
Obituary

On 2 August 1995 the composer Irwin Bazelon died at the Lenox Hill Hospital, Manhattan. He was aged 73, and had just undergone an attempted multiple by-pass operation.

Known to his intimates as 'Bud' or 'Buddy', he was born in Chicago in 1922, the son of a salesman, and grew up there during the Depression. He developed a keen interest in jazz, and began his musical life as a jazz pianist and songwriter for Chicago jazz bands. During his teens, however, he heard his first classical concert, and decided there and then that he was going to compose. He studied composition at De Paul University, gaining his Master's Degree there. He then studied with Hindemith, though it was not a successful relationship, and subsequently with Darius Milhaud. He spent six years working as a railway booking clerk, until he finally began to make a living writing advertising jingles, and eventually found work with a cartoon animation studio. From that time onwards until the 1970s he made a good living from film music, on which he also wrote *Knowing the Score*, which many authorities, including Richard Rodney Bennett, regard as the best book yet written on film music.

From the 1970s onwards he wrote almost nothing except serious concert music. He employed an eclectic style, embracing serial technique and strong jazz influences; but throughout his career his music was accessible and agreeable even to diffident ears. He composed over 60 orchestral, chamber and instrumental pieces, including symphonies – like so many composers, he completed the fateful number of

nine, and was working on his tenth at his death. He was a passionate lover of horse racing, and wrote a piece in celebration of Churchill Downs, the racecourse where the Kentucky Derby is run, and he subtitled his Ninth Symphony 'Sunday Silence', after a famous American racehorse. Only a few weeks before his death he came to Britain to oversee the recording of that work, and the Seventh symphony, with the Bournemouth SO. The CD is available on the Albany label.

I met him once, only a few months before he died, and formed an impression of a lively, vigorous man, who seemed much bigger than his physical self. He looked, I decided delightedly, rather like Beethoven and rather more like Ernest Borgnine; with a liking for bright-coloured tracksuits and baseball caps, effusive and full-blooded in his enthusiasms, demonstrative and emphatic in his opinions, but, beneath that, a gentle, sensitive and deeply serious man – generous, affectionate and thoughtful. There was not an ounce of spite or malice in him: he was notably reluctant to say anything but good about anyone if he could help it. Not many people knew that he used to work seated on a soft cushion knitted for him by his friend Richard Rodney Bennett, bearing the legend 'Buddy's Composing Cushion', and somehow that seems to me to sum up the essence of the man: human, warm and full of fun; he was what in Norfolk, where I used to live, they call 'real'. He leaves a widow, the artist Cecile Gray Bazelon. He will be greatly missed.

Mike Seabrook

Letters to the Editor

From Robin Freeman

With further reference to the origins of the concerto for orchestra (*Tempo* 194), Viktor Ullmann also wrote one in 1929, which William Steinberg conducted. Petrassi was more likely to have known it than Holmboe's. But Petrassi's decision to spin out his symphonic life's work in

a series of orchestral concertos was primarily a composer's brainstorm. Behind it, though, lies a complex of influences and strategies that help make it the right one. Hindemith and his own Concerto for Orchestra surely come into the picture – there is a largely unpublished correspondence between the two men dating from the 1930s, while the resemblance of certain pages