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| Davidovsky, Mario (1934 -- ) |
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| Mario Davidovskyis one of the most original and relevant voices in the contemporary music scene and a pioneer in the composition by electronic means.  In his celebrated series *Synchronisms* he explored the interaction and combination possibilities between pre-recorded electronic sound and conventional instruments played live (ranging from a solo instrument to an orchestra and a choir), becoming an inescapable point of reference for composers working with mixed media. |
| Mario Davidovsky is one of the most original and relevant voices in the contemporary music scene and a pioneer in the composition by electronic means.  In his celebrated series *Synchronisms* he explored the interaction and combination possibilities between pre-recorded electronic sound and conventional instruments played live (ranging from a solo instrument to an orchestra and a choir), becoming an inescapable point of reference for composers working with mixed media.  This series runs through his entire production, which includes both chamber and symphonic and vocal music, and made up of twelve short pieces. The first was composed in 1962 for flute and electronics, and the last in 2006 for clarinet and electronics. *Synchronisms number 6* for piano and tape (1970) became a milestone of 20th century music and earned him the 1971 Pulitzer Prize and won him ample renown thanks to its clever integration between electronic means and a conventional instrument.  Davidovsky was born in Médanos, Argentina, and during the fifties he moved to Buenos Aires, where he studied under Guillermo Graetzer, Ernesto Epstein, Erwin Leuchter and Teodoro Fuchs. He became a member of the Agrupación Nueva Música founded by Juan Carlos Paz.  Before leaving for the United States he premiered his early works amongst which Cuarteto de Cuerdas (String Quartet) (1954), Nonetto for Nine Istruments (1956) and the Suite Sinfónica para “El Payaso” (Symphonic Suite for “The Clown”) (1955) are worth mentioning.  At Aaron Copland’s recommendation in 1958 he arrived at the Berkshire Music Center, known today as Tanglewood. During that period he composed String Quartet nº 2 (1958) and Serie Sinfónica 1959 (Symphonic Series 1959) (1959) in which he continued in the atonal, abstract style of the works he had composed in Buenos Aires.  Contrastes nº 1 (Contrasts nº 2) (1960) for orchestra and electronic sounds inaugurates a new aesthetic characterized by the search for integration of the electronic sound in the musical discourse. This new impulse coincides with his move to New York, thanks to a suggestion by Milton Babbit, and where he met Otto Luening and Vladimir Ussachevsky at the newly founded Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center.  As well as Professor of Music at Columbia, he became Director of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center from 1981 to 1993. Once there, he began his experiments in electronic music and composed his Electronic Study I, II and III (1961, 1962, 1965), the latter dedicated to Edgard Varèse whose technical assistant he had been as well as eventually his friend. In these studies he applied classical compositional procedures to the electronic generation of sounds with the intention of extending bridges between tradition and the new resources proposed by the emerging technologies of the sixties. Nevertheless when Electronic Study I was presented in a an auditorium, Davidovsky was disatisfied with the absence of a performer and thus he began his systematic search for not only a musical motivation and expression of electronic sounds but also their integration with the Western instrumental tradition, which would come together in his *Synchronisms* series. Although he would never give up composing for traditional instruments, after Synchronisms nº 8 (1974) for wind quintet and tape, Davidovsky decided to stop composing electronic music and concentrated fundamentally on instrumental music in which the behavior of the sound in some manner reflected his experience in the studio. The assimilation of sound manipulation transferred itself to his instrumental writing in his new works and his conception of sound remained attached to electronic music procedures. The transference of the gestures of that language becomes more evident in Divertimento (1984), Concertante (1990), Duo Capriccioso (2003), Concertino (1995).  Economy and asceticism seem to be the principles that run through the character of his works and a particular focus on texture. According to his own description, a *strata* created by a polyphonic constellation of statements lead to a linear narrative. “In a way, my stratification involves one person telling four stories – the one person is the remnant of the voice leading”.[[1]](#footnote-1) His music is also characterized by a lyric warmth and suggestive instrumentation.  The composition of his first work for voice, *Scenes from Shir ha-Shirim* (1975-77) for soprano, two tenors, bass soloist and chamber ensemble, inaugurates his post electronic period. Integrated in three parts (Song of Songs I, II and part of III), a complex politextuality unites with a rhythmic flexibility that brings it closer a Hebrew song. Although there are tonal references, they are elusive. Harmony is a dense complex that moves between tension and toning down. His six vocal compositions, with different instrumental accompaniments show Jewish or Hispanic roots (*Romancero* (1983); *Shulamit’s Dream* (1993), *Sefarad:four Spanish-Ladino Folkscenes* (2004)).  The series called *Quartetto* (1987, 1996, 2000, 2005), the first composed for flute, violin, viola and violoncello, do not depart from entirely from his five string quartets and do not abandon the principle of a dialog between the instruments. But they do introduce in place of the second violin, a flute, an oboe, a piano or a clarinet each of them as a soloist, as would appear in a traditional repertoire.  Although part of his instrumental music follow in traditional genres (suite, chacona, capriccio, concertino, etc.), the manner in which it combines the instruments, his narrative strategies and the way he reinvents the tradition of the instruments are completely innovative.  With *Sincronismos 9* (Synchronisms 9) for violin and tape he went back to composition with electronic means. Even though practically all of Davidovsky’s music requires a high degree of virtuoso performance, this is particularly true for this piece, where different sources of virtuoso writing for violin flow together, probably internalized when he studied the instrument as a boy.  He composed *Festino* (1994) for guitar, viola, violoncello and bass the same year he began teaching at Harvard, and together with Synchronism *nº 10*  (1992) are the only works in his Catalog where he uses guitar.  Davidovsky is widely known for his *Synchronisms,* where he rendered the electronic sounds *more aesthetic* not only through his ability to endow them with expressive musicality but also because he reintroduced the performer, a disruptive element withinthe realm of electronic music. He thus gave him/her back to an audience who were reluctant to see loudspeakers in place of live musicians within the new expressive medium.  His music has been recorded by Columbia Records, CRI, New World Records, Wergo, Nonesuch, Finnadar, Turnabout, Bridge Records, DDG, Albany Records and his music publisher by C.F. Peters Corp, E.B. Marks Corp. and Mc Ginnes and Marx. Chronology of All WorksElectronic Music   Elec Study nº 1 (1961)  Elec Study nº 2 (1962)  Elec Study nº 3 (1965) **Mixed media** Synchronisms: Nº 1, fl, elecs. (1962)  Nº 2, fl. Cl., vn, vc., elecs. (1964)  Nº 3, vc, elecs. (1964)  Nº 4, male vv/mixed chorus, elecs. (1966)  Nº 5, perc ens, elecs (1969)  Nº 6, pf, elecs (1970)  Nº 7, orch, elecs. (1974)  Nº 8, ww qnt, elecs. (1974)  Nº 9, vn, elecs (1992)  Nº 10, gui, elecs (1988)  Nº 11, db, elecs. (2005)  Nº 12, cl, elecs (2006) Chamber: Str Qt nº 1 (1954)  Qnt, cl, str (1955)  3 Pieces, ww qt (1956)  Noneto, 9 insts (1956)  Str Qt nº 2 (1958)  Trio, cl., tpt, va (1962)  Inflexions, chbr ens (1965)  Junctures, fl, cl, vn (1966)  Music For Solo Violin (1968)  Chacona, vn.,vc, pf (1973)  Ludus 2, fl, cl., vn, vc, pf (1973)  Str Qt nº 3 (1976)  Pennplay, 16 players (1979)  Str Qt nº 4 (1980)  Str Trio (1982)  Capriccio, 2 pf (1985)  Salvos, piccolo, alto fl, cl, harp, perc, vn, vc(1986)  Quartetto nº 1, fl, str trio (1987)  Festino, gui, va, vc, db (1993)  Flashbacks, fl, cl, vn, pf, perc (1995)  Quartetto nº 2, ob, str trio (1996)  Str Qt nº 5 (1998)  Simple Dances fl (piccolo alto) 2 perc pf, vc (1999)  Quartetto nº 3, pf, str trio (2000)  RecitAndy, vc (2001)  Duo Capticcioso, pf, vn, (2003)  Piano Septet (2007) Orchestral: Concertino, perc, str (1954)  Symphonic Suite for ‘The Clown’ (1955)  Symphonic Suite (1959)  Contrasts nº 1, str orch, elecs (1960)  Pianos (1961)  Transients (1972)  Consorts, sym. Band (1980)  Divertimento, vc, orch (1984)  Concertante, str qt., orch (1990)  Concertino, vn, chmbr orch (1995) Vocal- Instruments Scenes from Shir-ha-shirim (Bible: *Song of Solomon*), S, 2T, B,  Chmbr orch (1975-77)  Romancero (14th-16th Century Sp.), S, fl, cl, vn, vc (1983)  Biblical Songs, S, fl, cl, vn, vc, pf (1990)  Shulami’s Dream, S, orch (1993)  Cantione Sine Textu, S, chmbr ensemble (2001)  Sefarad: Four Spanish-Ladino Folkscenes, baritone, fl, cl, perc, vn, vc (2004) Bibliographic references Charles Wuorinen, Mario Davidovsky: Contrasts nº 1, *Perspectives of New Music,* Vol. 4, Nº 2 (Spring – Summer, 1966), pp. 144 – 149.  Chasalow Eric, Mario Davidovsky: An Introduction, Commissioned on the occasion of Davidovskys receipt of the Siemens Prize. First printed in *Agni 50*, Boston University, 1999. Available at: <http://www.bu.edu/agni/reviews/print/1999/50-chasalow.html>  Chasalow Eric, Mario Davidovsky – Liner Notes for a Bridge Records 2005 release. Available at: <http://www.ricchasalow.com/pdfs/davidovsky.pdf>  de la Vega Aurelio: ‘Latin American Composers in the United States’, *Latin American Music Review/Revista de música Latinoamericana, i/2 (1980), 162-75*  Gagne, Cole, and Tracy Caras. “Mario Davidovsky.” In Soundpieces: Interviews with American Composers. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1982.  S.M. Gryc: ‘Stratification and Synthesis in Mario Davidovsky’s Synchronisms Nº 6, *In Theory Only,* iv/4 (1978-9), 8-39  Teitelbaum Richard, SON-NOVA 1988: Electronic Music by Bulent Arel; Mario Davidovsky; Vladimir Ussachevsky Review, *Perspectives of New Music,* Vol. 3, Nº 1 (Autumn - Winter, 1964), pp. 127-130.  Trimble, Lester, and Noel B. Zahler. “Mario Davidovsky.” In The New Grove Dictionary of American Music, H. Wiley Hitchcock and Stanley Sadie, eds. London and New York: Macmillan, 1986. MULTIMEDIA  * Synchronism nº 6: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suf7SQ84-RM> * Electronic study nº 1 (1961):   <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWMREHOsoKg&feature=related>   * Festino (1994): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4g9tarE> * Mario Davidovsky: A Long Way From Home by Frank J. Oteri on November 1, 2006: <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/mario-davidovsky-a-long-way-from-home/> * Mario Davidovsky, In Memoriam Edgar Varèse (5:22). This magnetic tape composition was done in the tape studio of Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. This composition was done entirely on magnetic tape with each   sound created and controlled entirely by the composer within the tape studio:  <http://www.ubu.com/sound/davidovsky.html>  Mario Davidovsky, interviewed by Eric Chasalow, filmed by Barbara Cassidy, 1997: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiigCMx6tKk>  Youtube, Mario Davidovsky interview pt 1:  <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0718VtWcTw>  Youtube, Mario Davidovsky interview pt 2:  <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5aGI3oViT8&feature=relmfu>  Youtube, Mario Davidovsky interview pt 3:  <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIuaGbDiDzM&feature=relmfu>  Youtube, Mario Davidovsky interview pt 4:  <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShXUGx4VQ34&feature=relmfu> |
| Further reading: |

1. See <http://artofthestates.org/cgi-bin/piece.pl?pid=366> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)