

Topic Page: [Berio, Luciano, 1925-2003](#)

Definition: **Berio, Luciano** from *Philip's Encyclopedia*

Italian composer. He was in the forefront of post-war avant-garde composers, and used electronic and chance effects in many of his works.



Summary Article: **Berio, Luciano**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

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Italian composer. His work, usually involving electronic sound, combines serial techniques with commedia dell'arte and antiphonal practices, as in *Alleluiah II* (1958) for five instrumental groups. His large output includes 11 *Sequenzas/Sequences* (1958–85) for various solo instruments or voice, *Sinfonia* (1968) for voices and orchestra, *Formazioni/Formations* (1987) for orchestra, and the opera *Un re in ascolto/A King Listens* (1984).

Although Berio's compositional techniques are severe, the effect is softened by wit and theatricality. He was one of the most active composers of electronic music and worked with Boulez at the Institut de Recherche et de Co-ordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM). He also used graphic notation, and many of his works leave the performer with a wide range of choices. He was particularly interested in exploring the possibilities of language as developed in musical performance.

Berio was born in Oneglia, Italy. After studying with Giorgio Ghedini in Milan and with Luigi Dallapiccola in the USA, he met members of the European avant-garde such as Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez, and Bruno Maderna. With Maderna he founded an electronic studio, the Studio di Fonologia Musicale, at Milan Radio in 1953–60. He lived in the USA from 1963 to 1972, teaching at the Juilliard School, New York, in 1965–72. He was married 1950–65 to the US soprano Cathy Berberian, who gave the first performances of many of his works.

WorksDramatic*Laborintus II* (Paris, 1970), *Recital I (for Cathy)* (Lisbon, 1972), *La vera storia/The True Story*, opera (Milan, 1982), *Un Re in ascolto*, opera (Salzburg, 1984).

Orchestral*Chemins I–IV*, after *Sequenze/Sequences* for instruments (1965–75), *Concerto for two pianos and orchestra* (1973), *Points on the curve to find .. f* for piano and 20 instruments (1974), *Concerto II (Echoing Curves)* for piano and ensemble (1988).

Vocal*Chamber Music* (texts by James Joyce; 1953), *Circles* for female voice, harp, and two percussion (texts by E E Cummings; 1960), *Epifanie* for female voice and orchestra (texts by Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Bertolt Brecht, and others; 1961), *Sinfonia* for eight solo voices and orchestra (1968), *Ora* (text after Virgil; 1971), *Cries of London*, for eight solo voices (1973–75), *11 Folk Songs* for mezzo and orchestra (1975), *Coro* for 40 voices and orchestra (1976).

Chamber and instrumental the important series of *Sequenze* (I–XI) for solo instruments: flute, harp, voice, piano, trombone, viola, oboe, violin, clarinet, trumpet, and guitar (1958–85), *Wasserklavier/Waterpiano* for piano (1964), and a second string quartet (1986–90).

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