and what he sees as the resultant cheapening of art in the name of consumerism) – and to stand for traditional European values of creativity and authentic composition. To that end, Berger's compositional approach is marked by his continuous reimagining and development of familiar forms.

Lubomír Chalupka

seem almost improvised, and the *Allegro frenetico con reminiscenza* (2006) came into being. Afterwards my friends twice surprised me: they decided to play as a trio under my name (despite my objections), and this led to the creation of this recording project. Ladislav Fančovič studied the *3rd Sonata – da camera*, which is the oldest composition on the recording, dating from 1971. At the last moment I wrote *Impromptu* for Branislav Dugovič. I have dedicated the solo compositions to these outstanding players, the *Epilogue* to "my" trio, and the *Pathétique* to my late wife Rút.

I will add only that for me, expressionism is neither a style nor an aesthetic, nor an "out-dated" fashion: rather, it is the result of life experience. The drama of existence leads to drama in art – such is the imperative of Truth.

Roman Berger
Edited by Katy Hamilton

The Berger Trio

The Berger Trio comprises three leading Slovak concert artists, **Ján Slávik** (cello), **Ladislav Fanzowitz** (piano), and **Branislav Dugovič** (clarinet). Having performed for many years under their individual names, in 2010 they decided to name the ensemble after Roman Berger. This was as a result of the successful première of the composer's *Epilogue* as part of the Slovak Philharmonic Cycle of Chamber Concerts and a further successful concert with an exclusively "Bergerian" theme in Kraków. Since then they have performed under the name The Berger Trio. The ensemble has presented the premières of numerous works by Slovak composers (Berger, Kupkovič, Krák etc.) and has performed at many festivals and on many concert podia at home and abroad. The Berger Trio's repertoire is extremely broad, from the traditional repertoire for this combination of instruments (Beethoven, Brahms etc.) to contemporary work (Bryars, Hosokawa etc.) Apart from promoting Slovak music, they also focus on the presentation of lesser-known or forgotten works composed for their instruments. The ensemble's concerts have repeatedly met with a favourable response in professional journals, where critics have given particularly high praise to their sense of ensemble and their feeling for colourful dialogue between individual instruments. www.facebook.com/bergertrio



Photo: Katarína Selecká

Award-winning composer and music theoretician Roman Berger is widely respected for his stand against political repression in Eastern Europe during the last century. Most of the works on this recording are dedicated to the members of The Berger Trio, one of Slovakia's leading ensembles. They include a commemoration of the composer's late wife and other aspects of parting. The composer himself has written '... for me expressionism is neither a style nor an aesthetic, nor an "anachronistic" fashion: it is the result of life experience. The drama of existence leads to drama in art.'

 Hudobný fond
Music Fund Slovakia

**Roman
BERGER**
(b. 1930)

- | | | |
|----------|--|--------------|
| 1 | Pathetique (2006) | 12:06 |
| | Sonata No. 3 'da camera' (1971) | 23:03 |
| 2 | I. Andante con tristezza | 3:08 |
| 3 | II. Allegro deciso | 4:28 |
| 4 | III. Veloce | 2:59 |
| 5 | IV. Allegro inquieto | 12:28 |
| 6 | Allegro frenetico con reminiscenza (2006) | 13:13 |
| 7 | Impromptu (2013) | 7:54 |
| 8 | Epilogue (Omaggio a L. v. B.) (2010) | 21:55 |

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

The Berger Trio
Ján Slávik, Cello • Branislav Dugovič, Clarinet
Ladislav Fanzowitz, Piano

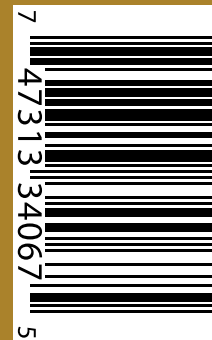
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