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After I left Pizzetti, I was still not satisfied. Though I was really well enough prepared as a composer, I felt there was still some secret which eluded me. I later realised that put simply, what I was always searching for was the secret of inspiration and creativity, as if it could be passed on from one person to another. I think that I also felt the secret was partly bound up with techniques, so that I was always exploring every possible avenue which may lead me to the great discovery. Of course, all that was absurd. I would have done far better if at a certain point I had made the decision to adopt whatever idiom I most preferred, and then written a good corpus of works without any further searching. This has been what most sane composers have done for centuries. But unfortunately, it is exactly what I didn’t do, for I embarked on yet another long journey of exploration.

I was faced with a dilemma. I had heard Dallapiccola’s opera ‘*Il Prigioniero*’ (The Prisoner) when it was first performed in Florence, and while some parts were too dense and stressful for my liking, other passages seemed to be just the kind of sound I had long looked for - a mysterious, complex sound with an intangible, enigmatic harmony which I found intensely beautiful. Unfortunately, Dallapiccola’s technique was said to involve the use of Schoenberg’s serialism, so everyone in Florence regarded him as a kind of devil sprouting horns. Florence is not a progressive town from a musical point of view, and is particularly anti-germanic in its artistic attitudes, so that Dallapiccola was almost an outcast, especially at the Conservatory, where his only position was merely as a piano teacher for the 3rd grade. To cap it all, he was not a Florentine at all, but originated in some barbaric part of Yugoslavia (actually in Istria, when it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). I think he was quite friendless at the Conservatory, and perhaps through this, his manner could be prickly and belligerent.

Of course, I already knew Dallapiccola because of the few orchestration lessons he had given me, and with which I had not been too satisfied. Nevertheless, I decided I must get to know something about serialism, and approached him once again, to arrange lessons. As it happened, he was just on the point of leaving Florence for the summer holidays, so he advised me to read a couple of books before we met again in the autumn. These were two books in French by Rena Leibowitz -‘*Introduction a la Musique de Douze Sons*’ and ‘*Schoenberg et Son École*’. Both books were very recent (1949) and were truly excellent, though laborious, in fact the ‘Introduction’ is quite a tough nut to crack. The greater part of the book is dedicated to a note-by-note analysis of each of the twelve movements of ‘Variations for Orchestra, Op.3l' and spares the reader no effort in the dense and repetitive script which occupies over a hundred pages. Unfortunately, I read this first, and got indigestion. The other book is much more readable, and more informative about Berg and Webern, as well as giving a less obscure picture of Schoenberg’s works. By the time I had finished these books I knew all I needed to know about serialism, except for the most vital fact - that no system or technique can in itself produce musicality, much less the work of genius. Unfortunately, Leibowitz forgot to mention this.

However, I soon had proof for myself. Having been seduced most by Webern’s intellectualisms, which have quite an appeal in that once a certain systematic pattern or plan is created, the rest of the music can follow almost automatically, I fell for such an ingenious concept, and wrote an extended piece for organ. When I tried it out on the organ in the Anglican church, the result was brutal in the extreme. Horrific. This puzzled me enormously, so I rang my friend Alvaro Company, who I thought may have some ideas. He put his finger on my error immediately, pointing out that it is not the system which creates beauty, indeed on its own it may only produce ugliness. Instead, beauty can only come from within ourselves, indeed what I had long looked for - the fount of inspiration and creativity -can be discovered nowhere but in our own minds. There may be many stimulants -other works of art, or other pieces of music - but the real source is only in ourselves. Later on, it seemed so obvious and simple, but at that time, to me it was still obscure.

That summer, I not only read the Leibowitz books, but bought the score of Dallapiccola’s ‘*Il Prigioniero*’, and examined the work in detail from end to end. I found a very different brand of serialism than that described by Leibowitz. The music had a more conventional look, with a smooth and refined harmony which appealed to me very much. Though it had the total-chromaticism of serialism, the harmony was without the brutism which was all-too-common with the Schoenberg School. The actual musical styles in the opera were quite varied, ranging over Italian music since medieval times. Some voice solos seemed to derive from Gregorian chant, choral pieces from renaissance polyphony, while most of the atmosphere was very much in the ‘verismo’ manner. In fact, the opening orchestral flourish was very similar to the first bars of *La Bohème*. Altogether, I was much more favourably impressed by Dallapiccola’s opera, than with anything I had found in the Leibowitz books, and I was looking forward to learning a lot from him.

Unfortunately, I was to be disappointed. Perhaps it was my fault. I should have done nothing but ask questions, delve into whatever I thought he could clarify, and demand precise answers. Instead I left him to lead the way, and we got lost. (Dallapiccola is said by some to be an excellent teacher, but even though eventually we became firm friends, I could seldom get a grasp of precise, decisive information, or guess at a well-defined method in his teaching. I doubt if he was an organised teacher at all.) However, it takes time to discover in which direction things are going.

Dallapiccola disliked frequent lessons at fixed intervals. He preferred to see me only when I had prepared something substantial, so every few weeks I would see him once I had completed a fairly large work. The result was catastrophic. Instead of assessing the significance of the complete work before examining small details - as should be done in evaluating any work of art - his attention would fix on some minor point, and from that moment any hope of him giving a constructive criticism of my work as a whole was lost. He had an infuriating habit which used to annoy me no end. He would open my score, and after a brief period, fix his attention on a few notes, or a bar or two. Then he would go to his music cupboard and after much searching, find a score which he then put on the piano and played. He never explained why he played it at all. The exact relevance of this escaped me, until one day I was so dissatisfied that I asked what he wanted to illustrate. The answer was involved, but not at all clear. I can only assume that the music I had written was probably similar in some way to that which he played on the piano, but it is difficult to see how this could help me in any way, except to show how somebody else had already done the same thing, but much better. I found it all frustrating and discouraging. It would seem that, yet again, I was getting nowhere pretty fast.

The truth is, Dallapiccola became over-involved with unimportant details, tending to draw conclusions from small matters without assessing the nature or value of the whole composition. Also, his teaching lacked organization, for we always seemed to follow, almost at a hazard, a confused path without establishing any specific goals at which to aim. This was unfortunate, for Dallapiccola could have taught me a lot, but as the months went by, I increasingly felt a lack of accomplishment, and so gradually ceased my lessons altogether. Instead, Dallapiccola’s own scores taught me far more than he did himself. Which shows that self-tuition is better teaching than any other.

However, I think there was a special personal reason why Dallapiccola could not help me at that time. He had reached a crisis point himself, which he must have been struggling to resolve. His early works in the serial technique had been conceived in what he thought to be the serial ‘method’ of Schoenberg, but in reality were far from being true to the ‘correct’ style. (Nevertheless, to me, these have been his most valid, original and inspired pieces.) It was only in the ‘fifties, when Webern’s scores at last became posthumously available, that Dallapiccola could see how far he was from what was then regarded as the paragon of serialism. He could at last see that compared with the intellectual perfection of Webern’s highly sculptured rationalizations, his own work had been conceived in a much less formal way - spontaneously, freely, and with loose, informal constructions. Probably this must have been quite a shock to Dallapiccola, who, if nothing else, regarded himself as an intellectual of no mean order.

From that point, (probably just when we were meeting), he abandoned his own original style, and searched to incorporate Webern’s constructivisms into his own idiom. This meant a radical change, giving up the free, lyrical flow of his previous music, and constructing with the rigid cell structures of the Webern manner. He must have suffered agonies of indecision before rejecting many composing methods which had stood him in good stead until then, and it is my belief that from then on, his music suffered accordingly.

However, it must have been that the new rationalization suited his highly intellectual attitudes and gave him satisfaction, though I sometimes wondered if these were only a facade to hide some sense of inferiority. He tended to talk in the high manner of a German philosopher, labouring obscure teutonic concepts which were beyond the comprehension of my humble mentality. Or he would delve into the Classics, throwing out abundant quotations in classical Greek. I was stricken speechless. Was this meant as normal conversation, or was its real purpose only to astonish me with his erudition? If so, why did he feel the need to impress me?

Whatever the reason, as a way of teaching, it was highly counterproductive, for good teaching should throw light on darkness, and make the most obscure ideas become lucidly clear. That is good teaching, not Germanic philosophising and Greek mystification. Perhaps after all, the best thing Dallapiccola gave me was a strong aversion for obscurity, and a compelling desire for illuminating clarity.

Looking back, what had my composition teachers taught me? In the end, they seemed to have been largely unprofitable, disorganised, even befuddling. Worse still - a grievous waste of time. Self-tuition, with an understanding, guiding hand, would have been far more efficient and profitable. Perhaps, in the end, my somewhat negative experiences did serve a good purpose. They must have helped me improve my own teaching when the time came for that.

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In later years, my relationship with Dallapiccola improved enormously, though he was always a bit enigmatic to me. Perhaps it was his origins. His father was a school headmaster in an Austrian-ruled province. His family experienced the humiliation and suffering of deportation to Graz in Austria during the First World War. When he came to Florence, he married a jewess, and in the German occupation of 1943-5, even though Italians were favourable to jews, he must have lived in fear for his wife. All this is shown in his use of imprisonment and liberation as the main themes in his music.

In summer we both spent the August holidays at Vittoria Apuana, almost next door to each other. This meant I may have to stumble into a high-powered conversation at any moment. In Florence, I used to walk him home from the Conservatory, all the way up Via Bolognese, because I knew he liked to be able to talk. I said very little. Most of what he said was polemic, but I learned to say little and be a good listener. I was very careful not to set him on fire by using careless words like ‘Stravinsky’ and ‘John Cage’. I used to wonder if he thought me a bit dumb, so I was surprised to find that when the editor of "La Rassegna Musicale’ (the most important musical quarterly in Italy) wished to publish a special essay for Dallapiccola’s sixtieth birthday (1964) he asked me to write it, saying the composer himself had put forward my name. This happened again on other occasions, so I was content that he thought me not so dumb after all.

Occasionally, he came out to supper when my friends and I went out to eat an evening meal in the country. He even brought Laura, his wife, but I was never comfortable with her, for she never seemed to be able to unbend and relax. I never heard the maestro tell a joke, or express a crudity, so I was most surprised to get a letter from him years later (1964) about a concert performance in Florence of a piece of Morton Feldman, in which he revealed that he did have a sense both of refined humour and Tuscan rough humour. It is worth translating word for word, though I should explain that the piece referred to, ‘*Durations’* (for ‘cello and piano), has very few notes indeed, and a very abundant amount of silence:

‘Now during the piece of Feldman, that is, while poor Gomez scraped a string of his ‘cello with his bow, and while his wife, with her bottom in the air, searched inside the piano to pluck the strings, one of the audience had a violent fit of laughter. A fit he couldn’t control. For a while he tried to hold it in by stuffing a handkerchief in his mouth; but in the end the strain was excessive, and relieved only by a yielding of the anal sphincter. The fact is, in public, he let go a resounding passage of wind (recorded with the music on the electromagnetic tape). So this is where we have got to: after a season of concerts, that which is most talked about is a fart.’....

When, in 1978, the Italian Embassy in London arranged a Memorial Exhibition: ‘***Luigi Dallapiccola: The Man and his Music***’, I was asked to send a letter for exhibition, so I could not resist sending the above, especially because it must be almost unique in his writings and reveals a human side to his character which we never suspected. However, it must have been too strong for the organizers. They exhibited only what he had written on the reverse, which was a largely incomprehensible reference to what Thibaudet reported about a remark of Mallarmé - nothing of personal or musical significance at all, and telling us nothing of Dallapiccola’s particular sense of humour.