Ligeti's *Trio* for violin, horn and piano (1982) follows a very different trajectory to the Brahms *Trio*, and there are other apparent connections besides the common “Lebewohl” allusion. Though the valve horn is required, Ligeti frequently asks for natural harmonics, including the out of tune higher ones Brahms would have expected his player to correct by hand positions in the instrument’s bell. The piano writing makes a feature of Brahmsian octave-doubled thirds and the forms of the first three movements are more nearly traditional than anything in Ligeti’s music of the 1960s and ’70s. The opening *Andantino con tenerezza* is in ternary form, notated in common time though actually evolving in three simultaneous tempi coming together only briefly in the central episode. The *Vivacissimo molto ritmico* second movement is apparently more of a through-composed scherzo, if based upon a frenetic rising-scale ostinato which inhibits any real sense of harmonic progression. There follows another character-piece in the guise of a ferociously dislocated *Alta Marcia* with a more evenly flowing trio.

But the final *Lamento Adagio* is sui generis. Registral it follows a gradual widening of range; gesturally and harmonically, everything moves downward by extension of the falling scale fragment of the “Lebewohl” motif. At the climax, the piano seems to crash through the floor leaving the violin and horn in their highest and lowest registers to initiate a coda of glacial calm. In retrospect, the surreal timelessness of these final bars epitomizes the entire work, in which—so one discovers on further acquaintance—any impression of traditional thematicism is largely an illusion created by distorted schemes of overlapping ostinato, and even the most vehement passages have a quality of expression that Ligeti himself has described as “deep frozen.”

_Bayan Northcott_
A concert of music by Berio and Ligeti

—program—

Folk Songs (1964)  
Luciano BERIO

Katherine Eberle*, mezzo-soprano  
Sonja Feig, flute  
Christine Bellamy, clarinet  
Pamela Weest-Carrasco, harp  
Joseph Rebik & John Donald, percussion  
Nathalie Cruden, viola  
James Ellis, violoncello  
David Gompper*, conductor

—a brief pause—

Trio, for violin, horn and piano (1982)  
György LIGETI

Kristin Thelander*, horn  
Nancy McFurland, violin  
Eugene Gaub, piano

*=School of Music faculty

program notes

Folk Songs (1964)

Cathy Berberian (1928-1983) was an American singer embraced by the avant-garde for her range of abilities (in dance, mime and drama) as well as her range of octaves. Her dedication to new works and to meeting the challenges of contemporary composers led them to write technically demanding pieces specifically for her (including Stravinsky’s Elegy for JFK). She was studying in Italy on a Fulbright Fellowship in 1949 when she met Luciano Berio, and they married in 1950. Berio was to write several pieces for Berberian’s voice (Circles, Sequenza III, Visage, Recital I) before and after their divorce in 1966.

These Folk Songs were arranged for Berberian by Berio in 1964, but the title is misleading. The first two (Black is the color and I wonder as I wander) were composed by the classically trained, Kentucky-born folksong scholar and singer John Jacob Niles. La donna ideale and Ballo were written by Berio himself for Berberian while she was still a student in 1949. The others are genuine enough: Losovin yelav, an Armenian song about the rising moon; the French Rossignol du bois, in which the nightingale suggests the way to win a girl’s heart is to ask for the apples in her garden, but she demands the moon and sun; A la femminisca, which the wives of Sicilian fishermen sing as they wait for their men to return from the sea; and Motetta de tristura, a sad Sardinian song to a nightingale. Canteloube’s “Songs of the Auvergne” was the source of Malarrus qu’o uno feno and La foliaire, the first explaining the paradox of marriage (the single man can’t live without a wife and the married man can’t live with one), and the second, a song of a girl at a spinning wheel who gave two kisses when a shepherd asked for one. Berberian found the Azerbaijani Love Song on a Russian 78-rpm recording and sang it phonetically, able to have only the section in Russian translated to reveal a comparison between love and a stove.

Emily King

Black is the color (USA) (John Jacob Niles)

Black is the color  
of my true love’s hair,  
his lips are something  
rosy fair,  
the sweetest smile  
and the kindest hands;  
I love the grass whereon he stands.

I love my love and well he knows,  
I love the grass whereon he goes;  
if he no more on earth will be,  
’twill surely be the end of me.

Black is the color, etc.
I wonder as I wander (USA) (John Jacob Niles)

I wonder as I wander out under the sky
how Jesus our Savior did come for to die
for poor orn’ry people like you and like I,
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus ’twas in a cow stall
with wise men and farmers and shepherds and all,
but high from the Heavens a star’s light did fall,
the promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted of any wee thing,
a star in the sky or a bird on the wing,
or all of God’s angels in Heav’n for to sing,
h e sure could have had it ’cause he was the king.

Loosin yelav (Armenia)

Loosin yelav ensareetz
saree partezor gadareetz
shegleeg meggleeg yeresov
Pörvetz kednneel loonse dzov.
Jan a loosin
jan ko loosin
ja ko gölber sheg yerenseen.
Xavarn arten tchokatrzav
oo el kedneeel tchogatzav
loosm loosov halatrzadz.
moost amberti metch mbnadz.
Jan a loosin, etc.

Rossignolet du bois (France)

Rossignolet du bois,
rossignolet sauvage,
apprend-moi ton langage,
apprend-moi à parler,
apprend-moi la manière comment il faut aimer.

The moon has risen

The moon has risen over the hill,
over the top of the hill,
its red rosy face
casting radiant light on the ground.

Jan a loosin
jan ko loosin
ja ko gőlber sheg yerenseen.
Xavarn arten tchokatrzav
oo el kedneeel tchogatzav
loosm loosov halatrzadz.
moost amberti metch mbnadz.
Jan a loosin, etc.

The way to love aright
I can tell you straight away,
you must sing serenades
two hours after midnight,
you must sing to her: 'My pretty one,
this is for your delight.'

They told me, my pretty one,
that you have some apples,
some renet apples,
growing in your garden.
Allow me, my pretty one,
to touch them.

No, I shall not allow you
to touch my apples.
First, hold the moon
and the sun in your hands,
then you may have the apples
that grow in my garden.

Loosin yelav ensareetz
saree partezor gadareetz
shegleeg meggleeg yeresov
Pörvetz kednneel loonse dzov.
Jan a loosin
jan ko loosin
ja ko gölber sheg yerenseen.
Xavarn arten tchokatrzav
oo el kedneeel tchogatzav
loosm loosov halatrzadz.
moost amberti metch mbnadz.
Jan a loosin, etc.

Rossignolet du bois, rossignolet sauvage,
apprend-moi ton langage,
apprend-moi à parler,
apprend-moi la manière comment il faut aimer.

A la femminisca (Sicily)

E Signuruzzu miu bon tempu
ha ia l’amanti miu’mmezzu lu mari
l’arvuli d’oru e li minni d’argentu
la Marunnuzza mi l’av’aiutari,
chi pozzanu arrivòi asaraventu.
È comu arriva ’na littra
ma fari ci ha mitteri du duci paroli
comu ti l’ha passatu mari, mari.

May the Lord send fine weather...

May the Lord send find weather,
for my sweetheart is at sea;
his mast is of gold, his sails of silver.
May Our lady give me her help,
so that they get back safely.
And if a letter arrives,
may there by two sweet words written,
telling me how it goes with you at sea.

The moon has risen

The moon has risen over the hill,
over the top of the hill,
its red rosy face
casting radiant light on the ground.

Jan a loosin
jan ko loosin
ja ko gölber sheg yerenseen.
Xavarn arten tchokatrzav
oo el kedneeel tchogatzav
loosm loosov halatrzadz.
moost amberti metch mbnadz.
Jan a loosin, etc.

La donna ideale (Italy) (Berio)

L’omo chi moiern vor piar,
de quatro cosse de’e spiar.
La primiera è com’el è nna,
la’ltra è se l’è ben accostumaa,
la’ltra è como e’l è forma,
la quartà è de quanto e’l è dotaa.
Se queste cosse ghe comprendi,
a lo nome di Dio la prendi.

The ideal woman

When a man has a mind to take a wife,
there are four things he should check:
the first is her family,
the second her manners,
the third is her figure,
the fourth her dowry.
If she passes muster on these,
then, in God’s name, let him marry her.
Ballo (Italy) (Berio)
La la la la la la...
Amor fa disviare li più sagg... e chi più l’ama meno ha in sé misura.
Più folle è quello che più s’innamura.

La la la la la la...
Amor non cura di fare suoi dannaggi.
Che non può raffreddare per freddura.

Motettu de tristura (Sardinia)

Tristu passirillanti
comenti massimbilas.
Tristu passirillanti
et tua mi consillas
a prangi po s’amanti.

Tristu passirillanti
cand’ happess intarrada
tristu passirillanti
faimi custa cantada

cand’ happess intarrada

Malorus qu’o uno fermo (Auvergne)

Malorus qu’o uno ferno,
malorus qu’en’cat!
Quò n’1 cat n’en bou uno,
quò n’uno n’en bou pas!
Tradhia ladërilda réro, etc.

Obio ‘no counoullheto
e’n’ai prés un postrou.
Liour liour, etc.

Obio liour

Per fa li bourdudet
mè domond’ un pou toutou.
Liour liour, etc.

Liour liour, etc.

E ibu soui pas ingrate:
en liet d’un nin fau dous!
Liour liour, etc.

Liour liour, etc.

I had a little staff
and I called a shepherd to me.
Liour liour, etc.

For looking after my sheep
he asked me for a kiss.
Liour liour, etc.

And I, not one to be mean,
gave him two instead of one.
Liou liour, etc.

Azerbaijan love song

Apart from a passage in Russian which likens love to a stove, the words of this song are in the dialect of the Soviet Asian Republic of Azerbaijan. They were taken down syllable by syllable from a scratched 78 rpm disc by Cathy Berberian, who knew not a word of the language, and they have so far defied translation.

Trio, for violin, horn and piano (1982)

One could write an entire history of music around the way that basic technical elements of composition have acquired specific expressive charges at certain periods and lost them again at others. In the early days of the classical orchestra, rank-and-file horn players spent much of the time pumping out a tonic-dominant-tonic figure on the most reliable notes of their pre-valve instruments, traditionally known as ‘horn fifths’. Yet by the end of the eighteenth century, the falling version of the figure had somehow taken on the additional signification of departure, distance, loss: “Lebewohl” (farewell) writes Beethoven over the descending ‘horn fifths’ opening of his Piano Sonata, Op 81a Les Adieux on the departure of his pupil, Archduke Rudolph.

Fifty-six years later, composing an Adagio mesto for horn trio in the aftermath of his mother’s death, Brahms apparently feels it too blatant to base the whole movement on a musical symbol already almost a cliché. But towards the end, he insinuates a distant pre-echo of the main theme of his finale comprising both rising and falling ‘horn fifths’. A hundred and seventeen years further on again, Ligeti does begin a horn trio subtitled “Hommage à Brahms” with the “Lebewohl” figure—but in a strangely distorted version, implying a still more oblique attitude to a once directly expressive device.