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TADEUSZ BAIRD:

- PLAY, Edition Peters 8169, c 1972 (£6.25)
- VARIATIONS IN RONDO FORM, Peters 8444, c 1979 (£3.50)
- CONCERTO LUGUBRE, Peters 8381, c 1978 (£24.00)
- OBOE CONCERTO, Peters 8324, c 1975 (£15.50)
- SCENES, Peters 8442, c 1979 (£12.00)
- PSYCHODRAMA, Peters 8187, c 1973 (£12.00)
- ELEGEIA, Peters 8246, c 1975 (£8.00)
- GOETHE-BRIEFE, Peters 8167, c 1972 (£7.25)

RAYMOND MCGILL

Since this review was written the death of Tadeusz Baird has been announced. (Ed.)

Born in 1928 in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Baird studied at the State Higher School of Music in Warsaw with Piotr Rytel and Piotr Perkowski; he also studied privately with Bolesław Woytowicz and Kazimierz Sikorski. With Kazimierz Serocki and the conductor Jan Krenz he founded the Group 49; which represented an effort to unite against the older and more established generation of composers who included Lutosławski

(b. 1913), Panufnik (b. 1914), and Bacewicz (1909-69). The younger composers brought about a more folkloristic approach to music coupled with the taste of late Romanticism in a style that represented a continuation of the Szymanowski tradition. Baird was one of the few composers in the 1950s who had enough courage and self-confidence to oppose formalism, although it was only with the rise of the Gomulka era after 1956 that a truly avantgarde school of Polish music grew up. The year 1956 also saw the establishment of the Warsaw Autumn festival, which is an annual event devoted to the promotion of contemporary music, and owes its existence chiefly to Baird and Serocki.

The strongest influences on Baird's music were Debussy, Szymanowski, Mahler, and Berg. The pessimistic spirit of Mahler is particularly striking in many works, and is very strongly felt in the Second Symphony of 1952, in strong contrast to the First Symphony of 1950, which is imbued with Szymanowskian ecstasy. These early works at once reveal the underlying principles governing Baird's musical thought processes, which were the expression of his spiritual and emotional life. In this sense his music is highly subjective, with less concern for formal perfection. Early works reflect the neo-classical qualities that were very much in evidence in a lot of Polish music at this time (much of the music of Bacewicz provides a striking example of such stylistic tendencies). As his style developed Baird experimented with serial techniques and the String Quartet of 1957 and *Four Essays* for orchestra of 1958 are both fine examples of his approach to these techniques. However, the emotional value and content are still of paramount significance. A flair for lyrical writing placed Baird in a position almost without rival among his contemporaries, and this is clearly exemplified in the large number of vocal works and works for a solo instrument and orchestra that he wrote. Literature and drama acted as sources of inspiration for Baird, and he composed a number of scores for theatrical productions, in addition to the one-act opera *Jutro* (Tomorrow), which is based on the short story of the same title by Joseph Conrad.

Both *Play* (1971) and *Variations in Rondo Form* (1978) are for string quartet and reveal the essential features of much of Baird's music, in the use of tightly controlled forms, and an economical use of instruments. Both works are in one continuous movement and represent yet another direction in which Baird's music moved. *Play* was written for the Danish Quartet and lasts about 11½ minutes; *Variations* was first performed in Paris by the Warsaw Quartet and is more substantial, lasting about 18½ minutes. Both of these works are divided into contrasting sections in different tempi, using a wide variety of ideas. Virtuosity is a feature common to both, particularly in the writing for cello which is often at the extreme upper range of the instrument's compass. Here Baird integrates the colour of the cello with the violins and viola and sometimes all four instruments play in unison or thirds. It is in the rich chordal passages, where multiple stopping is used, that the entire range of the instruments is exploited, and in such sections Baird writes for all the instruments in rhythmic unison. The contrasting passages are linked with aleatoric sections, usually derived from the thematic ideas presented as solos (frequently by the viola). Instruments are pitted against each other in contrary motion, often moving in small chromatic steps with contrasting wide leaps.

One of the most recent solo instrumental works is the *Concerto lugubre* for viola and orchestra. This was written in 1975 to a commission by the Philharmonic Orchestra of the City of Nuremberg and is in memory of Baird's mother who died in 1974. The first performance was given in Nuremberg in May 1976, with Stefan Kamasa as the soloist. It is a Classical work, 'Classical' referring not only to the Classical - Romantic patterns of musical narration - the course of tensions - but also to the whole expressive structure of the piece. The work is a continuous movement lasting about 20 minutes and falls into three clear sections: the first is dramatic, the middle section is intensely lyrical, while the Finale is very aggressive. Conceived in a mood of funereal gloom the *Concerto* opens with restrained *pizzicati* on the solo viola; the texture thickens as dynamics increase. The predominant referential sonority, the note E flat, is firmly established, while the soloist presents the main theme. Variations of this theme provoke the orchestra into explosive utterances. The first part of the work dissolves into silence, from which increasingly frequent and incisive timpani strokes reiterate E flat. The influence of Mahler and Berg is particularly apparent in this work which comes to rest after the final entry of the soloist, dying away *al*

niente, in a state of elegiac peace.

Using an equally large orchestra, including a substantial battery of percussion employing five players, the Oboe Concerto dates from 1973, just two years before the *Concerto lugubre*. The Oboe Concerto was the result of a request from the oboist Lothar Faber, and the work is dedicated to him. Like the *Concerto lugubre*, the Oboe Concerto is conceived in one continuous movement but it falls into four sections which are clearly differentiated in mood and tempo. The work opens quietly with percussion instruments to which are added two harps. As momentum is gained the soloist is allowed to enter tentatively. The oboist frequently plays while little else is happening, another parallel with the *Concerto lugubre*. String writing in multiple parts is common to both concertos, the resulting effect creating a band of sound against which the soloist is placed. Tremendous technical demands are made on the oboist, although these are not made simply to create a bravura display, for musical ends are always given, and achieve, priority.

Although not called 'concerto', *Scenes* for cello, harp, and orchestra is a single-movement work described by the composer as 'a talk, an argument and a reconciliation', and is effectively a concerto. The solo instruments represent the two voices set against an orchestral background of largely sustained sounds, with just a few explosive 'comments'. The work was written in 1977 to a private commission from Helga and Klaus Storck, and the solo writing very much reflects the tremendous virtuosity of this partnership, similar to that of Ursula and Heinz Holliger.

Both *Psychodrama* (1972) and *Elegeia* (1973) are single-movement orchestral works. In these works expression of emotion and feeling is most concentrated, being conveyed purely instrumentally. Between the very sustained and peaceful sounds that characterise *Elegeia* and the cataclysmic Finale of *Psychodrama*, one experiences the whole gamut of emotions. Commissioned by the Norköping Symphony Orchestra in Sweden, *Psychodrama* is scored for 48 soloists and a Classical orchestra, to which are added a harp, harpsichord, piano, celesta, and percussion. It is one of Baird's most compact and concentrated works (lasting about 8 minutes), and also one of his bleakest; parallels may be drawn with the Finale of Mahler's Sixth Symphony. Employing a fairly large orchestra, *Elegeia* was commissioned by the National Arts Center Orchestra of Canada for the 500th anniversary of the death of Copernicus. The work is continuous and is in the form of a series of dialogues between one section of the orchestra and another: slow-moving music is answered by lively arabesque-like figures. The dynamic level is kept to a minimum throughout, with the result that the *fortissimo* outbursts and the massive unison passage for strings near the end of the work (marked 'con passione') are doubly magnificent.

The correspondence between Goethe and Charlotte von Stein provided the inspiration for the last work in this batch, the cantata *Goethe-Briefe*. Dating from 1970, *Goethe-Briefe* is scored for baritone, chorus, and orchestra and was the result of a commission by the Dresden Philharmonic: it was written some 15 years after another major work for solo voice and orchestra, *Love Sonnets*. Besides their literary origins, these works have in common lyricism and a neo-romantic spirit. The theme of *Goethe-Briefe* is love, and the work is infused with the spirit of Wagner (parallels may be made with *Tristan*), Mahler, and Berg. The text consists of sentences taken from the letters of Goethe and Charlotte von Stein; the result is an almost documentary and strikingly suggestive record of their love. Baird's music does not detract from the text, but rather complements it with lyrical commentary. As the word expresses more than a tutti can achieve, the orchestra is abandoned. This is the effect at the end of the work - the parting - where Baird achieves a masterpiece of expression almost through understatement.

Goethe-Briefe is undoubtedly Baird's greatest vocal work, and indeed one of the finest works in his entire oeuvre. Baird was one of the original voices in modern Polish music and has justifiably achieved international recognition. From his somewhat eclectic works of the immediate post-war period, Baird slowly evolved a style that is unique and highly personal. He embraced all musical forms and employed a wide variety of forces, and this diversity is represented in these eight works dating from the 1970s. Each is inventive and displays superb craftsmanship; despite severe demands made on both soloists and orchestral players, Baird never resorts to virtuosity for its own sake.