A STUDY AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO
LUCIANO BERIO’S SIX ENCORES POUR PIANO

D.M.A. DOCUMENT

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ABSTRACT

Considered one of Italy’s greatest modernist composers, Luciano Berio (1925-2003) brings creativity in *Six Encores pour piano* that require performing artists to effectively communicate his or hers imagination through challenging performance techniques. *Six Encores pour piano* emphasizes Berio’s imaginary of the elements (water, earth, air, and fire), pushing the performer to create an audible interpretation of a visual and bringing the pianist to his or her limits of control and subtlety in “Brin”, and “Leaf”. This formal study of Berio’s work provides a guideline to the six encores, which were influenced by Schoenbergian twelve-tone techniques and are excellent examples of contemporary works for a pianist to study and perform.

The first half of this document (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) will provide a brief biography of the artist, followed by a brief survey of *Six Encores pour piano*. I will also discuss three additional piano works (*Cinque Variazioni*, *Sequenza IV*, and *Rounds*) to examine Berio’s piano style. In particular, a study of the compositional style influenced from atonality, the textural layers used, and the rhythmic complexities the performer might experience will be discussed. In addition, meter and tempo changes, dynamic contrast, and pedal application will be analyzed in an effort to establish issues that may arise in the practice and performance of these works. Lastly, the range of the keyboard
used and how the hands are positioned across the keyboard will be discussed in an effort to present technical difficulties that may occur during a performance.

In the second half of this document (Chapters 5) I will provide a formal study and performance guidelines to Berio’s *Six Encores pour piano*. In conjunction with the study of the selected piano works by Berio, these chapters will provide significant and useful information for performers to better express musical interpretation of each of four pieces based on natural elements, and to better tackle technical aspects of the two later works.
DEDICATED

To my family
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This introduction includes a description of Luciano Berio’s *Six Encores pour piano* ("Brin", "Leaf", "Wasserklavier", "Erdenklavier", "Luftklavier", and "Feuerklavier"), and a brief overview of Berio’s writing style in selected piano solo works (*Cinque Variazioni, Sequenza IV, Rounds*). The ensuing chapters include substantive information and suggestions for interpreting these works from the performer’s perspective.

Luciano Berio was born in the small town of Oneglia, Italy, where his grandfather and father played organ, and composed. Growing up during the time of Mussolini, Berio was deprived of hearing music of pioneering composers of 20th century, whose music was outlawed in Italy. After the war he quickly began to engage himself in serialism and with the influence of his teacher Giorgio Federico Ghedini (1892-1965), Berio carved out his footprint on 20th-century music. Despite moving his compositional style ahead throughout the 20th century, Berio never lost his awareness of and interest in his predecessors and contemporaries, having written an ending to the Schubert’s unfinished *Symphony No. 10 in D major, D.936a* in *Rendering* (1989), as well as creating
arrangements and instrumentations of Purcell, Boccherini, de Falla, Verdi, Mahler, Puccini, Weill.¹

Between the years of 1965 and 1990, Luciano Berio wrote his *Six Encores pour piano*. Four of the six (“Wasserklavier”, “Erdenklavier”, “Luftklavier”, and “Feuerklavier”) were written to represent the natural elements (water, earth, air, and fire). In expressing the meanings of these titles, Berio includes the idea of the element, how the element reacts, and how the element changes in its natural state. The last two pieces that were composed (“Brin”, and “Leaf”) were written as studies in stasis.

Considering four of the six pieces in *Six Encores pour piano* have part of their title containing the name of an element, one may think that the pieces could be program music. Program music, “attempts to depict one or more non musical ideas, images, or events”.² However, although each piece contains musical expressions that could describe the elements associated with them, the overall theme of the pieces may not convey the imagery of the element. For example, in the unexpectedness in dynamics in “Feuerklavier” a performer can exaggerate the dynamic contrast to help represent the extreme flames. In addition, in “Wasserklavier” one can imagine the unexpected shifts in musical directions as the changing of currents in water.

Yet, Berio tries new approaches and technical demands with each piece, making them seem more like absolute music. For example, Berio indicated very detailed instructions, such as in the case of “Erdenklavier”, specifying the duration of each note,

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dynamics, and pedal duration including the movement of the pedal. Therefore, it may be that the answer lies somewhere in between, where Berio does have some musical expressions to help depict the idea of the title, but the music is free of any explicit or implied connection as a whole.  

The remainder of the document includes substantive study and suggestions for performance. In Chapter 2, I provide the pianist with a brief biography of Luciano Berio, in order to give the reader some background of the composer’s life, so that it may help them interpret the music. In Chapter 3, I provide a brief survey of *Six Encores pour piano*.

Chapter 4 includes a description of Berio’s writing style of his piano solo works and a discussion of the influence of serialism on Berio’s works. Chapter 4 also explores the textural layers Berio uses in his piano solo works and the rhythmical complexities pianists may encounter. This chapter includes Berio’s specific indications of tempo changes, dramatic dynamic contrasts, and all three pedal applications used. The requirements of large hand-spans, rapid hand-shifts over a wide range of the keyboard, and technical difficulties with clusters will also be mentioned.

Chapter 5 provides the majority of discussion in this study, which includes the formal study and performance guidelines from the performer’s perspective for each of the *Six Encores pour piano* pieces. The Bibliography includes materials from four categories: books, articles, on-line sources, and scores. The study and performance practice

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suggestions in this document derive primarily from my own experience with Berio’s Six Encores pour piano.
CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Luciano Berio was born on October 24th, 1925 in a small town near Imperia on the Ligurian coast (modern Liguria, Italy). Berio’s family had been active professional musicians around the towns of the Ligurian coastline. His grandfather Adolfo Berio (1847-1942) pursued a long career as an organist and a composer, and his father Ernesto Berio (1883-1966) studied composition at the Milan Conservatorio with Illdebrando Pizzetti. At age five Berio began to learn the rudiments of music from his grandfather and his father began supervising in teaching him harmony, counterpoint, and piano performance. By the time he was eight, he joined his father’s chamber music evenings. Berio’s first attempt at composing came a few years later when he wrote *Pastorale* for piano (1937).

During World War II, Mussolini’s Republic of Salò controlled Liguria and 19-year-old Berio was called up to join the army. Berio reported to service at San Remo and during the first day of training, without any previous instructions, was given a loaded

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gun. When Berio attempted to try to understand how the gun worked, it exploded in his right hand, severely injuring it.⁶

With an end coming to World War II, Berio was able to enroll at the Milan Conservatorio di Musica in the autumn of 1945. However, due to the consequences of his hand injury, Berio changed his career focus from pianist to studies centered on compositional techniques.⁷ During his time at the conservatory Berio studied counterpoint with Giulio Cesare Paribeni, composition with Giorgio Federico Ghedini, as well as conducting with Carlo Maria Giulini and Antonino Votto.⁸ The music program ran for a ten-year course; however, due to Berio’s musical upbringing he was able to take the fourth-year examination at the outset and begin courses in the fifth year of the program.⁹

Up until age 20, Berio had written only a few compositions and, because of the disruptions of war, had little understanding of music from the previous 50 years outside of Italy.¹⁰ At the Milan Conservatory, Berio made his first contacts with twentieth-century music hearing a performance of Milhaud’s La Mort d’un Tyran in Milan, in October, 1945, and in particular the Second Viennese School, Schoenberg’s Pierrot Lunaire in 1946.¹¹ His exposure to these performances led to Berio joining Ghedini’s composition classes and although Ghedini had only occasionally resorted to serialism in

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his own work, he did not discourage students from exploring its techniques further.\textsuperscript{12} Within a few years, Berio had explored the scores of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern with increased interest.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1952, having received a scholarship from the Koussevitzky Foundation, Berio attended a composition course taught by his fellow Italian, Luigi Dallapiccola (1904-1975), at Tanglewood in Lenox, Massachusetts. The week he came to the United States, on October 28th Berio went to the Museum of Modern Art in New York City for the country’s first public concert that included electronic music. This performance included instrumental music by Edgard Varèse and taped pieces by Otto Luening and Vladimir Ussachewsky. Moved by this concert, when Berio returned to Italy he created the country’s first studio of electronic music at the RAI Milan headquarters, inaugurated the following year as the Studio di Fonologia Musicale. Here he recorded \textit{Mimusique No. 1}, a short tape piece that represented the sound of a gunshot as music.\textsuperscript{14} The same year Berio also become influenced stylistically by his teacher Dallapiccola, composing \textit{Cinque Variazioni} for piano, in homage to him.\textsuperscript{15} In 1953, Berio was commissioned to work on a soundtrack for a series of television films, during which he met the composer and conductor Bruno Maderna (who later worked as co-director of the Studio di Fonologia) and attended a conference on electronic music at Basle.\textsuperscript{16} In 1958 Berio wrote the first of his many Sequenzas, starting with the flute, all exploring the idiomatic potential of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} David Osmond-Smith, \textit{Berio} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 4.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid. 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid. 9.
\end{itemize}
individual instruments. Ultimately, Berio would produce 14 Sequenzen for solo instruments; *Sequenze IV* for solo piano was written in 1966, and completed the last Sequenza (for violoncello) in 2003.

During this time Berio’s reputation began to grow, which brought invitations to teach composition. Thus, in 1960, Berio resigned from his post at the Studio di Fonologia and returned to the Berkshire School of Music at Tanglewood, Massachusetts as an instructor. Following his teaching at the Berkshire School, Berio taught composition at the Dartington Summer School during the summers of 1961 and 1962, where he also composed *Passaggio* (1961). In 1962 Berio moved to California where he taught at Mills College, in Oakland, California, under the invitation of Darius Milhaud. During this time Berio explored the complex combinations of timbres in *Tempi concertati* (1959), *Sincronie* (1964), and the expressiveness of the female voice with *Epifanie* (1959-60), *Circles* (1960), and *Sequenza III* for voice (1965).¹⁷

In 1965, Berio took up teaching posts at both Harvard University and the Julliard School of Music in New York. However, in 1966, he resigned from his position at Harvard in order to concentrate on his work at the Julliard School and, in 1967, founded the Juilliard Ensemble, a group dedicated to the performances of contemporary music.¹⁸

Due to constant travel, Berio’s circumstances posed problems for his teaching duties at Julliard and, in 1971, he resigned. Although Berio continued to travel for years afterward,
he decided to focus his activities in Italy, and made it his permanent residence and center of his work for the remainder of his life.\textsuperscript{19}

In the mid-1970s, Berio accepted the invitation of Pierre Boulez to direct the electro-acoustic program at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM) in Paris. At IRCAM, Berio worked with physicist Giuseppe di Giugno on a 4X digital synthesizer that could process and transform sound in real time.\textsuperscript{20} Berio later resigned from his post at IRCAM and in 1980 negotiated with the city council of Florence to create a new research center where he would be able to develop some of the same technology he worked with in Paris. This center ultimately was established in 1987 with the creation of Tempo Reale, a center for music production, research and education. Meanwhile, Berio accepted the artistic directorship of the Orchestra Regionale Toscana, in 1982, and Maggio Muscale Fiorentino in 1984. Throughout the rest of the 1980s and 90s Berio received awards for his decades of music writing, production work, and teaching efforts in composition.\textsuperscript{21}

On May 27\textsuperscript{th}, 2003, Berio died in a Rome Hospital at age 77. His combined work, both lyrical and intellectual, was grounded in his knowledge of classical composers, while exploring new ideas in his own music.\textsuperscript{22} His musical compositions ranged from chamber music to large-scale orchestral works, from song to opera, all combining innovative and analytical depth. In the end, his love for a broad spectrum of


\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

music was unique for his time; he had listened to and appreciated Italian opera, 20th-century modernism, popular music, Romantic symphonists, and folk music from around the world. Berio was influenced by all of these genres and composed new works or arrangements that could be categorized neither as new nor old to listeners who loved his work.²³

CHAPTER 3

A BRIEF SURVEY OF SIX ENCORES POUR PIANO

Luciano Berio’s Six Encores pour piano were written between 1965 and 1990. Despite being composed in different time periods, these pieces constitute “eloquent evidence of the technical continuity which permeates the mature work of Berio.” With the exception of “Brin” and “Leaf”, each piece within Six Encores pour piano represents an element for which the piece is named: “Wasserkklavier” (Water Piano) (1965), “Erdenklavier” (Earth Piano) (1969), “Luftklavier” (Air Piano) (1985), and “Feuerklavier” (Fire Piano) (1989). “Brin” (1990) and “Leaf” (1990) are studies in stasis, and require control and subtlety.

3.1 “Brin”

Berio wrote “Brin” in 1990 and dedicated it to the French pianist, Michel Oudar, who died tragically at age 20. Berio pays his respects to Oudar with the repetition of a

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high B-natural, intoned exactly 20 times in memory for each year Oudar lived.26 “Brin” also explores the timbric extensions of a single, rich chromatic chord, expressed with in his use of the sustain and sostenuto pedals.27 The chord itself, disclosed in full at the end of this piece, is a variant on a chord from Schoenberg’s Op. 19, Six Little Piano Pieces, also a memorial, written for Gustav Mahler. The title “Brin” is French meaning wisp or a small piece of something, such as a blade of grass (brin d'herbe).28 In the case of “Brin”, the music is constructed with small fragments of material that magnify, until the end when two chromatic chords are played.

3.2 “Leaf”

Like “Brin”, “Leaf” was written in 1990, also in memoriam, to Michael Vyner, the artistic director of London Sinfonietta from 1972 to 1989.29 “Leaf” also focuses on an evocative sustained chord, but the sostenuto pedal is held down from the first chord through the end of the piece. In order to refresh the resonance of the chord, staccato are used in conjunction with dynamic strikes of the notes belonging to the sustained chord. In addition, the density, color, and attack of the chord are varied, with the last two notes of the piece hanging in the air.30

27 Ibid.
3.3 “Wasserkliäver”

Of the *Six Encores pour piano*, “Wasserkliäver” was written first, and dedicated to Antonio Ballista, an Italian pianist who went to school with Berio in Milan.\(^3^1\) As its German title implies, the piece represents the water element, not only its function in nature, but the symbolic meaning of the element linked to the concept of hidden, submerged memory.\(^3^2\) Although “Wasserkliäver” is the only piece of elemental encores to be tonal, it still has unexpected shifts in musical directions. Like the flow of water, “Wasserkliäver” has a musical flow that can change course, creating new lyrical melodies from newfound streams from a larger body of water.

“Wasserkliäver” features material from Schubert’s *Impromptu Op. 142, No. 1* (Fig. 3.1) and Brahms’ *Intermezzo Op. 117, No. 2* (Fig. 3.2). The ending F-minor chord from Schubert’s *Impromptu* is intoned during the full length of “Wasserkliäver”,\(^3^3\) structuring the piece, which features material from other Romantic and Classical composers and features other detailed means and modes of articulation for the music; it relies on tonality more than the other pieces within *Six Encores pour piano*. Considering Berio was known as a modernist and directing Boulez’s *Domaine Musical* in 1965, William Bolcom was surprised to hear “clearly in F minor” the tonality of a “sweet piano piece” that would later become “Wasserkliäver”, hearing mentioned, “This was

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heresy.\textsuperscript{34}

Figure 3.1. Franz Schubert, *Impromptu Op. 142, No. 1*, mm. 1-4.

Figure 3.2. Johannes Brahms, *Intermezzo Op. 117, No. 2*, mm. 24-28.

3.4 “Erdenklavier”

“Erdenklavier” is the second piece from *Six Encores pour piano* and was dedicated to Thomas Willis (1928–2004), a music and arts critic, and arts editor for the *Chicago Tribune*.\(^\text{35}\) “Erdenklavier” represents the earth element, just like the tilling of earth and plantings seeds for a new year; musical material is rotated slowly in “Erdenklavier”, replacing old tones with new. This turning produces an orb of sound spinning like the Earth, with material creeping up like the sun beginning to rise across the surface on a new day.

“Erdenklavier” opens with a group of short notes, and gradually introduces other notes to create a melodic range. These other notes are prolonged, in what David Osmond-Smith calls a “harmonic sheath,” creating a sound that extends horizontally.\(^\text{36}\)

“Erdenklavier” also features a pointillistic pattern, emphasizing tones by sustained notes and use of pedals.\(^\text{37}\) Berio explored these tones by using the resonance of the free strings when holding down the keys for long durations and by using strong dynamic changes.\(^\text{38}\) In addition, throughout the piece these tones and other musical material permute into a sequence of pitches, which gradually introduce new tones and siphon off old ones. Thus, the complete chromatic collection of twelve pitches is always in rotation and shifting.

The musical material appears to form a single, unharmonized line throughout. The piece

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also forms a study in pedaling and resonance. Only one note is struck at a time, and Berio uses the sustain and sostenuto pedals to create various layers of sound to form the harmony in “Erdenklavier”.\(^{39}\)

### 3.5 “Luftklavier”

It was sixteen years before Berio added another piece to the set, this time, invoking the element air (“Luftklavier”), in 1985. Unlike the previous elements (earth and water), both reserved and subtle in construction, “Luftklavier” is distinctly virtuosic.\(^{40}\) Created after Berio’s experience writing the *Concerto per due pianoforti* (1972-73),\(^{41}\) “Luftklavier” is organized around a group of pitches, alternating between solid chords and broken melodies.\(^{42}\) Just like wind consists of the bulk of movement of air, musical material can suddenly speed up, slow down, or alter directions. Together a group of pitches move throughout the entire course of the music with help of an uninterrupted ostinato. “Luftklavier” is also completely self-contained as an expressive tone set against a set of gestures. Despite being more virtuosic than the other encores

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(except “Feuerklavier”) “Luftklavier” requires delicacy, treading the line between abstract and programmatic music.⁴³

3.6 “Feuerklavier”

The last of the pieces to be written was “Feuerklavier”, in 1989, and Berio dedicated it to Peter Serkin, a good friend and performer of his works.⁴⁴ Berio chose fire as his final element and; reflecting the instability of the element, the piece evokes an ever-changing mixture of tempo and dynamics with occasional “eruptions” in the music. From the sparks of the creation of a fire to smoldering ashes, “Feuerklavier” begins with a tense series of arpeggios in both hands and as an uncontrolled fire builds up, the music intensifies with explosively attacked chords towards a climactic middle section.⁴⁵ As the flame dies down, textures break lose with darting musical flames shooting up from the wild embers, until a slow resolve of burning ash and smoke.

CHAPTER 4

WRITING STYLE IN BERIO’S SOLO PIANO WORKS

4.1 Brief Survey of Selected Piano Works

Besides *Six Encores pour piano* Berio wrote several other piano works, including two concertos for piano; the best known of these were *Cinque Variazioni* (1953), *Sequenza IV* (1967), and *Rounds* (1967). These three pieces share compositional characteristics with *Six Encores pour piano*, including the influence of serialism, although only *Cinque Variazioni* would be considered true serialism in the traditional sense.\(^46\) The three pieces also share similar rhythmic complexities, dynamic contrasts, rapid hand-shifts, and the wide keyboard register with *Six Encore pour piano*.

4.1.1 *Cinque Variazioni*

Berio wrote *Cinque Variazioni* between 1952-1953, under the stylistic influence of his teacher Dallapiccola, and revised the work in 1966.\(^47\) The premiere performance was held in 1953 in Milan, with Berio himself performing. The piece consists of five variations; however, the material found in the variations works backwards, the original

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theme revealed in the coda. The influence of Dallapiccola’s masterwork *Il prigioniero* (1949) is apparent, in fact, too apparent for Berio, who eventually revised *Cinque Variazioni* several times until his final revision of 1966, a version that masked the coda presentation of Dallapicolla’s opera theme.

4.1.2 *Sequenza IV*

*Sequenza IV* (1965) was Berio’s fourth in a series of solo sequenzas, having written the first for solo flute in 1958. *Sequenza IV* focuses on harmonic processes, the opening chords presenting all of the pitch material used in the piece. The sostenuto pedal is used throughout to help create complex layers of rhythmic and harmonic activity. Berio’s notations show his precision in depressing and lifting the sostenuto pedal. Once a chord has been sustained with the sostenuto pedal, Berio indicates the chord being sustained at the beginning of each bar. Thus, *Sequenza IV* requires the pianist to be careful to sustain the notes firmly at the bottom of the keybed in order for them to be heard clearly through the other musical material played over each sustained chord.

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51 Ibid. 56.
4.1.3 Rounds

Originally written for harpsichord, the manuscript of Rounds shows half of the sheet music is written right-side-up while the other half is written upside-down. Rounds was later arranged for piano,\(^{52}\) and constitutes a short piece in proportional notation that allows the performer rhythmical freedom and consists of similar material to Sequenza IV, such as sustained notes.\(^{53}\)

4.2 Composition Style

4.2.1 Influence of Serialism

It was not until 1945 that Berio first had the opportunity to hear the works of the Second Viennese School and for a number of years he embraced serialism. (As mentioned above, one of his major piano solo serial works was Cinque Variazioni.) However, as time passed Berio grew critical of serialism, in particular the rules and structural models. Remarking on serialism, he stated:

To me, instead, it is essential that the composer be able to prove the relative nature of musical processes: their structural models, based on past experience, generate not only rules but also the transformation and the destruction of those very rules.\(^{54}\)

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In other words, Berio felt that the composer need not be limited by structural models in their compositions. Instead, he advocated for composers to base their works on past models and work past those rules to create new and exciting identities within their own music. Therefore, Berio at times used the full chromatic array of twelve pitches, particularly five pieces of his *Six Encores pour piano*, (except for “Wasserklavier”) even after his serialism period of the 1950s. However, he did not use the strict Schoenbergian tone rows in creating these pieces; instead he freely circulated the twelve chromatic pitches and was not afraid to repeat them.

4.2.2 Textural Layers

Berio demands the performer to have textural control of the various layers of his music, as when two hands play moving voices. For example, “Luftklavier” requires separate textural control between the ostinato pattern and the main voice, not always appearing in the same hand. Thus, the second system of “Luftklavier” in Figure 4.1 shows a group of thirteen grace notes in an ostinato pattern, separated in the middle (the right hand to the left hand), and with the main voice played by the left hand, which moves to the right hand. Berio indicates that the repeated grace notes be played as soft as possible, while the main voice is more pronounced, allowing the sound to be distinguishable from one another.
Figure 4.1. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Luftklavier”, 1st and 2nd systems.

In the fourth variation of *Cinque Variazioni* a similar example of textural layers appears in two voices between the hands. For example, the beginning of the main voice is written in the bass clef, played by the left hand in measure 3, moving to the treble clef where the right hand takes over the melody in measure 4, until the main voice lies in the left hand again in measure 5. Even though the textural layers are played by both hands, to and fro, the performer should pay attention to the direction of the main voice and allow it to flow naturally. A suggestion for a performer would be to practice the main melody by itself in both hands, making sure the main voice is clear and distinctive before adding the additional layer. Therefore, it should sound as if two people are playing the different
voices, one the clear main melody, the other the light chromatic-like passage moving under the main melody.

Figure 4.2. Luciano Berio, Cinque Variazioni, IV. Variazione, mm. 3-6.

4.2.3 Rhythmic Complexity

One of the most difficult challenges of Berio’s piano solo works is their rhythmical complexity. The composer often uses abrupt changes in a short period of time, from one rhythmical configuration to another. For example, in “Leaf” he irregularly mixes both duplet and triplet rhythm with small grace notes and adds many rests in random places (Fig. 4.3). In Sequenza IV, Berio writes various kinds of complicated rhythmic patterns (Fig. 4.4). Therefore, the performer should thoroughly study the rhythmic variety away from the piano, by tapping out the rhythmic changes (out loud) in
the score, before attempting to play the piece. Thus, preparing the pianist to adjust to sudden rhythmic changes during a performance.

![Figure 4.3. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Leaf”, mm. 24-28.](image)

![Figure 4.4. Luciano Berio, *Sequenza IV*, mm. 38-42](image)

### 4.2.4 Meter and Tempo Changes

Berio only wrote meter indications in two of the *Six Encores pour piano*, “Leaf” and “Wasserklavier”. The other four—“Brin”, “Erdenklavier”, “Luftklavier”, and “Feuerklavier”—have neither meter indication, nor bar lines, but instead he thoroughly indicates metronomic leads to the different tempos and the diverse rhythmic flow. For example, no meter is found in “Feuerklavier”, but the composer guides the performer by
marking exactly how fast one should play (accelerando up to \( \frac{d}{d'} = 96 \)), and what tempo one should revert back to \( \left( \frac{d}{d'} = 66 \right) \), as shown in Figure 4.5. In addition, Berio specified both meter and tempo changes in the detail for *Sequenza IV*. As shown in Figure 4.6, frequent changes of the metronomic marking appear with meter indicated. The performer should bring careful attention to each—the specific meter and tempo changes—in order to deliver what the composer indicated in the music.

Figure 4.5. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 5th system.
Figure 4.6. Luciano Berio, *Sequenza IV*, mm. 29-37.

On the other hand, in his piano solo writing Berio allows the performer a degree of flexibility in regards to tempo. For example, as shown in Figure 4.7, the composer indicates *Tempo fluttuante* \( \frac{66}{96} \) in the middle section of “Feuerklavier”, allowing the performer time to either stretch out the rhythm where there are big leaps, or to push forward to create rhythmic tension. For another example, the first variation of *Cinque Variazioni* is unmetered and Berio indicates the metronomic marking as \( \frac{72}{82} \) (Fig. 4.8). Here, the performer is free to play the tempo flexibly within the indicated desired range.
4.2.5 Dynamic Contrasts

Most of Berio’s piano solo works require a wide dynamic range and sudden dynamic contrasts often appear within a short period of time. For example, in “Erdenklavier” Berio indicates that the large notes (notes printed in standard size) should be played $ff$, and the small notes (those printed smaller than the standard size) should be played $pp$ (Fig. 4.9). Even though at first sight the beginning of “Erdenklavier” may seem easy, it demands careful attention because each circled note needs to be held out until the
next time it occurs, this time with an abrupt change in dynamic. *Rounds* also demonstrates constant dynamic changes in the range between *ppp* to *fff* throughout. As shown in Figure 4.10, every measure (except m. 12) includes dramatic dynamic changes.

In order to express the sudden dynamic changes successfully, the performer must shift finger and forearm weight promptly. To play this effectively, one should practice each note slowly; lifting up his or her finger high above the keyboard and striking quickly down on the key with the full weight of the finger to create *ff*, and then one should gently brush the keyboard to create the soft *pp* sound.

![Figure 4.9. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Erdenklavier”, 1st system.](image)

![Figure 4.10. Luciano Berio, Rounds, mm. 10-14.](image)
4.2.6 Pedal Application

In using the three pedals of the piano—una corda, sostenuto, and sustain (or damper)—Berio attempts to create certain effects in his piano writing. The composer marked indications for all three pedals in “Feuerklavier” and in Sequenza IV, specifically, for example, the una corda and sostenuto pedals are used together at the beginning of “Feuerklavier” (Fig. 4.11). As the dynamic changes rather quickly to ff, the pianist should create the dramatic crescendo by using the damper pedal without una corda. Moreover, Berio specified to use all three pedals consistently throughout his Sequenza IV, which will allow the piano to reverberate random resonances. As shown in Figure 4.12, by using both una corda and damper pedals the composer wanted to sustain a certain chord, and to create a foggy or light sound.

Figure 4.11. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Feuerklavier”, 5th system.
4.2.7 **Large Hand-spans**

If the pianist has large hands, then it would be beneficial for him or her to play Berio’s piano solo works. These pieces require the performer not only to greatly expand each hand to play big intervals, but at the same time to create a delicate sound. For example, the right hand has wide rolls in measures 20 and 21 in “Wasserklavier” (Fig. 4.13). Soon after (m. 22), both hands play two big rolls starting at the bottom of the keyboard. Since entire dynamic indication is *ppp* in “Wasserklavier”, the performer should try to accomplish equally voiced and delicate chords when they perform these expanded rolls. The best way to play these rolls is rotating the wrist in one motion from left to right. Berio’s *Sequenza IV* shows another example of a large hand-span in Figure 4.14. After a big cluster is played *ff* in measure 151, the small notes softly fill up the resonance of the cluster chord in an irregular pattern over a large keyboard range.
4.2.8 Rapid Hand-shifts

Berio demands very quick shifts of the hands across the keys in his piano writing. It would therefore be necessary for the performer to accurately gauge distances between each chord in order to shift to the correct position as rapidly as possible. For example, when there are vertical chords with staccato, as in “Leaf” (Fig. 4.15), the performer should keep the hands and body mobilized (or ready) at the keyboard in order to shift promptly. Furthermore, in Sequenza IV (mm.11–13) another example of a need for a rapid shift in the keyboard is shown. The performer should practice shifting each hand quickly to the exact position on the keyboard to play each note or chord, allowing each finger to know where it needs to arrive at.
4.2.9 Wide Keyboard Range

When writing for a wide range on the keyboard, Berio utilizes three staves, such as is found in both “Luftklavier” and “Feuerklavier”. A further challenge of Berio’s writing for keyboard is that the music is played at a fast tempo even in these extreme ranges. An example of this writing is shown in Figure 4.17, from “Feuerklavier”. His second variation of Cinque Variazioni also requires a precise hand placement on the keyboard where the music spans a wide range, although the music is written in two staves (Fig. 4.18).
4.2.10 Technical Challenges with Clusters

In order to obtain a certain effect with a percussively loud and direct sound, Berio experimented with writing clusters. The performer should pay close attention to the use of fingertips to create an effective cluster sonority. For example, the composer uses a cluster for the crescendos in “Feuerklavier” (Fig. 4.19). Berio’s Sequenza IV also shows many vertical clusters at a fast tempo (Fig. 4.20). Other extreme examples of Berio’s
forearm clusters appear in his *Rounds* between measures 28 and 32 (Fig. 4.21). In each of these cases the performer needs to quickly relocate his or her fingers, hands, and forearms and project the sonorities of these *ff* clusters by using firm fingertips. One should practice adjusting each hand rapidly to the accurate position on the keyboard, allowing each finger to know the exact arrival point, and firmly strike the *ff* clusters in a short period of time to create a clear percussive sound.

Figure 4.19. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 20th system.

Figure 4.20. Luciano Berio, *Sequenza IV*, mm. 96–98.
Figure 4.21. Luciano Berio, *Rounds*, mm. 28-32.
CHAPTER 5

FORMAL STUDY AND PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

5.1 “Brin”

5.1.1 Twelve-Tone Pitches

No key signature, nor any certain tonality, appear on the score of “Brin”. Instead, Berio presents the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale (Fig. 5.1), all of which appear in the first system except G♯, the first grace note of the second system in the left hand (Fig. 5.2).

![Figure 5.1](image)

Figure 5.1. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Brin”, twelve-tone pitch orderings.
5.1.2 Grace Notes

There are two types of grace notes appearing in “Brin”, the first being the single-note grace note, such as those starting in piano right hand above the treble staff and connecting to the left-hand note. For example, at the beginning of the piece a grace note appears on a B♭5 above the staff in the right hand, connected to the D4 played in the left hand (Fig. 5.3). Therefore, it is important for the performer to play these notes quickly but smoothly, connecting these two notes, marked with a slur.
The second type of grace note is a group of four notes played by both hands simultaneously. This type of grace-note pattern is played seven times within “Brin” and Berio indicated that these grace notes be played très rapide et sans accents, or very fast, without accents (Fig. 5.3). It is suggested that the performer play the four grace notes together as a chord using the fingering of 1-5-2-3 for the right hand, and 5-3-2-1 for the left hand to gauge the distance of each grace note on the keyboard; this practice will ensure they are played more readily as separated notes. In addition, the pianist should be alert to releasing the tension in both arms and wrists so that the grace notes are played lightly without any accents.

5.1.3 Ties and Voicing

Many notes need to be sustained for long durations, indicated by ties throughout “Brin”. Because no rests appear in “Brin”, Berio’s use of ties, the sustain pedal, and layered textures within the piece results in continued sound until the end of the piece. The
performer should study and review all ties in the music in order to know exactly the
duration of each note. For example, Figure 5.4 shows a passage where one should hold
the left-hand D♯ during and after striking the small grace-note G♯ of the right-hand
melodic line, and sustain until the next group of grace notes is played. Also, one should
hold down the A♮5 with the right hand until it has filled in the inner voices of the
inverted diminish triad. One should continue to hold the chord until the left hand has
played all G♯ pedal tone notes.

![Figure 5.4](image)

Figure 5.4. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Brin”, 2nd system.

At the beginning of “Brin”, four individual notes (C♯-D-F♯-A♯) appear, held by
ties (except the grace-note B connected to D). Berio indicated the melodic line starting
with D-F♯- A♯, creating an augmented triad sonority. Therefore, to voice the three notes
as a connected line, the performer should sustain each note as it appears rather than
releasing any (Fig. 5.3). A similar example of this is shown in Figure 5.4, where the tied
notes are held (A and C in the right hand, and G in the left). In this example one should
noticeably bring out the right hand’s F♯ to the G♯ in the left, as the composer specified.
5.1.4 Dynamics and Pedaling

The una corda pedal is required throughout “Brin”, and Berio indicated a very soft dynamic, *pppp*, the only such dynamic marking in the piece (or in any of the *Six Encores pour piano*). To create a consistent *pppp* sound, the performer should depress the keys very slowly, and the sustain pedal gently in order not to inadvertently cause any sounds of reverberation from unplayed strings of the piano. One should also produce a distinctive sound, following the composer’s specifications in a certain melodic line and in the repeated notes with tenuto marking (Fig. 5.5).

![Figure 5.5. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Brin”, 5th system.](image)

Each time a group of grace notes is played, the composer instructs the performer to use the sustain pedal in order to catch dissonant resonances. For example, during the grouped grace notes, played with both hands simultaneously with the sustain pedal (Fig. 5.6), the performer should play the grace notes lightly to avoid producing any abrupt dynamic changes in the music. The best way to achieve this is by rotating the wrist in a circular motion to help in releasing the tension in the fingers.
Lastly, towards the end and of the piece both hands play the repetitive dissonant chords vertically (Fig. 5.7). Seth Brodsky writes that,

Berio enmeshes a moving subtext: the piece’s chord, once disclosed in full at the end, is a variant on chord employed in the fourth of Schoenberg’s Op. 19 Six Little Piano Pieces—a work which was also a memorial (For Gustav Mahler), and whose repetitions were said to invoke the Viennese bells on the day of Mahler’s funeral. 55

When the performer plays the chords as a single unit, he or she should tenderly and slowly depress the keys as if brushing them, in order to execute a delicate sound in pppp dynamic.

5.2 “Leaf”

5.2.1 Twelve-tone Pitches

No key signature is indicated in “Leaf”, nor any certain tonality. Berio wrote the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale within the first three measures in blocked dissonant chords (Fig. 5.8). The order of the twelve pitches is shown in Figure 5.9.

Figure 5.8. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Leaf”, mm. 1–6.

Figure 5.9. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Leaf”, twelve-tone pitch orderings.

5.2.2 Sostenuto Pedal

In “Leaf”, Berio uses the sostenuto pedal, depressed at the beginning of the piece and held down for the duration of the piece. The sostenuto pedal causes only the notes
being played as it is depressed to sustain until the pedal is released. Thus, any notes played afterwards are unaffected by the sustaining effect of the sostenuto pedal. As Figure 5.8 shows, a blocked dissonant chord, played at the beginning of “Leaf” with the sostenuto pedal depressed, is held until the end of the piece. Therefore, when notes belonging to the blocked dissonant chord (F♯-G-A-C-C#-D-F) are played (even if the notation is staccato), they will have a prolonged resonance. This effect requires the performer to consider two sets of harmonic identities when playing: 1) the notes of the blocked dissonant chord, and 2) the notes outside of the blocked dissonant chord. Berio described the sonority created from the struck notes of the blocked dissonant chord as “A sound shadow that accompanies the speech of the keyboard.”

5.2.3 Texture

The musical texture of “Leaf” appears at first glance to be filled with discontinuous, thick chordal passages. However, because of the sostenuto pedal effect on the blocked dissonant chord throughout the piece, two contrasting sounds are heard, the combinations between staccato notes and resonant notes. Therefore, in “Leaf”, the performer needs to capture the implicit resonances of the blocked dissonant chord within a texture. One should actively listen to the first blocked dissonant chord held by the sostenuto pedal while he or she plays staccatissimo chords. Thus, a correlation between

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the staccato and the resonant notes results: the discontinuity of the vertical lines in the staccato and the linearity of the continuous resonance of the horizontal line.

5.2.4 Rhythm

Besides “Wasserklavier”, “Leaf” is the only piece in the set where Berio indicated a time signature (2/4) and bar lines. One of the challenging aspects in “Leaf” is executing the mixture of duplet and triplet rhythms with so many rests in random places, and a proliferation of grace notes. The performer is advised to subdivide the precise duration of each note and rest. For example, the length of two eighth rests in measure 7 (Fig. 5.10) should be treated differently, because the first eighth rest is of standard duration in \( \frac{2}{4} \) = 64 (as the composer indicated), but the second belongs to a triplet rhythm. Therefore, one should subdivide the rest accordingly; with the first eighth rest held out a little longer with duration of 2/4 and the second rest duration of 1/3.

![Figure 5.10. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Leaf”, mm. 7–10.](image)

Another challenging rhythmic pattern that the performer should note appears in measures 16–19 (Fig. 5.11). The two sixteenth notes in measure 18 last longer than those
in measure 19; the latter sixteenth notes are equal to the value of an eighth note of the triplet. Thus, the performer should play the sixteenth notes in measure 19 faster than those in measure 18. The suggested technique to play the sixteenth notes in measure 19 quickly is to place his or her fingers close to the keyboard and crisply stroke the keys in one motion.

![Figure 5.11. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Leaf”, mm. 16–19.](image)

Lastly, besides having rests in random places, as rests fall mostly on the downbeat, the performer should feel the downbeat, getting a sense of the rhythm, in order to accurately judge the length of each rest and note played. Even though rests fall on the downbeat, Berio indicated in each measure that the first blocked chord is still held by the sostenuto pedal effect. Therefore, one should not only be careful to sense the downbeat, one should also listen for the resonance of the blocked chord throughout the piece.

### 5.2.5 Dynamics and Articulation

After the first blocked chord is declared with *mf*, “Leaf” generally maintains *pp*, except for three sudden *ff* blocked chords, accented and marked tenuto, and played during the latter part of the piece (Fig. 5.12). Therefore, as there is no indication of a crescendo,
the performer should not build up the volume of the sound, but instead prepare the hand placement to promptly attack the multiple keys together in order to create the sudden percussive ff. Moreover, as tenuto is indicated, when the performer plays these three sudden attacks, he or she should press the notes down firmly and hold them out for their full value. Thus, these notes will receive more emphasis. One should also release any arm tension just after striking the sudden ff chords, in order to express the sudden dynamic change to pp in measures 29 and 33 (Fig. 5.12).

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Figure 5.12. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Leaf”, mm. 24–34.

After the last *ff* chord (Fig. 5.13)—unlike the other two *ff* chords—the performer should retain the same dynamics when playing the eighth-note triplet rhythm, to make the dramatic decrescendo from *ff* to *p*, in measure 35. Use firm fingertips to grasp all blocked chords together when playing the four-sixteenths blocked chords staccato, and then
release the keys instantly to create crisp-sounding staccatos. Conversely, for the long legato line appearing over the last four measures of the piece, the performer should keep a flexible wrist and use finger legato to connect each interval smoothly (Fig. 5.13).

Figure 5.13. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Leaf”, mm. 33–41.
5.3 Wasseklavier

5.3.1 Meter Changes and Rhythm

“Wasserkklavier” opens in the compound meter of 6/8, creating a sense of flow. The 6/8 meter also creates two rhythmic patterns: 1) the traditional pattern of six eighth notes, and 2) the pattern of four dotted eighth notes. However, this second pattern of rhythm interrupts the flow of the compound meter; therefore, the performer should play each one of the rhythmic patterns differently to distinguish the differences in the rhythm. For example, it would be best in measure 3 (Fig. 5.14) to play the second dotted eighth note (D♭) longer than the value of a normal eighth note, and then hold out the quarter notes following the D♭ longer to differentiate between the two patterns.

![Pattern 1 and Pattern 2](image)

Figure 5.14. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Wasserkklavier”, mm. 1–4.

Even as frequent meter changes and different rhythmic patterns appear throughout “Wasserkklavier”, one should try to let the music flow naturally, depicting the flow of water, in this case. At measure 6 (Fig. 5.15), the meter changes to 9/8 expanding on the
6/8 meter until measure 11 (Fig. 5.16) when it reverts to 6/8. At measure 15 the meter switches back to 9/8 and remains for two measures when it switches to 3/4.

Figure 5.15. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Wasserklavier”, mm. 5–7.

Once the music changes to 3/4 (Fig. 5.17), the second pattern of the four dotted eighth notes found in the 6/8 meter changes to a dotted quarter note equal to a quarter note. Thus, what was once a break in the flow of the rhythm at the beginning of the piece
becomes normal and now instances of a triplet pattern create interruptions in the flow of the rhythm.

Figure 5.17. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Wasserkliervier”, mm. 17–19.

### 5.3.2 Tone Quality

“Wasserkliervier” contains no dynamic markings besides the initial *ppp* at the beginning of the piece. Berio marked the piece *teneramente e lontano*, meaning it should be performed tenderly and sound as if far away. In addition, the composer indicates that the una corda pedal should be used for the entire piece to create a distant sound. As the performer approaches the keys of the piano, he or she should relax the shoulder, arms, and wrists to provide a soft, gentle quality of sound. As the name of the piece suggests, the execution of musical material should sound similar to water, meaning water flow, but at times might shift directions and depict the idea of currents. However, even though one might imagine a displacement in the currents, the overall flow and direction of the water remains.

One of the technical challenges of “Wasserkliervier” is in performing the wide range of large arpeggio rolls smoothly, while maintaining the melody line. The composer

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also indicated “grace notes and arpeggios always very fast”\textsuperscript{60}; therefore, one should gauge the exact distance of the intervals of each arpeggio and, in preparation, locate where the hands need to be placed for each upcoming arpeggio. In addition, one should try to make the sound of the arpeggio soft, but rapid, instead of direct and aggressive, between the changes of each arpeggio. The best way to play these arpeggios delicately is rotating the wrist in one motion from left to right (Fig. 5.18).

![Figure 5.18. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Wasserklinger”, mm. 20–22.](image)

**5.3.3 Phrasing and Voicing**

The phrasing in “Wasserklinger” changes primarily based on meter changes; for example, from measures 1–5, Berio repeatedly shows the melodic motive D♭ and C, and presents two rhythmic patterns in 6/8 meter. Following measures 6–16, before the meter changes to 3/4, the dotted-eighth rhythmic patterns dominate this section. Finally, at measure 17, the compound rhythmic flow settles down; however, the vertical melodic line starts to ascend by intervals of a sixth and the wide range of big chordal texture descends, based on an F-minor natural scale.

Berio uses a tenuto mark to voice certain melodies. For example, from measures 13 to 15 (Fig. 5.19), he indicates where the inner voice line should be connected, marking the note or interval with tenuto alternatively in each hand. Therefore, it would be best for the performer to bring out each indicated line, but play them in a way that sounds natural, as if one hand is playing the two-note figures. Lastly, in performing these three measures one should be ready to move to the next chord promptly, relaxing the torso and making the body able to shift, creating an alignment to the keyboard during the leaps and hand crossings.

![Figure 5.19. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Wasserklavier”, mm. 13–15.](image)

**5.3.4 Fingering**

In measure 10 (Fig. 5.20), the performer should gently but quickly roll the wide-range arpeggio from the bottom note to the top. As soon as the left hand fifth finger and thumb play the bass C and A♭, the pianist should immediately place the left-hand index finger on the E♭6, at the top of the large, rolled F-minor chord. Also, while the left hand is playing the E♭6, the right hand should be ready to strike the F an octave higher with the fifth finger, in order to make the music sound smoother and free (Fig. 5.20).
Berio indicates that the grace notes and arpeggios must always be played very fast. To play octave grace notes quicker in measure 11 (Fig. 5.21), one can play the first grace note (C4) with the left-hand index finger and the second grace note (C5) with the right-hand index finger. The performer might apply the same fingerings as suggested for measure 11 again, in measure 13, for the grace notes (Fs) in octave. Thus, one would play the first (F4) grace note with the left-hand index finger and the second (F5) with the right-hand index finger. Following the grace notes, the F octave (F5 and F6) should be played with the right-hand thumb and fifth finger in order to create a rapid sound (Fig. 5.21).
5.4 “Erdenklavier”

5.4.1 Twelve-tone Pitches

Berio presented the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale by using the limited two-octave range on the keyboard (\(B_2\) to \(B_4\)) in “Erdenklavier”. The order of the twelve pitches is shown in Figure 5.22.

![Figure 5.22. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Erdenklavier”, twelve-tone pitch orderings.](image)

Among the twelve pitches shown above, the first five (C G F B♭ D) repetitively dominate the work. These initial five pitches are rhythmically and dynamically emphasized throughout the piece while the other pitches support the overall sound (Fig. 5.23).

![Figure 5.23. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Erdenklavier”, 3rd system.](image)
5.4.2 Rhythmic Notation

No bar line or measures appear in “Erdenklavier”, but Berio gives a metronome indication of $\text{♩}=50$. In a performance note, he instructs the player about circled notes:

1) The notes should be held until the next same note.

Le note vanno tenute fino alla successiva, uguale nota.

Die Noten sollen bis zur nächst gleichen Note gehalten werden. 61

For example, the B♮2 should be held during the entire system, since the next B♮2 does not appear until the next system (Fig. 5.24). Conversely, the standard-sized D should be held down only while one is playing the following notes G-C-G, and when one plays the second D he or she should release the initial D, because it remains uncircled. Therefore, the performer should thoroughly observe all circled notes in the score before playing on the keyboard to be aware of how long each should be sustained. Seth Brodsky writes that, Berio directs only one attacked note at any given moment; on the score it appears as if the entire piece is a single line, unharmonized through to its end… various tones this line are stuck at different dynamic levels and held for different durations, so that the melody in essence creates its harmony, which it meticulously restricts or develops further. 62

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5.4.3 Dynamics and Touch

No dynamic marks are indicated in “Erdenklavier”, except at the beginning and end of the piece. However, the composer shows the dynamic contrast by using differently sized notes, specifying them as:

2) Unless notated otherwise (at the end), the large notes (♩) should be played \textit{ff}, the small notes (♩) \textit{pp}.

Salvo indicazione contraria (alla fine), le note grandi (♩) vanno suonate \textit{ff}, le note piccole (♩) \textit{pp}.

Wenn nicht anderes angegeben (am Ende), sollen die großen Noten (♩) im \textit{ff}, die kleinen Noten (♩) im \textit{pp} gespielt werden.

For example, the performer should play all small notes in the \textit{pp} range, and the four larger notes (D-G-B♭-F), written alongside in the treble clef (Fig. 5.25), should be played \textit{ff}. However, the exception to this instruction is notated at the end of the piece (Fig. 5.26).

In this passage, one should play the large notes (G-D) in the treble clef moderately loud instead of \textit{ff}, since the composer specifically indicated \textit{mf}.
The performer should observe the score detail carefully, such as the differently sized notes, and their dynamic differences. Also, when each note in the same group of fast notes has extreme dynamic changes, one should gauge how to control touch and speed when approaching the passage. For example, in one group of four 32nd notes (Fig. 5.27) Berio marks a different dynamic for each note. Thus, it is suggested that one should practice this type of pattern on a tabletop or closed piano lid. Doing this will allow one to practice lifting the fingers up high and using speed and gravity to hit the surface as fast as possible; then, after making a *forte* sound, immediately releasing the tension from the hands to barely depress the surface, making a soft sound. Again, if one practices this technique slowly using a flat surface (a tabletop or piano lid), one will make a larger
distinction between dynamic contracts of pp and ff, both needed when playing this section up to speed on the piano (Fig. 5.27).

Figure 5.27. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Erdenklavier”, 5th system.

5.4.4 Pedaling and Timing

Berio specified his use of the sustain and una corda pedals for “Erdenklavier”. At the beginning of the piece he also indicated the duration for the sustain pedal held down and the duration of its release. For example, Berio asks the performer to depress the sustain pedal for the length of a 16th note with the metronome indication of $\frac{\text{j}}{\text{=}} = 50$ (Fig. 5.28). He indicates to depress the pedal for the length of a single quarter note, and release it the length of a quarter rest. Furthermore, in a performance note, he wrote:

3) The movement of the pedal should be regular and constant. An exact rhythmic coordination with the keyboard is not required. 
Il movimento del pedale deve essere regolare e costante. Una esatta coordinazione ritmica con la tastiera non è richiesta. 
Das Pedal soll regelmäßig und konstant getreten werden. Eine genaue Koordination zwischen dem Treten des Pedals und dem Spielen auf der Klaviatur ist nicht erforderlich.
Even though the entire “Erdenklavier” is written in a single line, because so many notes are held down throughout the piece in constant depression of the sustain pedal, the music sounds as if it is amassing different layers and creating various harmonies. In essence, this phenomenon produces an echoing effect in which resonating sound creates various tone colors from the single musical line. Seth Brodsky comments on this effect:

In fact, the piece is an impressively subtle study in pedaling and resonance… What ultimately materializes is a kind of brilliant trick on the musical cogitation: even though we hear nothing more than a durational snippet—sound pushing its way through a tiny wedge of previously unexperienced time—what we listen to (that is, what we interpret through hearing) is much less like a two-minute interval, and much more like revolving orb of sound, spinning outside time and which we only observe for two minutes.  

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5.5 “Luftklavier”

5.5.1 Twelve-tone Pitches

Berio presented twelve pitches of the chromatic scale within the first system of “Luftklavier” (Fig. 5.29), also displaying a broken, or fragmented melody. The isolated twelve pitches and their order is shown in Figure 5.30.

Figure 5.29. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Luftklavier”, 1st system.

Figure 5.30. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Luftklavier”, twelve-tone pitch orderings.
5.5.2 Ostinato

Berio also set out a pattern of thirteen grace notes in the beginning of “Luftklavier” and repeated this pattern consistently throughout the piece. This ostinato pattern consistently appears at a quick pace, in the right or left hand between the dynamic ranges of ppp to p. Seth Brodsky explains:

Berio’s brief Luftklavier is perhaps the most whimsical of the quartet: it is fastidious construction, tightly organized around a nexus of pitches that run the gamut between solid chords and broken melodies, woven together by an uninterrupted, coursing ostinato.64

The performer should not be distracted by the ostinato when playing the distinctive melodic line, but instead treat these thirteen grace notes as one set, played lightly with a flexible wrist (Fig. 5.31).

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Figure 5.31. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Luftklavier”, 1st and 2nd systems.
5.5.3 Hand-crossing

Hand-crossing frequently occurs in Luftklavier, because of the constant presence of the ostinato pattern in the middle range of the keyboard. When the right hand begins the ostinato at the opening of the piece, the left hand crosses it to play the first two notes (C and D♭), as shown in Figure 5.31. When the left hand takes over the ostinato pattern, the right hand also crosses the left hand (C5 to B2), in Figure 5.32. When one hand crosses the other, the performer should gauge the exact interval of the leaps between the series of notes played in order to smoothly connect them. For example, one should practice playing C5 to B2 in the right hand (back and forth) to learn the exact distance between the two notes while placing the left hand where the ostinato would be played in Figure 5.32.

![Figure 5.32](image)

Figure 5.32. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Luftklavier”, 2nd system.

In addition, when hand-crossing occurs quickly over a wide range, one should avoid lifting the forearm too high from the keyboard during the jump, in order to play the notes separated by large gaps efficiently. For example, when the left hand plays the
ostinato, the right should play all the notes written in both treble and bass clefs (Fig. 5.33). In order to save time when the right hand jumps from C5 to E♭2, to B♮4, then B♭5 to D♭3 to E5, B♭5 to C3, and B♮1 to E5 (Fig. 5.33), one should keep the hands close to the keys.

Figure 5.33. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Luftklavier”, 20th and 21st systems.

### 5.5.4 Tempo Changes

Berio designated three different tempo marks without any bar lines in “Luftklavier”: \( \mathbf{\dot{=}} = 62 \), \( \mathbf{\dot{=}} = 84 \), and \( \mathbf{\dot{=}} = 104 \), and alternated the use of \( \mathbf{\dot{=}} = 84 \), and \( \mathbf{\dot{=}} = 104 \) throughout the piece. “Luftklavier” begins with the ostinato pattern, played as fast and equally as possible, the main voice appearing with the tempo indication of \( \mathbf{\dot{=}} = 62 \). At
the first tempo change, $\text{♩}=84$, with accelerando to $\text{♩}=104$ (Fig. 5.34), the player should not lose this equality when the tempo begins to suddenly increase, but instead should articulate each triplet clearly. However, Berio moves from $\text{♩}=104$ back to $\text{♩}=84$ while presenting the broken melody with both hands repeatedly. One more tempo change occurs before the triplet passage (Fig. 5.35), but shortly after the tempo returns to $\text{♩}=84$ and maintains this tempo until the end of the piece.

Figure 5.34. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Luftklavier”, 8th and 9th systems.
5.5.5 Dynamics and Repeated Notes

Berio marked at the beginning of “Luftklavier”, *sempre ppp, il più veloce e uguale possibile*, in other words, always *ppp*, and played as fast and equally as possible. Thus, the composer directs the performer to play the ostinato pattern very softly throughout the piece. Berio also used the dynamic range from *ppp* to *mf*, using the dynamic range *ppp* to *p* most frequently. However, as the same repeated notes are played quickly in both hands, the dynamic gets louder (up to *mf*) and gets softer (down to *ppp*) in order to create a quick shift in dynamic. For example, the D is rapidly reiterated by a finger in each hand with an abrupt crescendo and decrescendo (Fig. 5.36). The performer should start playing this tremolo with both hands close to the keys and a relaxed wrist in
order to create a hushed sound. As the music crescendos, the performer should make attacks on the keys more aggressively by raising the hands higher with each stroke, and then release the tension in the wrist to decrease to a gradual decrescendo to *ppp*.

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 5.36. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Luftklavier”, 7th and 8th systems.

### 5.5.6 Texture and Voicing

Berio used three staves at the beginning and end of “Luftklavier” to notate a layered texture. In an ostinato pattern, played in the middle range of the keyboard, a single main voice line is presented in both clefs, as shown in Figure 5.31. When the performer plays this passage he or she should create a texture that sounds like two distinctive lines, one the continuous ostinato where notes are played in a repeated pattern and the other the horizontal main voice over a larger range (Fig. 5.31). Therefore, the performer must pay attention to the sounds created in the voice line in the big leaps to
avoid creating various degrees of dynamics; instead, the sound created should appear to originate from two pianists performing different layers of the texture.

The thirteen grace notes of the ostinato pattern should be played softly and lightly underneath the leading melodic line. Then, when the performer switches hands (Fig. 5.37) in playing the ostinato pattern, this pattern should sound smooth and unaffected by the main melody. For example, one should gently connect G♭ to C♯ with the right hand while the left is taking over the ostinato pattern from the C♮2. In addition, the performer should release tension in the arms before starting the ostinato in order to create a gentle, tender ppp.

![Figure 5.37](image1.png)

Figure 5.37. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Luftklavier”, 2nd system.

Lastly, Berio mostly indicated a slur when a big leap in the voice line occurs. Therefore, one should avoid disconnecting each interval, in order to prevent a fragmented effect. For example, when the performer plays the accented C5 and the B♭2 (Fig. 5.37), he or she should make sure to depress the C5 strongly enough and then to stroke the B♭2 gently by releasing arm tension while moving to the latter note. This way one allows the
fluidity of the resonance of C5 to connect to the sound of the B♭2, avoiding the effect of simply playing two distinctive notes.
5.6 “Feuerklavier”

5.6.1 Twelve-tone Pitches

In the first system, Berio has presented the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale, except A♭, the first note of the second system in the left hand (Fig. 5.38). The order of the twelve pitches is shown in Figure 5.39.

![Image of musical notation]

Figure 5.38. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 1st and 2nd systems.

![Image of musical notation]

Figure 5.39. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, twelve-tone pitch ordering.
5.6.2 Structure

Berio includes no time signature in “Feuerklavier”, nor does he include bar lines. However, the overall form is quite simple and direct. It consists of three parts, including the outer sections, filled mostly with an ostinato texture, and a middle section, with many wide-range leaps notated on three staves. The first section begins in the right hand, with a minor-second trill motive, and in the left-hand Alberti-like figuration (Fig. 5.40).65

![Musical Notation](image)

Figure 5.40. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 1st and 2nd systems.

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The middle section of “Feuerklavier” demonstrates a large contrast in registers as each note is placed far away from its neighbor (Fig. 5.41). Because of this large distance between notes, Berio uses three staves for the middle section (Fig. 5.42). Finally, the last section returns to the texture presented in the initial section (Fig. 5.43).

Figure 5.41. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 13th system.

Figure 5.42. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 18th system.
Figure 5.43. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 25th system.

5.6.3 Tempo Changes

Berio indicates no bar lines in “Feuerklavier” and the tempo is marked $\text{♩}=66$; frequent tempo changes occur throughout the piece, which mostly oscillates between $\text{♩}=66$ and $\text{♩}=96$. The predominate tempo is $\text{♩}=66$, but accelerates to $\text{♩}=96$, then slowing to $\text{♩}=66$ again (Fig. 5.44). At the middle section the tempo marking, *Tempo fluttuante* [$\text{♩}=66/96$], indicates more flexible phrasing and pace. Therefore, the performer can vary the tempo more liberally between $\text{♩}=66$ to $96$ because the distance between each leap is irregular and random (Fig. 5.45). Throughout the piece all tempo markings are either $\text{♩}=66$ or $\text{♩}=96$, except in one section where an instance of $\text{♩}=64$ occurs. After executing the delicate roll and the following right-hand trill, the performer should take a moment to adjust the articulation, staccato in the right hand and legato in the left (Fig. 5.46).
Figure 5.44. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 11th, 12th, and 13th systems.
Figure 5.45. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 13th and 14th systems.

Figure 5.46. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 19th system.
5.6.4 Dynamic Changes

Berio used extreme and sudden dynamic changes (between ppp to ff) in “Feuerklavier”. Expressing the dynamic changes effectively within a short time span is one of the challenges of this piece. For example, the piece begins with sempre ppp e legatissimo and remains at that dynamic until the first accelerando appears. However, an abrupt crescendo occurs from p to ff in a short period, and this quick passage requires the performer to anticipate the dynamics for each note during the crescendo to ensure that (between the hands) each is distinctly louder than the previous one. One suggestion is to play the accented, dotted-half note (F5) with the left-hand middle finger in order to project the effect of a clear ff. In addition, one should immediately release tension in the arms and wrist after the sudden crescendo to play the ppp delicately in the left hand (Fig. 5.47).

Figure 5.47. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 5th system.

From the 11th system (Fig. 5.48), the left hand starts out with ff over the right hand’s p, but the latter quickly crescendos (within seven small grace notes) to ff then just
as quickly decrescendos to \( p \). This fluctuation in dynamics between the left and right hands, followed by a quick change in dynamics by the right hand, can easily cause tension in the arms, as the performer tries to match the dynamics of the left hand with the right. Therefore, it is suggested that the performer should practice this section slowly, note-by-note, focusing on bringing the dynamic of the right hand from \( p \) to \( ff \) back to \( p \), while maintaining \( ff \) in the left hand (Fig. 5.48).

Figure 5.48. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 11th system.

A third example of sudden dynamic changes is shown in Figure 5.49. Unlike the 11th system, the 23rd system (Fig. 5.49) presents abrupt dynamic changes in one musical line while each hand in turn plays individual notes. Therefore, the performer should practice this section slowly to allow it to sound as if the musical line is played by one hand, while expressing the dynamic details effectively. In addition, when one makes a dramatic decrescendo by playing the accented tremolo C\#5 and B5 directly after starting in \( f \), one should release wrist tension in order to quickly change to a soft \( pp \) (Fig. 5.49).
5.6.5 Pedaling

In “Feuerklavier”, Berio has deliberately written markings for all three pedals of the piano. However, the sostenuto pedal is often marked in a random manner, indicating that one should pulsate the pedal for several systems. Thus, the resonances of the piano will become unpredictable, because the sostenuto pedal will irregularly capture some of the dampers (Fig. 5.50).

To make these sounds more dramatic, Berio uses the sustain pedal for making large dynamic changes, because this pedal helps to create the effective crescendo or
diminuendo sound. For example, in the 1st and 2nd systems (Fig. 5.38), 5th system (Fig. 5.47), 11th (Fig. 5.48), and 23rd (Fig. 5.49) systems, as mentioned in discussing the dynamic changes earlier, in order to maximize the dynamic contrast, the composer indicated the use of the sustain pedal. Thus, the random dissonant sounds are mixed in one sustain pedal during a large crescendo, which makes the sound louder and more explosive.

5.6.6 Tone Quality

The overall tone quality of “Feuerklavier” is a metaphor for the archetypal symbolism of fire, both as temporal existence and as a mysterious power. The performer might imagine the different characteristics of fire while performing certain sections of this piece. For example, the repetitive trills and Alberti figuration of the beginning section (the 1st and 2nd systems) depict the imagery of simmering white-hot fire (Fig. 5.38). Moreover, when the composer presents a sudden, distinct texture over a wide range, one could imagine the music representing instantaneously the idea of little darting flames shooting up from wild embers (Figure 5.51).

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Figure 5.51. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 10th and 11th systems.

The destination of the *Tempo fluttuante* \( \text{♩} = 66/96 \) is suggested to imagine as an explosive flame of fire represented by a group of notes over a wide range with loud dynamics and fast tempo. The performer should represent the unexpectedness of the extreme flames in a raging fire by exaggerating the drastic crescendo from *ppp* to *ff* in the section in the 13th and 14th systems (Fig. 5.45). After the cadenza-like middle section, the music returns to a calmer mood representing now extinguished flames, similar to the opening of the beginning section (Fig. 5.52).
Towards the end of the piece, a single rising arpeggio occurs as an appoggiatura written in grace notes, played *ppp* (Fig. 5.53), and representing the illumination of the shadow of a final spark of light from the flame.\(^{67}\) Finally, at the end of “Feuerklavier”, when the light of the flame is no more, only the weak burning embers remain. Lastly, the final main motive, four sixteenth notes, is played in both hands, *ppp*, fading out, just as the final smoke rises from the ash (Fig. 5.54).

“Feuerklavier” opens with *legatissimo* articulation, and the performer should connect each note for an exceedingly smooth line. However, the composer did not indicate the use of the sustain pedal in the beginning. Therefore, it is suggested that performers practice each motive of the 1st system as slowly and as lyrically as possible (Figure 5.50). The first staccato in this piece appears only in the 19th and 20th systems (Fig. 5.55). One should play the interval of the diminished 7th staccato (B and A♭), noticeably short and detached, to create a dryer sound. The fingers should be close to the keys and depress the keyboard sharply in order to produce a crisp staccato sound. While the right hand is playing the last set of the staccato motive, the left hand has a long slur that must be smoothly connected to blend with the right hand notation. The performer should distinguish the two different articulations carefully, between the right-hand staccato and the left-hand legato (Fig. 5.55).
Berio expresses sudden articulation changes as well as extreme dynamic changes within a short period. After the grace notes express a large crescendo with the sustain pedal, the accented, loud triplet-staccato motive comes without the pedal (Fig. 5.56). Therefore, according to Johann Andreas Streicher, the performer should use a “quick, sharp grabbing of the keys without hitting them, along with emphasis on the bass notes to maximize the sound.”

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A different approach is needed to play staccato, in order to create delicate articulation contrast in ppp (Fig. 5.57). As suggested in Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music: Their Principles and Applications:

The wrist, which should be very flexible, must make a movement for each note, in order to provide the necessary movement to the fingers so that each note sounds separately, especially if the notes are located far from each other.  

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In addition, one should be able to change the articulation to immediately show the difference between the staccato and long, legato patterns (Fig. 5.57).

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 5.57. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, 25th system.

### 5.6.8 Gesture

The performer might execute extreme dynamic changes and different volumes of sound by controlling the distance between the keyboard and the hands. For example, after an abrupt crescendo from *ppp* to *ff* (Fig. 5.39), one might start playing the tremolo starting with arms raised high above the keys to create a direct or aggressive sound. In order to play diminuendo while playing tremolo, one might reduce the height of the strikes and relax the wrist to produce a softer sound.

Berio indicates that the performer should silently depress the keys twice in “Feuerklavier”. After the short tremolo played with the sustain pedal (Fig. 5.58), the performer should silently depress the major 2nd interval with the right hand and the major 3rd with the left hand. One should move the upper body towards the keyboard and slowly and gently press down the keys so when the hammers reach the strings no sound is produced, but resonance is still heard. In addition, after playing the silent notes one
should move the upper body away from the keyboard, and locate where the hands need to be in order to play the sudden and rapid \( ff \) passage (Fig. 5.58).

![Figure 5.58. Luciano Berio, Six Encores pour piano, “Feuerklavier”, 17th system.](image)

As the end of the piece nears, the grace-note clusters should be played more calmly than when played in the middle section. The performer should keep his or her hands close to the keys with very relaxed arms, and pay more attention to the quarter rests in order to make sure that they are exactly a duration of one beat. The final presentation of the main motive is held longer by the fermata with the sustain pedal until the sound fades away. Therefore, while the sound fades, one should hold both hands above the keyboard for enough duration and slowly place them to the side of the body, this while slowly releasing the foot from the sustain pedal (Fig. 5.59).
Figure 5.59. Luciano Berio, *Six Encores pour piano*, “Feuerklavier”, last system.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Luciano Berio’s *Six Encores pour piano* are challenging pieces for the performer. The last two pieces (“Luftklavier” and “Feuerklavier”) are technically demanding. Taking a first glance of the first four pieces (“Brin”, “Leaf”, “Wasserkliaver”, and “Erdenklavier”), they may not look difficult to perform. Each piece has specific instructions, score details, different styles, and technical demands that require separate study and careful practice. In addition, only two of these pieces have meters (“Leaf” and “Wasserkliaver”), but they still require a strong sense of rhythm and tempo. The four other pieces have no bar line, which makes it difficult to feel the strong and irregular rhythmic pulse.

Although, not many analytical studies have yet appeared discussing the *Six Encores pour piano*, the pianist will find many studies that include performance guidelines for the more well-known *Sequenza IV*, which contains similar musical issues. This formal study and suggestions for the performance of *Six Encores pour piano*, in combination with the many studies on *Sequenza IV*, might assist the pianist in successful performances of Berio’s piano works.
Berio can be very specific in his performance guidelines (e.g. “Erdenklavier”) or be very flexible (e.g. “Wasserkklavier”), allowing the performer the freedom to interpret his or her perspective of the piece. This contrast in performance guidelines is unique among modern composers and helps further differentiate Berio’s compositional style. By consulting this study, the pianist will be further able to appreciate Berio’s music and to understand how to draw different kinds of sounds from the instrument.

Deciding how one would fit one or more pieces from *Six Encores pour piano* in a recital program is also important. For undergraduates, I would suggest the following pieces to choose from: “Brin”, “Leaf”, “Wasserkklavier”, and “Erdenkläiver”. Out of these four pieces, “Leaf” is the most technical challenging, due to the many rapid hand shifting, and I would suggest only an undergraduate of a high caliber to attempt it. For graduate students, I would suggest selecting between “Luftklavier”, or “Feuerklavier”, considering these two pieces are the most technically demanding out of six. However, I would not recommend performing these two pieces back-to-back, since they share a similar musical style of unexpectedness.

On the other hand, if the graduate student wishes to have a program that focuses on Berio’s works, then I would suggest performing all of *Six Encores pour piano*, especially the elemental pieces (water, earth, air, and fire) as a set. Along with the performance, one can show visual slides of artistic pictures of elements in different natural states, allowing the audience to better hear and visualize the musical interpretation that Berio is trying to convey.
Performing *Six Encores pour piano* is both challenging technically and performatively, making it an ideal work for any pianist working to better improve his or her abilities. Therefore, the performance approach offered in this study will help any pianist looking to extend his or her abilities to the next level.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Brodsky, Seth. Wasserklavier, for 1 or 2 pianos - Luciano Berio | Details, Parts / Movements and Recordings | AllMusic.


APPENDIX

Luciano Berio: Piano Works

Brin (1990)
Canzonetta (1990)
Cinque Variazioni for piano (1953; revised in 1966)
Erdenklavier (1969)
Feuerklavier (1989)
Leaf (1990)
Luftklavier (1985)
Mario Isabella (Adolfo Berio)
Pastorale for piano (1937)
Petite Suite for piano (1947)
Rounds (1965)
Sequenza IV (1966)
Sonata for piano (2001)
Suite for piano (1948)
Toccata for piano (1939)
Wasserklavier (1965)