

GUNNAR BERG *Melos*

Per Dybro Sørensen, Bolette Roed, Michael Norman

GUNNAR BERG (1909-1989)

Melos

Per Dybro Sørensen | guitar

Bolette Roed | recorder

Michael Norman | guitar *



	AR-GOÄT (1984-85)	24:52
	pour deux guitares *	
1	1st movement	11:32
2	2nd movement	4:46
3	3rd movement	8:35
	TRIEDRA (1952)	6:02
	Flûte (à bec) solo	
4	1st movement	2:02
5	2nd movement	2:37
6	3rd movement	1:23
	9 DUOS (1957/1984)	15:53
	pour flûte (à bec) et guitare	
7	I	0:53
8	II	1:35
9	III	2:12
10	IV	1:08
11	V	2:26
12	VI	1:52
13	VII	0:56
14	VIII	1:12
15	IX	3:40
16	MELOS (1979)	24:17
	für solo Gitarre	

Total: 71:04

GUNNAR BERG (1909-1989) is one of the pioneers of serial music and one of the most important representatives of European musical modernism in Denmark. At an early stage he adopted an international orientation and in 1948 he travelled to Paris to study with Arthur Honegger. He joined the circle around Olivier Messiaen, met John Cage and Pierre Boulez, and made the acquaintance of the music of Webern and Varèse. In 1952 he attended the international summer course for contemporary music in Darmstadt, where his meeting with Karlheinz Stockhausen served as a confirmation of his own musical experiments. The ten-year stay in Paris was of crucial importance to Berg, who from 1950 on uncompromisingly, consistently and personally adhered to the complex gesturality of musical modernism as well as the theory and aesthetics of the serial composition method – but without becoming dogmatic. Along with his wife, the French pianist Béatrice Berg (1921-1976), he returned to Denmark in 1957 to introduce the avant-garde music of the period to the Danish folk high schools, and the Bergs came to play an important role in the Danish musical life of the next few years, although there was never any great public response to his music.

From first to last his experiences at the piano had a determining influence on Berg's musical oeuvre. The piano works for Béatrice Berg comprise many small instructional pieces, four virtuoso orchestral works – *Essai acoustique*, *Frise*, *Pour piano et orchestre* and *Uculang* – as well as the two major solo piano works *Eclatements 1-13* and *Gaffky's 1-10*, both in formats that place them among the major manifestations of Danish piano literature in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Encounters with female musicians were highly stimulating for Berg. For the Swiss recorder player Anita Stange (b. 1926), who had trained at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis with the legendary Ina Lohr, he composed two recorder works – *Triedra* for recorder solo and *9 Duos* for recorder and cello. Both works are dedicated to Anita Stange, who gave them first performances at Hermann Gattiker's "Hausabende für zeitgenössische Music" in Bern, where Berg, with a total of fifteen performances, is on the top-ten list of just under 400 composers played (Doris Lanz: *Neue Music in alten Mauern*, 2006; the chapter on Gunnar Berg has also been published at www.gunnarberg.dk).

For the German guitarist Maria Kämmerling (b. 1946) Berg composed several works. In 1971 she had married the Danish guitarist Leif Christensen (1950-1988) and settled in Denmark. Both as teachers and as musicians,

this couple were pace-setters in Danish musical life, and they were greatly respected on the international guitar scene with concerts and a considerable CD production of both classical and modern guitar music.

The encounter with the Danish music scene was a surprise for Maria Kämmerling. She had undergone her musical training in the Cologne of Stockhausen and Kagel and at the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna, and not much was known there about Danish composition music and the tendencies towards simplicity that came as a reaction to complex international modernism and became known under the overall designation the New Danish Simplicity – a movement that with some justification can be compared to the attitude behind the famous Danish Dogma films of the nineties. As a member of the chamber ensemble Sub Rosa, which played both Baroque and contemporary composed music, Maria Kämmerling participated in first performances of several Danish works – including, in 1976, Per Nørgård's *Nova Genitura*. It was on that occasion that she first heard music by Gunnar Berg, whose *Triedra* and *9 Duos* were played by Annette Friisholm, recorder, and Hans Erik Deckert, cello.

Berg's musical idiom reminded Maria Kämmerling so much of Cologne that she visited Berg and invited him to write for her

instrument. Berg had no experience of the guitar and refused with the words: "Berlioz, in his *Traité d'Instrumentation*, is supposed to have said: If you do not play the guitar yourself, don't write for this instrument". However, Maria Kämmerling insisted, and Berg was persuaded to let her introduce him to the instrument. For the next year they jointly explored the guitar. Maria Kämmerling speaks of Berg's special interest in the guitar's quarter-tones, which are easy to execute in practice by pulling or pushing a string aside, but which were a relatively new phenomenon in the guitar literature of the time. Without regard to ordinary, normal playing and composition style, Berg went to work using quarter-tones, not only as individual notes, but also in chords, and sometimes in combination with harmonics. The new, unusual and different, boundary-breaking tonal landscape that arose reveals Berg's profound familiarity with the physiognomy of the tones; but technically Berg's scores were a great challenge to Maria Kämmerling, who had to write small arrows into her music to mark the direction in which the string had to be displaced so that the chord notes on the adjacent strings would not be prevented from sounding.

In 1978 this unusually fruitful collaboration between composer and musician resulted in *Fresques* for solo guitar, which with its array of quarter-tones, previously

unheard combinations of harmonics and an extreme spectrum of dynamics and stroke types is one of the most concentrated works that modern guitar music has to offer. The Swiss guitarist Mats Scheidegger has called *Fresques* a great vision for the instrument and regards the almost hour-long piece as one of the century's most significant guitar works, presenting nothing less than a whole sound-topography of the instrument in a beautiful and complex way; he compares *Fresques* to Helmut Lachenmann's *Salut für Caudwell* and Brian Ferneyhough's *Kurze Schatten II*.

Maria Kämmerling gave *Fresques* its first performance in 1978, and the next year she recorded it for the label Paula Records – a recording that stands as striking testimony to an extraordinary musician and an unusual ability to realize complex scores, a dexterity she lost in the tragic car accident in 1988, which Leif Christensen did not survive.

Gunnar Berg's guitar works comprise:

- *Fresques* (1978) for solo guitar
- *Hyperion* (1978) for soprano, guitar and nine instruments to a text by Friedrich Hölderlin
- *Melos I* (1979) for solo guitar
- *9 Duos* (1957/1984) for recorder and guitar (originally recorder and cello; the

recorder part can also be played on a flute)

- *Ar-Goät* (1984-85) for two guitars
- A small collection of early songs where the piano has been replaced by the guitar

AR-GOÄT

In 1980 Gunnar Berg left Denmark and returned to Switzerland, where he was born. In Igis, some 100 km south of his birthplace St. Gall, he concluded his guitar chapter with *9 Duos* for flute and guitar and *Ar-Goät* for two guitars. *Ar-Goät* was first performed on 2nd February 1986 at the Royal Danish Academy of Music by Maria Kämmerling and Leif Christensen.

Berg was not particularly communicative about his music, and several of his work titles are enigmatic. This is the case with *Ar-Goät*, although he pointed to a Celtic connection: Argoat is the Breton name of the wooded inland region of Brittany where Berg spent the summer of 1949.

The dominant character of *Ar-Goät* is pointillistic. In all three movements single notes in changing textures and density predominate; notes from the two guitars rarely coincide, although they both play all the time, and the use of chords is limited. The first movement's shifting metronome

speeds, time signatures and dynamic range from *ppp* to *f*, along with the frequent use of quarter-tones, create a fluctuating character. Sometimes the movement comes together in a swinging pulse, solidifies and begins anew. There is a surprisingly alien contrasting section with tremolo glissandi in both guitars, which ends just as suddenly as it began. The fast second movement is a *tour de force* with dynamic shuttling between *ppp* and *f*. The metronome speed and time signature remain the same throughout the movement, but one guitar part is notated in 4/8, the other in 5/8, and this has an electrifying effect, creating a rhythmic drive that at some points recalls free jazz. In a very few places the notes are supplemented by rapping on the guitar body. The third movement is one long fade-out; there are no dynamic markings, but there are changes in both metronome speed and time signature. The pulse is slower, sometimes coming together march-like in a more stable tempo, sometimes coming to a complete halt. A few chords are allowed to sound fully – as the concluding note D does, when the two instruments finally meet.

TRIEDRA

Triedra was composed in 1952, the year Béatrice and Gunnar Berg married. The honeymoon went to Darmstadt, where

Berg attended a 12-tone course and where his meeting with Stockhausen was of great importance. In his first 12-tone work, *Suite pour violoncelle seul* from 1950, Berg adheres to the traditional Baroque form; *Triedra* too is a 12-tone work in traditional three-movement form and expression – two playful, fast outer movements and a slow, melancholy, lamenting middle movement.

In his subsequent works Berg tried out freer rhythms and forms and established a true serial composition method with its basis in Olivier Messiaen's division of the twelve chromatic notes of the tempered scale into groups, the so-called "modes with limited transpositions", but expanded to apply to all the parameters of the music. The result is a minutely calculated structuring of durations, pitches, volumes and instrumentation, which was one of the main themes in Darmstadt in 1952. Gunnar Berg described the method as static, and spoke of game rules where, with the aid of techniques such as mirroring, crab-inversions and transposition, he established a basic body of material ordered so that the individual movements could be 'cut out'.

9 DUOS FOR RECORDER AND GUITAR

9 Duos for recorder and cello from 1957 is a typical example of Berg's works in the latter half of the fifties with several short move-

ments or variants of differing characters and idioms. The first manuscript score of *9 Duos* bears the title *Thèse et Anthithèse*, but Berg abandoned this title – without revealing why, or the background for using the Hegelian concepts. In a letter to Herman Gattiker in 1957, Berg implies that the work posed problems: “The duos for recorder and cello were a bad business, gave me a lot of trouble ... Whether this work succeeded for me in the end remains to be seen.”

The interval of the third provides the common structural factor in the nine movements, which exhibit varying degrees of complexity and intensity – all the way from unison passages to polyrhythms, great interval leaps, changing time signatures, many notes tied over the bar line, and entries in unaccented times – with the last and longest movement as a *Synthèse*. The cello part, thoroughly reworked in 1984, has been tailored to the playing techniques of the guitar, and the work has the feel of an independent composition, in no way of an arrangement of something else for the guitar. On 18th January 1987 the flute version was performed for the first time at the Winterthur conservatory in Switzerland by Susanne Huber and Christoph Jäggin. On 23rd February 1987 the recorder version was given its first performance at the Royal Academy of Music in Århus by Anne Mette Karstoft and Maria Kämmerling.

MELOS I

Maria Kämmerling premiered *Melos I* on 13th January 1980 in the rehearsal hall of Folketeatret in Copenhagen during Danmarks Radio's ‘Music New Year’ 1980. Kämmerling herself wrote in the programme that “the composer uses, in condensed form, some of the instrument's most distinctive but rarely used possibilities: quarter-tones – both individually and in chord structures – extremely high harmonics and harmonic chords, passages for the left hand alone.” Berg makes use of a total of seven different stroke techniques and positions, yet the piece never takes on the character of a display.

Berg did not reveal much about the background of the title of the work, or the motto-like sentence he wrote on the inside of the manuscript cover: *Das Verschwiegene oder die Legende vom Nichtsein* – ‘the unspoken, or the legend of non-being’. *Melos* is the name of the Greek island where the *Venus de Milo* was found, but it is also the Greek word which from the time of Plato on was used to designate both the ordering of different pitches into a melodic progression and the connection between language, rhythm and harmony. Berg's *Melos I* is one long monodic progression – a *tone-colour melody* – borne up by harmonics and quarter-tones, with the relatively few chords as ‘coloured’ notes.

Something similar can be said about the sister work *Melos II* for organ, also from 1979. The widespread use of tied notes, triplets, quintuplets, the extension of crotchets by a semiquaver, and sudden dynamic leaps between *pp* and *ff*, create a supple sense of pulse and an unusual drive with expression varying from tenderness to aggressive gesticulation, with the character of a *valse mélancolique* in long passages.

Jens Rossel, 2009

“SEEKING THROUGHOUT AN ENCHANTED LIFE”

This line from Herman Hesse's poem *Traum von dir* is an apt description of Gunnar Berg's motivation for creating music. Gunnar Berg's compositions are not 'knowing' music; they are a music that listens as closely as it possibly can: a wondering music that searches longingly, obsessively and unyieldingly for its own secret, perhaps for a vanished dream. "Interesting and vital, unresolvable and unfathomable, deep as the sea and shining," Rudolf Kassner calls such a compelling longing for the borrowed element that mankind seeks within himself. And the work of such an artist becomes an emotive symbol of life, a never-ending, circling movement around a centre at rest in itself.

Against this background it becomes understandable that Gunnar Berg has

never commented on his musical craft. Braced by among other influences the serial music of the 1950s, it is no more – nor is it any less – than an open door to all that is spiritual, or perhaps rather a fine-meshed net which, even from apparent nothingness, is able to catch the smallest particle of life, a seismograph that senses even the slightest tremor.

Gunnar Berg's compositions are not depictions of given situations, as little as they are stories. Gunnar Berg's music *evokes* an event: an emotional-spiritual episode that is triggered by sound and is played out within the listener. This makes his music above all a vessel with an abstract, open content.

It is certainly no coincidence that Gunnar Berg, in his late creative period, when he was strikingly preoccupied with the guitar, returned to an earlier setting of *Traum von dir*, and added a guitar accompaniment. His *Lied* becomes more intimate than before, as well as more sensitive and fragile, but above all calmer, appropriate to the tried, mature, experienced man.

Gunnar Berg's guitar works, apart from a re-instrumentation of an early *Lied* composition in the 1960s, were written between 1976 and 1985. In number, diversity and variety they form an astonishing totality that is not oriented towards the traditional guitar repertoire, yet still seems to have listened thor-

oughly to the instrument and to have grown organically out of it. How much 'unheard' and what great independence one discovers here! But more than anything, these compositions are characterized by a profound seriousness and sincerity that is far removed from any superficial amenability.

The inspiration for this rich process of creation was the meeting with the guitarist Maria Kämmerling, in whom Gunnar Berg found his ideal listener and interpreter. After *Fresques I-IV*, the monumental first work, the others came in quick succession: *Hyperion* (1977) for guitar, soprano and nine instruments, various reworkings of the piano *Lieder* (1977/1978), *Melos I* (1979), and after

a pause due to the composer's emigration to Switzerland, the re-instrumentation of the *9 Duos* for recorder or flute and guitar (originally composed for recorder and violoncello), and finally *Ar-Goät* (1984-85) for two guitars.

These guitar works, recorded for the first time on CD, and the integrated piece for recorder are, despite all differences, illustrative examples of what I have just described. True, for the seeker the titles of these works are more of an enigma than an explanation. And that is good, for they are only meant to lay down a trail, a scent, that "may lead astray, but not deceive." Christoph Jäggin, 2008

THE PERFORMERS

As a co-founder and member of the Corona Guitar Quartet, PER DYBRO SØRENSEN (guitar) is one of the pace-setting guitarists of Denmark, with a considerable international career. He trained with Maria Kämmerling in Århus and Konrad Ragossnig at the Musikakademie der Stadt Basel in Switzerland, taking his concert diploma in 1981. He has premiered solo works by Danish composers including Axel Borup-Jørgensen, Vagn Holmboe, Lars Hegaard and Hans-Henrik Nordstrøm, and has been responsible for Danish first performances of works by Peter Maxwell Davies, Hans-Werner Henze, André Jolivet and Luciano Berio. His wide knowledge of contemporary music has made him one of the artistic directors of the Suså Festival, and he has recorded several CDs, including guitar works by Jolivet, Maxwell Davies and Axel Borup-Jørgensen. In 2007 he released *Outline. 6 works by contemporary Danish composers*. On an everyday basis Per Dybro Sørensen teaches at the Køge School of Music. Per Dybro Sørensen plays a guitar built in 2005 by Jose. L. Romanillos & Son.
www.perdybro.dk

BOLETTE ROED (recorder), founder and member of various ensembles such as Iris, Paradox, Lune Rousse, Alpha and Gáman,

duo partner of James Crabb (accordion) and Allan Rasmussen (harpsichord), DR Artist of the Year 2005 and orchestral soloist with among others CoCo and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra/DR, has since her debut in 2004 made her mark among Denmark's leading instrumentalists on both the Danish and the international music scene. For Bolette Roed the recorder is an instrument that can be used in many different contexts, including those outside its various historical epochs in the Middle Ages, Renaissance and Baroque. She has extended the recorder's repertoire and worked with a great variety of instrumental combinations and potential repertoires, and has commissioned and premiered works by composers in and outside Denmark. Her collaboration with many different instrumentalists has further inspired improvisations on folk music and world music. Electro-acoustic improvisations are also part of her repertoire. Bolette Roed plays a Mollenhauer&Maarten Helder alto recorder A=440 Hz (*Triedra* og *g Duos*) and a Friedrich von Huene alto recorder A=440 Hz (*g Duos*).
www.boletteroed.com.

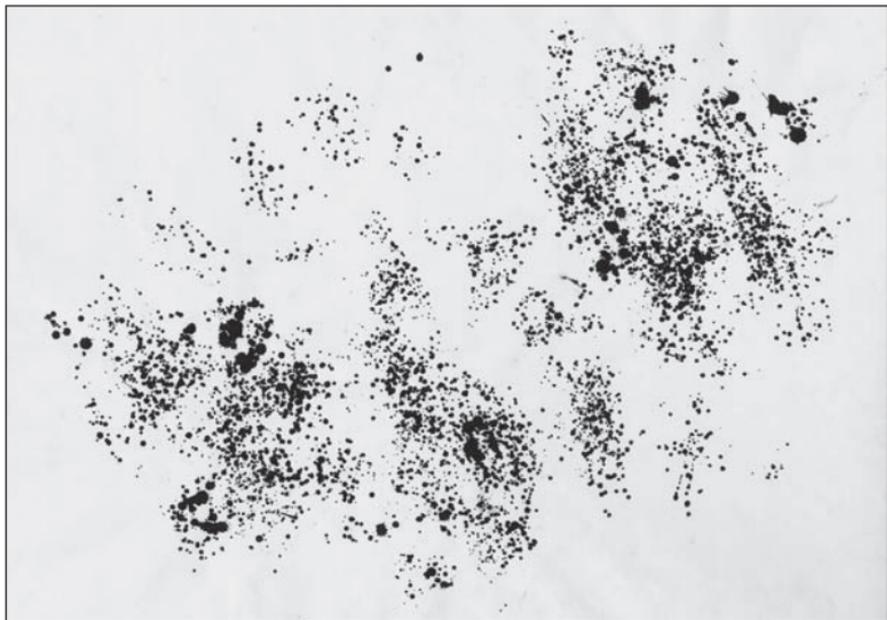
MICHAEL NORMAN (guitar) made his debut in 2008 at the Carl Nielsen Academy of Music in Odense as a pupil of Jesper Sivebæk. He trained at the North Jutland

Academy of Music with Karl Petersen with study periods in 1994-95 in Madrid with Margarita Escarpa and Jose Luis Rodrigo. He has also taken lessons with Timo Korhonen in Finland. Michael Norman has attended master classes by a number of the world's leading guitarists, including David Russell, Göran Söllscher and John Mills. He is an active chamber musician, for example as a member of CarlsVognen with the flau-

tist Karen Skriver and the tenor Jan Lund. Michael Norman has premiered a number of works and has participated in recordings of contemporary music on several CDs. On an everyday basis Michael Norman teaches at the Furesø School of Music and the Copenhagen School of Music MGK. Michael Norman plays a Merula guitar, built in 2004 by Bert Kwakkel.
www.michaelnorman.dk



Maria Kämmerling and Gunnar Berg at Lindved gl. Skole in 1978.



Drawing by Gunnar Berg (c. 1968; Indian ink on paper)

DDD

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