Contact: A Journal for Contemporary Music (1971-1988)

http://contactjournal.gold.ac.uk

Citation

Barrett, Nick et al., eds. 1981. *Contact*, 22. ISSN 0308-5066.

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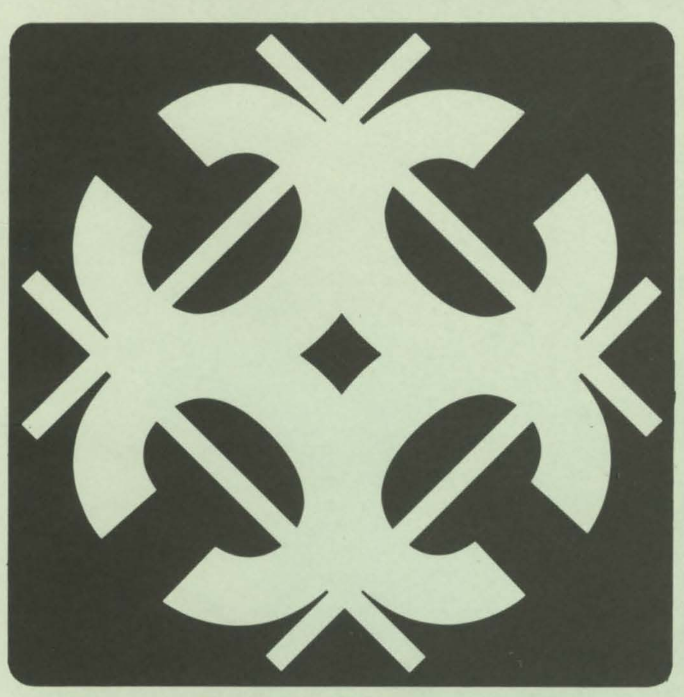
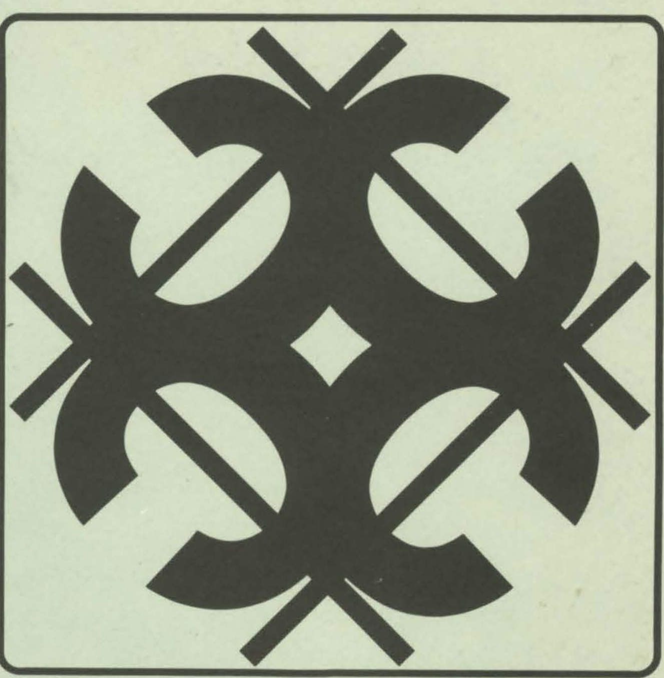
Today's Music

No 22
Summer 1981 £1/$3





English experimental music 2:
Gavin Bryars
John Tilbury

Reviews & Reports
New Music Diary

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Contact is printed by K. P.. & D. Ltd., Metrohouse, Third Way, Wembley, Middlesex; tel: 01-903 4331/2

CONTACT
SUMMER 1981

Edited by Nick Barrett, Hilary Bracefield, Keith Potter, David Roberts, Rosemary Roberts

ENGLISH EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC 2

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EDITORIAL ADDRESS for all contributions, material for review, etc.: Keith Potter, Department of Music, University of London Goldsmiths' College, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, England.

DISTRIBUTOR'S ADDRESS for subscriptions and back numbers: Philip Martin Music Books, 22 Huntington Road, York YO3 7RL, England.

ADVERTISING & BUSINESS ADDRESS: Mrs Hilary Bracefield, Department of Music, The Ulster Polytechnic, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT37 0QB, Northern Ireland.

Contact is published by the editors of the magazine, who gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Arts Council of Great Britain.

© 1981 THE EDITORS, CONTACT MAGAZINE ISSN 0308-5066

KEITH POTTER

Just the Tip of the Iceberg: Some Aspects of Gavin Bryars' Music

WHEN MICHAEL NYMAN called him 'the most independent and original experimental composer in England' in 1972,[1] Gavin Bryars did seem to be on the crest of a wave. This judgement was made in an article that previewed a concert on December 11 that year in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, consisting of three of his works – *The Sinking of the Titanic* (a 'work in progress' begun in 1969), *The Squirrel and the Ricketty Racketty Bridge* (1971) and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (1971) – and an appearance by the Portsmouth Sinfonia which Bryars founded.

Not only was that concert an unusually large-scale public statement for an English experimental composer to make, but it came at a time when English experimental music appeared to be undergoing a crisis – a crisis that, for example, had caused its generally acknowledged guiding spirit Cornelius Cardew practically to stop composing for a while. This apparently abrupt change of gear and the need for the composers concerned to question their whole musical aesthetic in the light of the political issues raised in the Scratch Orchestra is documented elsewhere in this issue by John Tilbury.[2] Bryars' concert, despite the fact that the pieces in it had actually been conceived during the heyday of English experimental music around 1970, must have seemed to some at the time quite anachronistic. Indeed, to regard it as a contemporary 'statement' is possibly quite misleading, since Bryars had himself almost stopped composing by the end of 1971 and was entering a period of crisis at exactly the same time as many of his fellow experimentalists: a crisis occasioned by the awakening of a political consciousness and the resulting desire of some of the composers to 'turn their abilities, including the style they've mastered, and use them in support of it'.[3] Yet there is at least one very important difference between Bryars and most of the others: he was not at any stage a member of the Scratch Orchestra.

The years 1972 and 1973 were undoubtedly crucial in the development of English experimental music. The Scratch Orchestra, founded in 1969 by Cardew with Michael Parsons and Howard Skempton, survived for a while under the banner of 'Scratch Orchestra Ideological Group' but finally disbanded altogether. Some composers followed Cardew in attempting to compose an overtly political music to accord with their new Marxist-Leninist or other related left-wing political beliefs; others, some of whom shared those beliefs, stopped composing, and often all other musical and related activites. Some carried on the composition and performance of an experimental music based on what they had been doing before, but it could clearly not be the same. The year 1973 was considered by some at the time to have been particularly barren; though Christopher Hobbs and John White were working regularly as a duo after the break-up of the quartet called the Promenade Theatre Orchestra, and though there were brief moments of solidarity among the 'non-political' composers (such as the Purcell Room concert on January 4, 1974 in which Parsons and Skempton, Hobbs and White took part),[4] much of the activity there was seemed to take place in isolation. There was little sense of a movement such as had existed strongly only a couple of years before. The summer of 1974 saw the publication of Nyman's book,[5] which included an account of English experimental music – more strictly, of some of the experimental activities in London – up to 1973. This seemed to its author and others, I think, to mark the end of an era and even the end of the use of the term 'experimental' as a vital and meaningful force.

Bryars' activities up to the end of 1972 have been fairly well documented, probably rather better than those of many of his experimental colleagues.[6] It is therefore my intention here to add to this material and avoid duplicating it, though I shall not attempt a comprehensive coverage of his output since the early 1970s. Rather I hope to shed light on the nature of his sharing in the crisis of this period, and to examine a variety of pieces, tracing a number of ideas to their sources, both musical and extra-musical. I contend that Bryars *remains* 'the most independent and original experimental composer in England', and in trying to demonstrate the nature of that independence and originality I hope also to suggest that the term 'experimental' still has meaning and validity today, even if, quite naturally, it means something a little different from what it did ten years ago.

Bryars was born on January 16, 1943 in Goole, Yorkshire. Interested in music from an early age, he nevertheless read philosophy, not music, at Sheffield University (1961–64), though he also studied composition with two Yorkshire composers, Cyril Ramsey and George Linstead. Bryars was a double bass player, and much of his early involvement with music came through playing jazz and popular music; for example, for 18 months from January 1965 he played in a working men's club in Greaseborough, Yorkshire. In 1963 he met fellow Yorkshire jazz musicians Derek Bailey and Tony Oxley. This was the period when they were moving away from their jazz roots towards the free improvisation for which they are now known. A free improvisation group was formed (which must have been among the first, if it was not the first, of such groups in this country), called Joseph Holbrooke after the composer (1878–1958, known today, if at all, as 'the Cockney Wagner').[7] The name was Bryars' suggestion and represents one of the earliest examples of his involvement with what, in another context, has been called the 'apparently disparate collection of composers

[1] 'As the Titanic went down', *Music and Musicians*, vol. 21, no. 4 (December 1972), p. 10.

[2] For a further account of this political approach to music see Cornelius Cardew, *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism* (London: Latimer New Directions, 1974) which includes contributions from Tilbury.

[3] Cornelius Cardew in an interview with Keith Potter, 'Some Aspects of a Political Attitude', *Contact 10* (Winter 1974-75), p. 23.

[4] For an attempt to define 'experimental music' in the climate of that concert see 'Some Aspects of an Experimental Attitude', an interview with Michael Parsons by Keith Potter, *Contact 8* (Spring 1974), pp. 20-25; see also the articles on John White and Howard Skempton in *Contact 21* (Autumn 1980).

[5] *Experimental Music: Cage and beyond* (London: Studio Vista, 1974).

[6] In addition to Nyman's article and book and other references below see Martin Dreyer, 'Yorkshire Composers 5: Gavin Bryars – Experimental Musician', *The Month in Yorkshire*, vol. 9, no. 10 (Summer 1979), p. 12. There is a short and uninformative entry on Bryars in *The New Grove*.

[7] The name given to him by Hannen Swaffer.

from the world of "alternative" musical history'.[8] The group, though, had almost nothing to do with Holbrooke's music.

Bryars' improvising activities at this stage find a parallel in Cardew's work with the free improvisation group AMM in the mid-60s and later. But Bryars became disillusioned with improvisation fairly quickly. His principal criticism of it continues to be what he calls its 'indulgence': 'There seemed to be nothing that was going to be produced by improvisation that was going to go beyond what the person was capable of thinking up in the moment . . . a repertoire of tricks.'[9] His development towards a distancing of creator from thing created, a fundamental characteristic of experimental music from Cage on, may also be seen in the following quotation which represents Bryars' position at the time he gave up improvisation in 1966:

> One of the main reasons I am against improvisation now is that in any improvising position the person creating the music is identified with the music. The two things are seen to be synonymous. The creator is there making the music and is identified with the music and the music with the person. It's like standing a painter next to his picture so that every time you see the painting you see the painter as well and you can't see it without him. And because of that the music, in improvisation, doesn't stand alone. It's corporeal. My position, through the study of Zen and Cage, is to stand apart from one's creation . . . They are conceptions. I'm more interested in conception than reality.[10]

In 1966 he stopped all regular playing and moved to Northampton to teach music at the technical college. Giving that up after a year, he went at the end of 1967 to America for six months, going out to the University of Illinois at the invitation of Powell Shepherd, an American dancer whom he had met while playing for some dance classes in London during his time at Northampton. His activities were already tending strongly in an experimental direction, and his stay at Illinois coincided with Cage's residency there.[11] On his return to England in 1968 he became part of the fast developing London experimental scene and worked regularly with the pianist John Tilbury for about a year and a half.

Typical of Bryars' approach at this time are the several versions he made in 1968 and 1969 of Stockhausen's *Plus-Minus* (1963) and a piece of his own called *Private Music* (1969). The notation of *Plus-Minus*, in which all content and several aspects of form are left to the player, leaves the way open to distinctively experimental approaches as well as the more avantgarde realisations sanctioned by the Master himself. In Bryars' versions something of the zany qualities of the Fluxus movement with which he became familiar in America (and which was also an important influence on the Scratch Orchestra) seem to be combined with the related concern for simple, sometimes apparently naive, tonal statement, often through the use of familiar classical or popular material (the starting-point for the Portsmouth Sinfonia). Both these are aspects that recur regularly in his later work. One of his versions of *Plus-Minus* incorporates a collage of the slow movement of Schubert's C major String Quintet and Barry Ryan's pop song *Eloise*:

> The result was quite ravishing – the sheer sensuality of the sound of each was enhanced by the other. In this respect things have changed radically over the last five years. Previously our attitude had been quite ascetic, in fact we had a horror of any kind of indulgence and it was felt necessary to destroy 'beauty' whenever it occurred. It was La-Monte Young and his music that helped to bring about the present situation.[12]

The 'indulgence' that Tilbury here accepts as a valuable and important part of an experimental attitude in the late 60s is of a very different kind from the one that Bryars has condemned as inevitable in improvisation. The 'cult of the beautiful' which Nyman identified as an element in English experimental music from around 1969 or 1970[13] may have stemmed from the American process composers and from Young in particular. But the re-acceptance of tonality, or at least of a high degree of consonance, in radical music started with Cage, who let 'sounds be just sounds', and if they were 'folk tunes, unresolved ninth chords, or knives and forks' allowed them to be 'just folk tunes, unresolved ninth chords, or knives and forks'.[14]

It is perhaps this more easy-going treatment of materials that is ultimately of greater importance to English experimental composers. Nyman points out that 'unlike the Americans . . . English composers have tended to use as their source material the music of Western classical composers. And as regards method, while the Americans have evolved highly controlled systems, English composers have tended to adopt less restricted processes.'[15] White's list of influences from the 'apparently disparate collection of composers from the world of "alternative" musical history' is an obvious instance. An openness to sentimentality is another important aspect of this very English realisation of *Plus-Minus*; Bryars was later to demonstrate his closeness to White when he used his elder colleague's dictum 'System and Sentimentality are the SS of my Reich'[16] (all puns presumably intended) as the starting-point for his piece *White's SS* (1977).

Surprising and subversive, ravishing and sentimental though it may be, Bryars' realisation of *Plus-Minus* nevertheless demonstrates the importance for him of following a clear and logical line of procedure. The rules of the composition appear to have been observed to the letter; there is a reason for everything, everything 'fits'. The importance of this will soon become apparent.

Private Music (1969) is similar to Stockhausen's piece in that it sets up a scheme for the player to work to, a system if you like, but does not give any precise indication of content. (The entire score is reproduced in Example 1.) But the aspect of the piece to which I want to draw attention is its very 'privacy'. The sound sources should be such that probably only the player can hear them. What the audience sees or hears will probably be the by-products of the performer's attempts to follow the score's instructions.

Three points emerge. The first is that this is a good example of Bryars' interest in conception rather than perception ('I'm more interested in conception than in reality.'). He has said that his compositions of this period 'have tended towards perceptual incompleteness, towards excess (of duration, number, ratio of effect to cause, of visual to aural), towards caprice, towards an interest in titles as well as pieces.'[17] His whole input in the composition of *Private Music* has been on the conceptual level: the idea *is*, in an important sense, the piece; few hints

[8] A quotation from Dave Smith, 'The Piano Sonatas of John White', *Contact 21*, p. 6.

[9] This and all following quotations not individually acknowledged are taken from conversations between Bryars and the author during December 1979 to February 1980.

[10] From 'Objections', an interview with Bryars by Derek Bailey, in Bailey's *Improvisation: its Nature and Practice in Music* (Ashbourne: Moorland Publishing, 1980), pp. 135-136. This interview gives an account of the circumstances in which Bryars abandoned improvisation and his reasons for doing so. (See Howard Riley's review of the book in this issue.)

[11] For some of the information contained in this paragraph and for one or two later biographical details I am indebted to Martin Dreyer who made available to me the full transcript of his interview with Bryars in June 1979 that formed the basis for the article mentioned in footnote 6.

[12] John Tilbury quoted in Nyman, *Experimental Music*, p. 135.

[13] Nyman, *Experimental Music*, p. 135.

[14] John Cage, 'Erik Satie', *Silence* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 81.

[15] Nyman, *Experimental Music*. pp. 135-136.

[16] Quoted in Michael Nyman, 'Believe it or not melody rides again', *Music and Musicians*, vol. 20, no. 2 (October 1971), p.28.

[17] Quoted in Nyman, *Experimental Music*, p. 80.

Example 1

PRIVATE MUSIC

For any number of performers
lasting as long as the source material.

Any kinds and numbers of private sources:
earphones, headphones, viewers, scents, feelies, food, drink, telephones etc.

Alternatives:
join in with the private source (not theatrically, but humming along, identifying, guessing).

Talk to the other performers or to yourself.

Simply keep your privacy private depriving others of the possibility of your privacy.

'The Sybil with raving mouth utters solemn unadorned unlovely words, but she reaches out over a thousand years with her voice because of the god in her.'
(Heraclitus: fragment 79)

Additional inputs:
telepathy, spirtualism (if the performer is a medium), all sensory inputs are available for use providing that their monitoring (expression) is voluntary.

Private Music **is essentially a solo performance, or parallel solos in simultaneous performance: for private group pieces, see** *Serenely Beaming and Leaning on a Five-barred Gate* **and** *1-2-3-4.*

Private Music **may be performed simultaneously with** *Marvellous Aphorisms Are Scattered Richly Throughout These Pages* **(solo performer).**

●●●

are given in the score as to how it may be realised. Any realisation will not merely be only one, inevitably partial, way of turning concept into percept (just as a performance of Beethoven's Fifth will only reveal some aspects of the conceptual whole that is the Work); a performance of *Private Music* will focus attention on the fact that the piece is about the fact that 'the piece is not for hearing'.

The second point is that Bryars seems to wish the privacy of the piece to extend to a hiding of the 'system' itself. This is in some ways most uncharacteristic of an experimental attitude. There is, admittedly, a good deal of secrecy surrounding Cage's chance operations; but Steve Reich's systems of phasing, etc. are designed to be audible, and his philosophy of composition is directed towards the perception of process, towards breaking down the barriers between system and sound, structure and hearing, concept and percept: 'What I'm interested in is a compositional process and a sounding music that are one and the same thing... I don't know any secrets of structure that you can't hear.'[18] On one occasion Reich asked Bryars just what he was trying to hide. Bryars' answer is interesting: 'I said that by retaining a certain privacy within the piece, a certain kind of hidden area where everything isn't revealed . . . you're not laying all your cards on the table. If someone wants to find out what your cards are they've got to look very closely.'[19]

Bryars' attitude to composition is thus very different not only from Reich's but from the 'usual' one. Like Cage with his use of chance, Bryars indulges in secret operations, but unlike Cage starts only with observations on the particular phenomenon that is to be the basis of the piece. That these secret operations are present will be obvious to any listener, and their detail can be ferreted out by anyone who takes the trouble. For *Private Music* anyway there is no other pre-compositional information, secret or otherwise. The difference between Cage and Bryars can be summed up: Cage's secrecy is a by-product of his compositional method, the details of which are undetectable by the listener but also largely irrelevant to him; Bryars' is an integral part of his compositional results and can be penetrated to the depth that the listener wishes to go.

[18] Steve Reich, 'Music as a Gradual Process', *Writings about Music* (Halifax, N.S.: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974; distributed by Universal Edition), p. 10.

[19] From an interview with Bryars by Andrew Thomson on April 1, 1980, and quoted in Thomson's *Music of Association – Mr Gavin Bryars and 'Irma': an Opera Op. XII by Mr Thos. Phillips* (dissertation, Keele University, 1980), p. 12. I am grateful to both composer and author for making a copy available to me.

Example 2

MARVELLOUS APHORISMS ARE SCATTERED RICHLY THROUGHOUT THESE PAGES

Any number and kinds of quiet sound sources

Concealed inside clothing in such a way that their activation and

manipulation is outside public view.

Inside shoes, hats, coats, trousers.

Bulky maybe, but quietly buzzing.

A bottomless mine of useless information.

First it was like Harpo Marx.

John saw it like an old man on a park bench.

I saw it like a prince among poets, constantly seeking out marvellous aphorisms.

●●●

The third point about *Private Music* concerns the observation I made earlier: few hints are given as to how the piece may be realised. To see how Bryars himself might make a version, we can turn to three pieces all of which seem to be realisations of the initial idea. *Serenely Beaming and Leaning on a Five-barred Gate* (1969) sets up a 'reducing network' of microphones, headphones and tape recorders for the transmission of two-channel tapes of spoken verse by Patience Strong. The effect is somewhat akin to that achieved in the party game in which a sentence is whispered from person to person, usually becoming hopelessly distorted in the process; here, though, listening and repetition are required to be simultaneous and Bryars asks for selective listening – just to high or to low sounds, for example. The piece may be done using 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 or 64 tape recorders; 64 would require 127 performers. *1, 2, 1-2-3-4* (1971) works on a similar principle, each performer having his own cassette tape recorder to which he listens using headphones; each has either a different or the same tape of 'familiar music' and is asked to reproduce what he can of the part for his own instrument. *Marvellous Aphorisms are Scattered Richly Throughout These Pages* (1971) is reproduced as Example 2 and is self-explanatory.

Despite his involvement with Tilbury (a regular and highly influential member of the Scratch Orchestra in both its pre-political and political years) and despite the similarity of many of the pieces he wrote between 1968 and 1971 to the kind of things the Scratch Orchestra was doing, Bryars never joined the group, which during its brief existence was the uniting and driving force behind English experimental music. One reason was simple and purely practical. In January 1969 Bryars took a part-time teaching job at Portsmouth School of Art (now part of Portsmouth Polytechnic), which became full-time for a year from that autumn. (The Scratch Orchestra's manifesto was published in June 1969[20] and its activities started shortly afterwards.) Following this year and a half of teaching music to fine-art students, he transferred in 1970 to Leicester, where he has taught ever since: he is now head of music at Leicester Polytechnic. Hence teaching outside the metropolis has prevented his regular involvement with a London-based group. This geographical isolation should not be overplayed, for throughout this period Bryars maintained his links with London by keeping a flat in Ladbroke Grove, which in 1972 became the centre for the Experimental Music Catalogue. Hobbs began the Catalogue in 1969, and was joined by Bryars and Nyman three years later; from then on, Bryars and his wife Angela did most of the work on the collecting, editing, anthologising, advertising and selling of scores.[21]

Bryars' early period of close contact with art students, professional artists and art historians contributed to the

[20] Cornelius Cardew, 'A Scratch Orchestra: Draft Constitution', *The Musical Times,* vol. 110, no. 1516 (June 1969), pp. 617-619.

[21] The EMC is currently in something of a dormant stage, but some of the material it made available in its early years is still obtainable, including quite a number of early pieces by Bryars. The full address is 208 Ladbroke Grove, London W10.

attitudes and involvements that constituted his experimental approach to the writing of music. It could in some respects be said to have been more important for him than for any other English experimental musician. A composer whose ideas stood little chance of being taken seriously in the professional musical world needed a sympathetic environment; some found it in the Scratch Orchestra, but Bryars found it in the art schools. At Portsmouth there was a genuine interest in the music he had recently been writing. Much of it was nearer to what is now called performance art than to traditional music making; it could often be performed quite successfully by students with little or no musical training. In terms of sheer numbers of pieces, the years 1968-71 are Bryars' most prolific; many have been collected in the EMC's *Verbal* and *Visual Anthologies*.

Other English experimental composers also took advantage of the liberal arts and complementary studies options that were still burgeoning in the art schools at the end of the educational expansion of the 60s. Parsons, for example, took over Bryars' Portsmouth job in 1970 and still teaches there. His involvement with the English systems artist Jeffrey Steele and others stems directly from contact with some of them at Portsmouth.[22]

In May 1970 Bryars founded the Portsmouth Sinfonia. Consisting at first entirely of Portsmouth art students plus Bryars, the orchestra's approach encapsulated many of his current concerns, including the use of classical music in an experimental context and working with amateur or non-musicians (both these were also concerns of the Scratch Orchestra). Nyman provides a useful summary of the Portsmouth Sinfonia's activities,[23] making reference to Skempton's term 'uncontrolled variables' - an important experimental concept:

> The uncontrollable factor arises out of the variable abilities of the members. Some are untrained and others less musically innocent may not be specially expert on their instruments. As with so much experimental music one hears a wide discrepancy between intention and effect. The intention is to play the notes, carefully, as written, even though some members can't read music and may not be too good at playing by ear. What results through the players' incompetence, is somewhat at variance with the letter of the music, and uncontrollably hilarious. What one hears at a Sinfonia concert is familiar music, seriously dislocated (to a greater or lesser extent). The originals may be recognised only by their rhythmic content or there may occasionally be more than a whiff of familiarity about a tune. Rhythm in the Sinfonia is something not to be relied upon; most players get lost, are not sufficiently in control of their instruments to keep up the pace, may suddenly telescope half a dozen bars into one, or lose their place. Pitch too is a very volatile element; as some players will most probably, if unintentionally, be playing wrong notes, the vertical combination will be unpredictable (one person *may* get the tune absolutely right for a few bars); rather, pitch *shape* and melodic contour may be preserved.[24]

At the same time, paradoxically, the crisis that occurred in Bryars' compositional development arose directly from working in an art school environment. The start of his period of teaching at Leicester brought about a rationalisation, a codification, and a considerable extension of his ideas, especially about his relationship with the arts in the widest sense: literature and philosophy as well as the plastic arts. This seems to have confirmed the relevance of some aspects of what he had been doing 'naively' before, but also raised doubts about whether his already established methods of working could form the basis of what he did next.

The widening, sharpening and focusing of Bryars' ideas through contact with the other arts can be seen as ultimately more important to his development than the critical dialectic of politics with which so many of his former colleagues became involved at the same period; he had little to do with the 'politicisation' they underwent. These two seemingly opposing modes of proceeding may be taken as two sides of the same coin, the currency of which has to do with some kind of reformation or reformulation of the whole notion of experimentalism in music, indeed in the arts generally. There must, after all, be *some* common ground in the rejection of experimental music as she had so far been practised; a rejection made at the same time by a group of people who were, in spite of a certain isolation, still very much in touch. Perhaps the dialectic between the two modes of proceeding can be carried on in the reader's mind in the light of the clear artistic–political–philosophical gap that exists between the content and argument of this article and that of John Tilbury.

To give a clearer picture of Bryars' preoccupations immediately before the 1972 concert I turn to one of the three pieces performed on that occasion; it is in some ways his best-known work, owing not least to its having been available for some time on record[25] and also, though admittedly more obscurely, in published form.[26]

The Sinking of the Titanic is an open-form work in progress begun in 1969. By the time of the 1972 premiere, the greater part of the work Bryars has done on it was already accomplished; the only published version remains more than adequate as the basis for the preparation of new realisations, even though he is still adding material as he finds it. The initial idea and much of the work thus predate the critical years of 1973 and 1974.

The *Titanic* is based on a detailed investigation into the loss off the coast of Newfoundland of the supposedly unsinkable ship of that name on its maiden voyage in April 1912. One of the 20th century's most famous disasters, it has captured the imaginations of many other artists including several composers.[27] In a programme note for an American performance in 1978, Bryars explained that 'The starting point for the piece was the report by Harold Bride, the junior wireless officer, of the band's behaviour and, from there, the various researches, interviews and reconstructions have provided a body of material out of which performances can be constructed.'

[22] For further on this see Michael Parsons, 'Systems in Art and Music', *The Musical Times*, vol. 117, no. 1604 (October 1976), pp. 815-818.

[23] The orchestra was very active in its early years and appeared on several records including *Hallelujah: The Portsmouth Sinfonia at the Royal Albert Hall* (Transatlantic TRA 285), a live recording of its concert on May 28, 1974. More recently the orchestra has resurfaced on television and elsewhere and there are projects for further recording. Bryars is still a member.

[24] Nyman, *Experimental Music*, p. 140.

[25] On the Obscure record label, OBS 1; *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* is also on this disc. *1, 2, 1-2-3-4* is on OBS 2, *The Squirrel and the Ricketty Racketty Bridge* on OBS 8 and Bryars' realisation of Tom Phillips's *Irma* on OBS 9. Originally marketed by Island Records, the ten discs on the label so far are now distributed by Polydor. In case of difficulty in obtaining them, write to Polydor Records Ltd., 17-19 Stratford Place, London W1N 0BL.

[26] In the American magazine *Soundings*, no. 9 (June 1975), unpaginated. This valuable issue also contains the scores of *The Ride Cymbal and the Band that Caused the Fire in the Sycamore Trees* (1969) and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet*, as well as a contribution by Nyman, 'Gavin Bryars 1971 Michael Nyman 1975'.

[27] George Antheil and Karg-Elert have both written pieces based on the sinking of the Titanic. Luciano Berio was attracted to the dramatic possibilities of the incident as early as 1957; though he never completed his original project, the story found its way into his *Opera* (1969-70) as one of the three main ideas behind the 'drama'. More recently the West German composer Wilhelm Dieter Siebert has written an opera called *The Loss of the Titanic* (premiered in Berlin in 1979) in which the opera house itself serves as the ship and the audience are among the passengers. More recently still the English composer George Nicholson's *The Convergence of the Twain* for chamber orchestra (1978) received its first performance; the title comes from a poem by Thomas Hardy about the sinking of the Titanic, and the poet's contrast of man's arrogance with the 'malevolent god' of nature is reflected in the two types of music on which Nicholson's work is based.

The score consists of elements besides musical notation. The bulk of it is made up of writings documenting, explaining and expanding the material that Bryars has painstakingly collected from newspaper clippings, interviews with survivors, etc. It also presents various hypotheses and conjectures concerning the events on the Titanic's voyage, and implicitly suggests ways in which this material may be used to make a performance. A representative sample page is given in Example 3.

Bryars investigates the story of the disaster as a whole, but selects in particular facts about the activities of the ship's band: the specifically musical situation of the incident. The documentation includes much information on the eight members of the band, the instruments they played and the music they performed. During the ship's last evening they played selections from Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffmann* and various ragtime numbers; the latter were apparently 'of incalculable help in maintaining morale'[28] after the ship had struck the iceberg. But the evidence crucial to Bryars' piece centres on the controversy surrounding what music was played last. There being insufficient lifeboats for all on board and the chances of survival seeming increasingly slim it appears that the entire band took the decision not to abandon ship but to continue playing, even as the ship went down.

Concluding a correspondence on the subject in *The Musical Times* which arose independently of Bryars, at the time of the QEH performance, the composer wrote as follows:

> Most evidence is in favour of the band's last tune being not *Nearer, my God, to Thee* (which they undoubtedly played at some stage) but an Episcopalian hymn tune *Autumn.* The most reliable witness on the subject of the ship's last moments is Harold Bride, the second wireless operator, one of the last survivors to leave the ship. In the *New York Times* of 19 April 1912 he recalled:
>
> > The way the band kept playing was a noble thing. I heard it first whilst still we were working wireless, when there was a ragtime tune for us, and the last I saw of the band, when I was floating out in the sea with my lifebelt on, it was still on deck playing *Autumn.* How they ever did it I cannot imagine. That and the way Phillips [first wireless officer] kept sending after the captain told him his life was his own, and to look out for himself, are two things that stand out in my mind over all the rest.
>
> As to the band's abilities and the use of parts in performance: the night of the disaster was Sunday, and that evening until after 10 p.m. there had been hymn-singing in the saloon, conducted by the Rev. Mr Carter accompanied at the piano by a young Scottish engineer. It is not unlikely that the two hymns were played then (ironically, *For those in peril on the sea* was played), and that the musicians could have been present. If there were parts, the night was exceptionally bright (and the electricity for the ship's own lighting lasted for a surprising length of time); there was also the Aurora Borealis, so the musicians could have read the parts – most cabaret musicians read music in far worse light conditions. Even if the parts were not there, there is no reason to think that the musicians could not play without music nor to suppose that the performance was perfectly harmonized.[29]

According to Bride's evidence, the piece the band played as the Titanic sank was the hymn tune *Autumn:* it is therefore given in Bryars' score as one of the basic materials for a performance. But evidence from other sources suggests that the last item played was another hymn tune with a confusingly similar name, *Aughton;* there is even a suggestion that it was not a hymn tune at all but Cécile Chaminade's *Autumn.* Confusion, not only of musical memory but of the names of the possible pieces thus characterises the evidence. Though the words set to *Aughton* in the *American Episcopal Hymnal* are appropriate to the situation,[30] there is no conclusive proof that it was played; but it could have been, and so it too is given in the score. Presumably the Chaminade could feature in a realisation too.

The question of evidence – the hard facts of what took place, in so far as they can be ascertained – is a crucial one for Bryars' work. The process of gathering it and using it in the way he does may seem an unusual method of going about putting together a piece of music, but it should now be obvious that the *Titanic*'s experimental qualities stem naturally from his previous preoccupations. Having made every attempt to base the piece on fact he takes matters further: not from fact to fiction exactly, but at least from thesis to hypothesis. For Bryars' *Titanic* is not merely a musical documentary or play with music. The question of supplying missing facts that have gone down with the ship is also taken into consideration, and in peculiar and original ways.

Again the musical situation is central. Here it is not a question of the general (the whole story of the voyage) leading to the specific (the story of the band), rather it is one of the specific ('the purely musical, acoustic consequences of the performance situation in which this extraordinary music-making took place')[31] leading to the general (the ways in which considerations of musical perception force the piece logically but relentlessly on to the rocks of the conceptual). Bryars asks what would have happened to the music the band was playing and builds this logical hypothesis into the piece. There is no evidence to suggest that the musicians actually stopped playing as the ship went down. Logically therefore, the piece must be concerned with 'what would have happened if they had still been playing – how would the piece have sounded, *granted that it is impossible that they still could be playing*'.[32] Note the passage in (my) italics. In the light of other pieces that he had written before the *Titanic* (particularly the 'versions' of *Private Music*), it is only a short step to thinking that 'it doesn't really seem an unreasonable hypothesis to assume impossible conditions'.[33] Even the most impossible of Bryars' hypotheses – that the sounds of the band never ceased – turns out to have some basis in scientific theory:

> After the development of wireless telegraphy, Marconi had suggested that sounds once generated never die, and hence music, once played, simply gets fainter (as does any sound on this account). Indeed, it is retained more effectively in the more sound-efficient medium of water and is partly sealed in by the 'ceiling' effect of the coincidence of air and water.[34]

Parallel with the *Titanic* piece is an 'imaginary' one, a kind of double which at the first performance was in phase with the 'real' one. Morgan Robertson's book *Futility,* published some 15 years before the Titanic disaster, foreshadowed the real event in uncanny detail: the ship is even called the Titan. A version based solely on the fictional disaster can even be mounted; in fact the composer has done this. The ways in which this 'imaginary' aspect may or may not connect with Bryars' hypotheses deserves investigation. And just as the real disaster could hypothetically have been a re-enactment of the Titan story, so there could be a 'real' performance of *The Sinking of the Titanic* off Newfoundland on one of the recently proposed replicas of the ship.[35]

This hypothetical line of reasoning led to the making of a

[28] From the eleventh page of Bryars' score as published in *Soundings.*

[29] *The Musical Times,* vol. 114, no. 1563 (May 1973), p. 489. For the complete correspondence see the three other letters in this issue and also no. 1559 (January 1973), pp. 33-34, and no. 1561 (March 1973), pp. 259-260.

[30] 'And when my task on earth is done/When by thy grace the victory's won/E'en death's cold wave I will not flee/Since God through Jordan leadeth me.'

[31] Nyman, 'As the Titanic went down', p. 12.

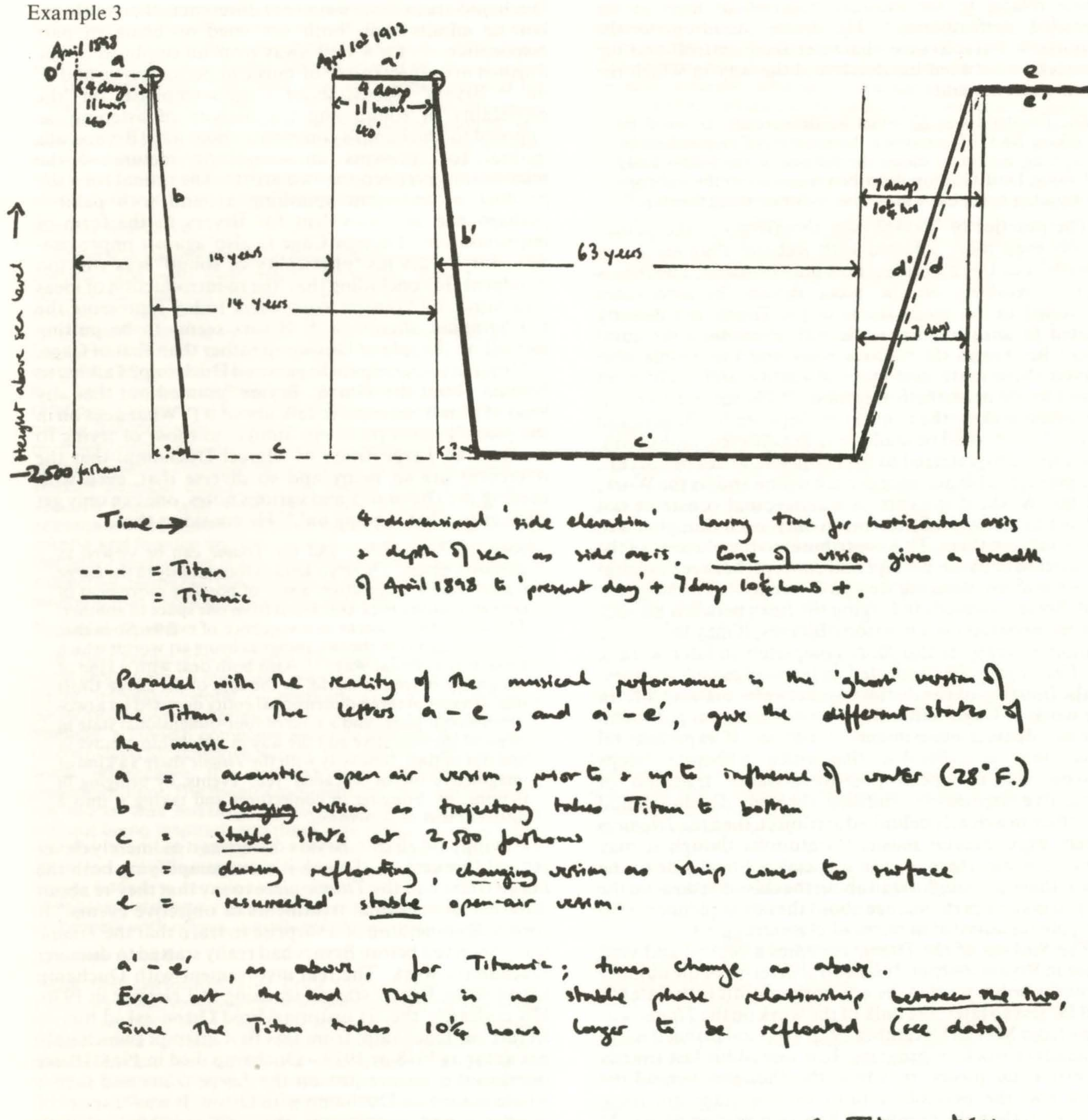
[32] Bryars quoted in Nyman, ibid, p. 12.

[33] Ibid, p. 12.

[34] From Bryars' sleeve note to OBS 1.

[35] See John Huxley, 'America wants to build three Titanics', *The Times* (Friday March 20, 1981), p. 1. According to Huxley there is also another plan afoot to salvage the original ship this summer. Many previous plans have foundered.

Example 3



tape for the premiere on which the sound of *Autumn*, played by a band of the line-up used on the ship, is subjected to timbral modification to suggest four stages of change: as heard in the open air on the deck; as the ship sinks; as it remains stable on the bottom of the ocean; and in a new state in the open air had the Titanic been raised in 1972 as had been planned. (The piece could presumably be extended to incorporate the raising of the ship if it ever takes place.)

These specific musical and acoustical hypotheses have led Bryars into the uncharted waters of the conceptual rather than the better-mapped perceptual. His concern with the minutiae of uncovering documented facts and pursuing hypotheses to their logical conclusions must result in a change in the notion of what constitutes a 'musical object', a change perhaps in its way greater than that required to understand either what Cage was doing in the 50s and 60s or what Bryars had been doing before the *Titanic*. For not only are we presented with 'found objects' forming 'readymades' (to follow the terminology associated with Marcel Duchamp): the documentation discovered and compiled by the composer to make a 'work of art' that is open in form and subject to the wind of circumstantial change; but the labyrinthine detail leads us to reconsider what constitutes a piece and whether what apparently surrounds it is not in fact central to it (if there is a centre to be found). As with Cage's chance pieces, the listener's perceptual starting-point will lead him inevitably in the direction of the conceptual framework. But unlike Cage, Bryars has made a link between perception of the sounds and the concepts that lie behind them by making just sufficient of his process apparent. That process is revealed as at root a musical one: it takes our perception of music as the basis for altering our conception of it.

In his dissertation on Bryars, Andrew Thomson suggests that not all the detail in the *Titanic*'s complex

fabric relates to the musical material, at least in the recorded performance.[36] He draws attention to the important 'Pataphysical character Dr Faustroll and the connection between his death and the way in which the Titanic met her end:

> Dr. Faustroll was 63 when he deliberately drowned by sinking his skiff, removing the waterproof preparation by drawing his finger along the outside of the hull – Lady Cosmo Duff Gordon described the effect of the iceberg's impact as being like a giant finger drawn along the ship.[37]

The practice of 'Pataphysics threatens to take us into waters even more infested with icebergs than we are in already; but three observations may be made. The first is that in working on the piece Bryars 'became more interested in the many facets of the *Titanic* not directly related to aural events, while still researching the aural ones'; he 'found the various roles and the people who played them more and more attractive and even as an object lesson in aesthetic rightness'.[38] The second is a point Thomson makes: the connection between the fingers and Bryars' piece could be made clear in a different realisation. The third, also referred to by Thomson, arises out of this; one perceptual experience cannot define and fix the Work, for the Work, if it exists, is a conceptual construct not subject to the laws of perception only, even though it is in part rooted in them. This contributes to the blurring of the distinction between percept and concept, between musical object and the thinking that gave rise to it. To the extent that Bryars succeeds in forging the links between his idea and his material (as Thomson observes, it may be that the composer achieves this more completely in later works), the *Titanic* must be connected, in terms of musical history, to the blurring of the distinction between 'art' and 'life' in the work of Cage. What Bryars was doing was part of an already distinct experimental tradition. If experimental music may be defined as that which deliberately steps outside the European post-Renaissance tradition of subjective expression, fulfilled through developmental structure in a clearly delimited art object, then the *Titanic* is surely experimental music. (Gratuitous though it may seem to some, there is even a social-political side to the piece: there is enough detail about the class divisions on the ship to make a performance about the consequences of the struggle for survival in terms of class struggle.)

The Sinking of the Titanic occupies a central and vital place in Bryars' output. It is central in terms of the number of works he has written: he was fairly prolific in the late 60s and far less so later; the bulk of the work on the *Titanic* was done from May to December 1972. It is vital in that it is still officially a work in progress. It is one of his last overtly experimental pieces, in which the thoughts behind the piece and the possible actions on the stage are more numerous than the number of bars of music on paper. At the same time, Bryars' concern for detail and its logical consequences indicates that his thinking was moving away from pieces that were perhaps just good ideas towards a new rigour.

The figure who most obviously represents this position in the art world and to whom various aspects of Bryars' *Titanic* appear to owe their existence is Marcel Duchamp. Bryars is fascinated by Duchamp; he has lectured on him quite extensively and written about his work.[39] He seems to agree with Cage's remark: 'One way to write music: study Duchamp.'[40] Bryars demonstrates that Cage and Duchamp are in some ways very different in their outlook, but he admits that 'both are cited as being in part responsible . . . for a shift away from an emphasis on the finished art-object/piece of music in performance and so on'.[41] Bryars' discussion of Cage's emphasis on 'the physicality of sound and the activity of listening' as opposed to Duchamp's comments about what Bryars calls 'retinal rot' presents an interesting picture of the relationship between the two artists. The retinal rot – the product of indulgent splashing around with paint – perhaps had an equivalent for Bryars in the form of improvisation. Though Cage is also against improvisation, for Bryars his 'physicality of sound' was still too indulgent. In concluding that 'the re-introduction of ideas into music by younger composers today represents the Duchampian alignment',[42] Bryars seems to be putting himself on the side of Duchamp rather than that of Cage.

How may we compare Bryars and Duchamp? Talking to Nyman about the *Titanic*, Bryars 'pointed out that any kind of purely descriptive talk about it ("What goes on in the piece") raises problems similar to those of trying to analyse the *Large Glass* of Marcel Duchamp: that the references are so many and so diverse that, even with reading the *Green Box* and various notes, one can only get clues as to what is going on'.[43] He considers that

> both the *Large Glass* and the *Titanic* can be viewed as narrative pieces. There's a kind of topography to the *Large Glass*; there's a narrative, a sort of possible movement of elements within the *Large Glass* from one space to another. The whole thing works as a sequence of events. So in that sense one can view the two things as being art worlds which behave in a similar way . . . Also both deal with a kind of imaginary objective world: in the case of the *Large Glass* that of a sort of three-dimensional entity depicted on a two-dimensional glass, and a kind of four-dimensional state in terms of the narrative and the way in which things move in and out of time. Similarly with the *Titanic* there's a kind of imaginative use of so-called 'real' events, by bringing in fictions, by bringing in conjectures and taking it into a different sort of dimension.

Having said all this, Bryars dismisses it as 'merely clever critical thinking . . . I think it's oversimplifying both the *Large Glass* and the *Titanic* piece to say that they're about different dimensional treatments of objective events.' It comes as something of a surprise to learn that the *Titanic* was conceived before Bryars had really started to discover Duchamp's work. The real involvement with Duchamp began when Bryars started teaching at Leicester in 1970. His colleague the art historian Fred Orton asked him to lecture on Duchamp; from this first attempt (which only got as far as 1918 or 1919 – Duchamp died in 1968!) there developed a lecture just on the *Large Glass* and then a whole course on Duchamp with Orton. It was 'a series of accidents and promptings that got me involved with Duchamp', says Bryars.

These 'accidents and promptings' could not have come at a better time. For at the beginning of 1973 Bryars reached his crisis, an impasse through which he somehow had to find a way into an experimental future which continued to seem valid, despite the collapse of English experimental music that was going on around him.

There is, according to Bryars, 'no music whatsoever' of his from either 1973 or 1974. Nor had there been very much from 1972; for most of the year he was preparing the *Titanic* for its premiere. He finished four pieces for the EMC's *Visual Anthology* but they had been sketched earlier.[44]

[36] See Thomson, p. 14.

[37] From Bryars' sleeve note to OBS 1.

[38] From Bryars' programme note for a performance of *The Sinking of the Titanic* at the British Music Information Centre, London, June 15, 1973.

[39] See Gavin Bryars, 'Notes on Marcel Duchamp's Music', *Studio International*, vol. 192, no. 984 (November–December 1976), pp. 274-279.

[40] John Cage, '26 Statements re Duchamp', *A Year from Monday* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968), pp. 70-72.

[41] Bryars, 'Notes on Marcel Duchamp's Music', p. 274.

[42] Ibid, p. 274.

[43] Quoted in Nyman, 'As the Titanic went down', p. 10.

[44] *To Gain the Affection of Miss Dwyer Even for One Short Minute Would Benefit Me No End*, for stereo playback equipment and a construction using at least 14 small loudspeakers; *A Game of Football*, employing a large outdoor space for a game of association football and manifesting the use of extreme distances; *Golders (as) Green by Eps(ups)om('n') Downs*,

When asked the obvious question 'why?' he was at first fairly non-committal: 'Heavens knows! Let's put those two down as crisis years, shall we? That's probably over-dramatising it. But I think I was aware during that time that there was nothing that I was able to write that made any sense to me, that I was sort of happy with.'

Fallow – largely or even entirely silent – years are not unusual in a composer's career. Sometimes the period is much longer than a mere two or three years: look at Satie, Schoenberg and Varèse. Bryars' silence was not only considerably shorter than that of Schoenberg or Varèse, it also came much earlier in his life: around the age of 30 rather than somewhere over 40. Not so much a mid-life crisis, more something that the composer suggests could, even should, have happened at the beginning of his composing career rather than several years into it. It was, he says, 'like going back to school' (which was what Satie did).

Putting it like this may imply that Bryars had more in common with the political ex-experimentalists than was the case. When Cardew, for example, rejected his experimental past, he had to school himself in functional tonal composition before he could write 'valid' music again; he was, on his own admission, too busy being experimental to bother to learn things like harmony and counterpoint at the Royal Academy. Bryars' case is far less extreme and far more subtle. In many respects the ideas and techniques to be found in his early music were to prove more durable than he must have thought during 1973 and 1974. What was really required was not the rejection of those ideas and techniques, but a greater focus on certain of them and a process of extension and refinement. The 'school' to which he returned to do this was the one where he was already a teacher: the art school.

Like all good teachers, Bryars learned a great deal from his teaching; it may even be said to have given him the crucial impetus he needed to find himself afresh as an experimental composer. In the early 70s he discovered not only Duchamp but also many of the other figures who have suggested ways forward to him as a composer – not necessarily by their music, for probably the majority are not musicians, but by their example in general and often by their working methods in particular. A brief and by no means exhaustive checklist of names follows. I have avoided the attempt to define closely the influence of 'Pataphysics on his recent thinking and music, even though it appears to be, if not central, at least important to his current work. The task of defining 'Pataphysics itself is fraught with problems (and debate continues to rage over whether to use the apostrophe and what it means): the College of 'Pataphysics is a kind of secret society, dedicated, it seems to the outsider, to the preservation of its secrets, and disapproving in the rare instances where an initiate has attempted some form of explanation.[45] (The College has, anyway, 'occulted' until the year 2000, though it is hard to gain a clear idea of what this means either.) Nevertheless, some of the names below have been associated with 'Pataphysics, and I hope some idea of the subject will be gathered indirectly.

Erik Satie (1866-1925) has been a major influence on many experimental composers from Cage on, particularly for his use of simple materials in unusual, non-develomental ways and his sense of humour; Bryars has, I think, always shared these qualities. Satie's 'indispensability'[46] has long been apparent to him; witness his performance with Christopher Hobbs of *Vexations* at Leicester Polytechnic in 1971.[47] Since then Bryars has done quite a lot of original research on Satie, and has written several articles.[48] The Garden Furniture Music ensemble, founded by John White in 1977, of which Bryars was an occasional member until its demise in 1979, owes its name to Satie's notion of musique d'ameublement ('furniture music'). *Ponukelian Melody* (1975), Bryars' first successful piece after his period of silence, draws on the scales and their harmonisations in the Rosicrucian notebooks and takes its unvarying, very slow crotchet pulse from Satie's *Les pantins dansent.* Not only does Bryars' piece share Satie's distant manner and unresolved harmonies, it also uses his mosaic method of composing: the piece was written in short sections and not in linear sequence; only afterwards were the sections put together in a definite order.

Lord Berners (1883-1950), who formerly had a reputation as an eccentric English dilettante – composer, novelist, painter and diplomat – has in the last few years become known in experimental circles largely due to Bryars' advocacy. He writes that Berners had 'a fondness for any style so exhaustive that it contains its own parody':[49] something that is characteristic of some of Bryars' own music, both pre- and post-crisis (*Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet,* 1971; *Out of Zaleski's Gazebo,* 1977). He also points out that Berners and Satie each 'pursued what was essentially an isolated career, at odds with the work of his contemporaries, and each produced a body of work that ranges beyond the normal confines of a composer's':[50] again comparisons with Bryars' own career and output are tempting. One of his major preoccupations at present is writing Berners' official biography for publication in his centenary year. *Poggioli in Zaleski's Gazebo* (1977) and *Out of Zaleski's Gazebo* both quote briefly from the second of Berners' *Valses Bourgeoises* (1919).

Percy Grainger (1882-1961) also has a reputation in mainstream opinion as an eccentric fringe figure but his importance as an experimentalist is slowly being recognised. Both his 'free' music and his apparently more conventional works have had an influence on experimental musicians. *White's SS* uses a Grainger source *(Irish Tune from County Derry,* 1902-11) and the easily recognisable and tonal-sounding cadence figures from Grainger's *Mock Morris* (1910) are the basis for the interludes in *Out of Zaleski's Gazebo.*

Siegfried Karg-Elert (1877-1933) is a Russian-German composer 'adopted' some years ago by experimentalists. His strange chromatic harmonies have, like Busoni's and Reger's,[51] been a considerable solace to the troubled experimentalist seeking an alternative both to the world

involving large resonators which the performer activates from a helicopter; and *Ouse* for 'prepared' vocal duet, performing 'My Hero' from Oscar Straus's *The Chocolate Soldier.*

[45] Roger Shattuck, a fairly high-ranking official within the College (Provéditeur Général Propagateur aux Iles et Amériques and Suscepteur Transséant de la Régence et Chaire de Matéologie post-Colombienne), did so and was apparently reprimanded. His article appeared in the *Evergreen Review* and was later published by the College as *Au Seuil de la 'Pataphysique* (Collège de 'Pataphysique, XC), available to College members in any of the nine languages into which all publications are translated. (The date of publication follows 'Pataphysical practice in using Jarry's date of birth as a starting-point.)

[46] Cage's term; see, for example, his 'Erik Satie', p. 82.

[47] See Nyman, *Experimental Music,* pp. 32-33 for extracts from the written dialogue that the performers carried on during this event. The whole of it was scheduled for publication by the EMC, with commentaries about other performances of *Vexations,* but it never appeared (see, however, footnote 48).

[48] See Gavin Bryars, 'Berners, Rousseau, Satie', *Studio International,* vol. 192, no. 984, pp. 308-318. A forthcoming book on Satie in the series *L'herne* (Paris) will include French translations of substantial articles by Bryars: 'Satie and the British' and '*Vexations* and its Performers'. The latter draws on material from the unpublished *Vexations* anthology referred to in footnote 47.

[49] 'Berners, Rousseau, Satie', p. 308.

[50] Ibid, p. 308.

[51] For comments on these and others of the 'apparently disparate collection of composers from the world of "alternative" musical history' see John White quoted in Smith, p. 4.

where the 'right' note reigns and to that where the 'wrong' one does. The two Zaleski pieces draw on Karg-Elert's organ interludes.

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) must come at the head of any list of non-musicians who have influenced Bryars, and a few words about his work are appropriate in the light of Bryars' current concerns. In a sense, he has led Bryars to all the other figures mentioned below who (in a very literal sense) inform his work. Though there is no piece that is overtly based on his work, Duchamp guides us to the very centre of Bryars' present preoccupations.

Bryars draws attention to the way in which Duchamp combines a lightness of approach with a remorseless logic by which the seemingly most inconsequential detail becomes of crucial importance.

> There's a certain quality of 'mental dancing' almost: he flitted about in an apparently self-indulgent way, but on examination all his moves turn out to have a quite close logic to them . . . There's nothing which could be stripped away . . .[52] Even when you look at the most minor piece of Duchamp – a cover for a magazine or a telegram to a friend – there's always some particular quality which seems to refer backwards and forwards to other pieces and draw everything together into one coherent shape.

Bryars' word for this way of working is 'justification': there has to be a reason for every compositional move and the composer must fully justify it to himself before he can proceed.

Alfred Jarry (1873-1907), the French writer, is known today principally for his play *Ubu Roi* (1896); Dr Faustroll, mentioned earlier, appears in his posthumously published novel *Exploits and Opinions of Dr Faustroll 'Pataphysician* (1911). He was, according to Roger Shattuck,[53] the 'chosen vessel' for making 'Pataphysics known to the world. Shattuck's attempt to define 'Pataphysics met with considerable disapproval from the College of 'Pataphysics, but it should be read by those interested in the subject if they can lay their hands on it.[54] Shattuck's briefest definition of 'Pataphysics is 'the science of imaginary solutions';[55] the better-known "Pataphysics is to metaphysics as metaphysics is to physics' may also be helpful. Jarry is of obvious importance to Bryars, but as with Duchamp, there is as yet no piece that draws directly on his work or ideas.

Raymond Roussel (1877-1933; notice that his dates coincide with Karg-Elert's) is close to both 'Pataphysics and Duchamp. He was a playwright, poet, novelist and even composer. He has been described as a 'Millionaire, crack marksman, chess theoretician, fan of Jules Verne and hackneyed melodramas, owner of one of the first "mobile homes"' and, significantly for his influence on Bryars, 'a globetrotter who preferred "the domain of Conception to that of Reality"'.[56] His work has been a considerable influence on surrealism, the nouveau roman and structuralism. A description of some of his working methods may be found in *How I Wrote Certain of My Books.* Duchamp is reported saying 'It was fundamentally Roussel who was reponsible for my *Large Glass.*'[57] Bryars' *Danse Dieppoise* (1978) has its starting-point in Roussel.

Jean Ferry (1906-1976) was an author and scholar much involved with 'Pataphysics; he wrote on Roussel and others. Bryars has particular respect for the thoroughness of his scholarship and his painstaking research of the smallest detail. The punning title of *The Cross Channel Ferry* (1979) is a homage to the writer; the piece was composed for a concert in Paris: 'the ferry being the way in which I can cross the Channel to France and, inversely, Ferry being the way in which France was brought to me'.[58] Bryars' reading of the volume of the *Cymbalum Pataphysicum* on Ferry revealed that the writer was devoted to Palestrina's *Missa Papae Marcelli.* He adopts a Rousselian device, and takes the last letter of 'Palestrina' and the fact that the mass ends 'in A major' as a starting- (or rather finishing-) point: this leads to a web of connections with the letter A: the instruments for which the piece was originally composed (viola, tuba, marimba, quijada, maruga [= maraca(s)]), the note 'la' (A), Latin America (LA) – with which Roussel and Duchamp had associations – and therefore Latin American rhythms ending in A (samba, rumba, habanera, etc.) and so on.

Henri Rousseau (1844-1910) was a painter and writer who occasionally composed music; he finds a place with Satie and Berners in an article by Bryars as an amateur musician whose painting is also 'difficult to locate within the mainstream of art'.[59] His interests are related to those of several of the above (he was, for example, a friend of Jarry). The multifarious manifestations of his talent have appealed to Bryars as much as to the Dadaist Tristan Tzara, who called Rousseau 'the complete modern artist'; Bryars suggests that Rousseau is a good example of Tzara's view that 'since art is a state of mind rather than a means of expression, the way used to express oneself is unimportant'.[60] Bryars involvement with the Portsmouth Sinfonia shows the value he places on the 'amateur'; there is no piece of his as yet, however, that has any direct connection with Rousseau.

One other involvement of Bryars in recent years that must be mentioned is his interest in detective fiction. A serious concern for this subject is something which he shares with the 'Pataphysics movement, or rather with those members of the intricate hierarchy of the College of 'Pataphysics who have set up a special sub-group to study detective fiction. Obsession with tiny detail and the enormous potential importance of the smallest clue in the assembling of evidence to which clear motives can be imputed is the obvious link between this and Bryars' other preoccupations. Not only are Sherlock Holmes and other giants of the genre important to him, but also such lesser-known figures as the detectives Poggioli and Prince Zaleski. The creations of T.S. Stribling (1881-1965) and Matthew Phipps Shiel (1865-1947) respectively,[61] the two characters are the exact opposite of one another in personality and approach:

> Poggioli works by trial and error, blundering from solution to possible solution, whereas Zaleski is a model of pure ratiocination, never leaving his room, arriving at the correct solution in a haze of hashish, fingering an Egyptian scarab, and rambling through the *Lakme* of Delibes on a harmonium.[62]

Poggioli in Zaleski's Gazebo and *Out of Zaleski's Gazebo* use elements of their characters. *The Perfect Crime* (1978) for two pianos, tape and slides uses projections of details from pictures with an accompanying description, from which a narrative reading about several murders may be extracted. The 'perfection' in question is the absence of clues.

Danse Dieppoise was composed in March and April 1978 in response to a request by some music students at Bryars' old university Sheffield for a piece involving video. The students' first idea was to make a television programme

[52] Not by her Bachelors, even?

[53] Shattuck, p. 7.

[54] See footnote 45.

[55] Shattuck, p. 9.

[56] From the potted biography on the back of Raymond Roussel, trans. Trevor Winkfield, *How I Wrote Certain of My Books* (New York: Sun, 1975).

[57] Ibid.

[58] From the composer's notes on the piece.

[59] 'Berners, Rousseau, Satie', p. 312.

[60] Ibid, p. 312.

[61] See, for example, T. S. Stribling, *Best Dr. Poggioli Detective Stories* (New York: Dover, 1975) and Matthew Phipps Shiel, *Prince Zaleski and the Cummings King. Monk* (Sauk City, Wisconsin: Mycroft and Moran, 1977).

[62] From the composer's notes on *Poggioli in Zaleski's Gazebo.*

about the composer and his music, but the nature of the project changed several times during work on it; what finally appeared was a videotape of a performance of Bryars' piece that included a version of its visual inspiration.

In François Caradec's biography of Raymond Roussel there is a page with two photographs of the writer taken in Dieppe in 1904, apparently within a very short time of each other.[63] The photographs show Roussel, his mother and a group of friends. The two are almost identical except that Roussel, on the far right in both, has moved from a fairly neutral pose in the upper picture to a somewhat flippant and jaunty one in the lower: what Bryars describes as 'playing a game with the camera; making a little joke'. Since the photographs may have been taken within seconds of one another, Bryars considers the pair as 'if you like, the only picture I've got of Roussel moving. It's an animation.' The original idea for the piece was to make an actual animation, on film or video, of Roussel moving between one pose and the other: 'a kind of dance, at Dieppe', hence the work's title. This proved beyond the capabilities of Sheffield University's TV studio and the idea had to be rethought.

Also in Caradec's book is another pair of similar photographs placed one above the other, this time of two designs Roussel made in 1932 for his funerary monument. The version of *Danse Dieppoise* eventually made at Sheffield had music played by five musicians visible on the videotape separated by two gaps. The first of these alternated the two 1904 photographs with a slow dissolve between them to suggest movement; the second consisted of a sequence of photographs of Roussel at different stages of his life, concluding with the two of the monument.

The first performance of the piece in this form took place on June 1, 1978 in Sheffield; the scoring was flute and clarinet, horn and trombone, and harpsichord. The first performance of the music alone had previously been given on April 15 in Amsterdam in a different scoring made for the Garden Furniture Music ensemble: vibraphone (taking the parts for flute and clarinet), baritone horn and tuba, and piano. (The instrumentalists were Ben Mason, Dave Smith, John White and Gavin Bryars respectively; Bryars has written frequently for various combinations of these players both before and after the disbandment of the ensemble.) An excerpt from the Garden Furniture version is given in Example 4.

In its melody and harmony, *Danse Dieppoise* is fairly typical of Bryars' music of the late 70s. Its 'new tonality' is pretty evident in the on-the-whole consonant progression of simple ideas, with a bass line that is never sure if it's a tune or not and a focus on the repeated piano figurations outlining the basic harmonies. Chords tend to be augmented, with what the composer calls 'slightly false relations' in the harmonic progress. The loud long low notes in the brass instruments create a peculiar effect not untypical of much of the music written by Bryars or by the more regular members of Garden Furniture Music for this unusual, bottom-heavy combination. This is due not only to the thematic prominence of these parts, but also to their sometimes tenuous relationship with the piano harmonies and their considerable difficulty: Bryars admits that in conventional terms, for two solo instruments anyway, this is 'simply bad brass writing'.

What is going on here is a transformed and somewhat dislocated rendering of *The Bluebells of Scotland.* The tune is in the brass instruments, much slowed down (it has also been referred to on the vibraphone in the opening bar); the 'correct' harmonisation of the piano and vibraphone does not alway fit. The effect is of a tune trying to synchronise with its harmonisation but not always succeeding. The piece is divided into two sections: the second has the same, though speeded-up, harmonic sequence as the first.

The reason why *The Bluebells of Scotland* is used is that the tune occurs as a musical quotation in Roussel's novel *Locus solus.* Roussel's surname is used in a Schumann-esque cypher form and there is a reference to Debussy's *La Mer,* which was composed at Eastbourne, facing Dieppe across the English Channel. Rhythmically and metrically the music appears fairly staightforward. The repetitive nature of the piece can occasionally lead to unexpected changes, but the most unusual features are the single bar of 19/4 at the beginning and the one of 19/32 before the second section. These time signatures are derived from the dates of the two pairs of photographs (1904 and 1932).

This kind of extra-musical derivation is fairly typical of Bryars' 'justification' process. This method of accounting for a high percentage of the notes in a piece has been described by Thomson as 'music of association'[64] and has led him to assert that 'Gavin Bryars is not a composer in the accepted sense of the word. He has no wish to be considered as such.'[65] Thomson points to Bryars' two or three years studying Duchamp rather than writing music as evidence that 'he feels no overriding urge to write music'.[66]

Bryars uses the 'deceptively simple surface' of *Danse Dieppoise* to 'lull the listener into a false sense of security';[67] the music has such a normal and unexceptionable surface that surprises are the more striking when they come. But the lengths to which 'justification' of the musical fabric, including the surprises, is taken is less representative of his recent music than the deliberately experimental quality of the brass writing and the tenacious yet tenuous hold on tonality. Bryars says:

> I was trying to be extremely literal in the sense of not wishing to write anything which I couldn't actually explain by extra-musical means. That is to say, everything that I did within the piece had to have a particular point and I had to be capable of justifying it without saying 'this is a nice-sounding chord'.

Danse Dieppoise takes to extremes what Bryars does in the planning stages of most or all of his recent pieces. Despite this, one of the bases on which he criticises it now is that he 'didn't actually make it rigorous enough; I could have gone even much further'. Typical of his highly self-critical approach is that he has largely disowned the piece, withdrawing it from performance and using part of the material for *The Cross Channel Ferry.*

Out of Zaleski's Gazebo is probably a better piece and one that readers are much more likely to come across. For the first concert, on November 21, 1977, of Garden Furniture Music, Bryars wrote *Poggioli in Zaleski's Gazebo,* for piano, tuba and percussion. In it the two detectives are characterised musically: Poggioli by a somewhat blundering xylophone part, independent and incongruous both timbrally and in terms of material; Zaleski by a very 'laid-back' harmonic style laden with chords of the type C-E-G sharp-B associated with his 'indolence and other-worldly preoccupation'. The piece was written in something of a hurry and Bryars was not satisfied with it. He therefore wrote *Out of Zaleski's Gazebo*, basing it on harmonic elements associated with Zaleski in the earlier piece, augmented by references to Karg-Elert, Berners and Grainger: at the time, 1977, his work was dominated by Karg-Elert and Roussel, whose centenaries both fell that year. Like a number of other pieces written in 1977 it ends with 'a faintly ironic coda'.

The piece is a very successful reworking of tonal materials in which traditional musical content is refracted to produce a curiously dislocated effect. Its 'deceptive surface' turns out not to be nearly so deceptive on the level of extra-musical 'justification', however: there seem to be no rigorously 'justified' reasons for using the particular combination of these particular pieces of Karg-Elert, Berners and Grainger other than their general significance

[63] François Caradec, *Vie de Raymond Roussel* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1972).

[64] Thomson, p. 10.

[65] Ibid, p. 11.

[66] Ibid, p. 11.

[67] Bryars quoted in Thomson, p. 6.

for Bryars.

What Bryars calls his concern for 'justification' is at the very centre of his work since 1975; it is rooted principally in the work of Duchamp. Just as we can trace the concern in the realm of conception back through the ideas of Roussel, Ferry and others to Duchamp, so we can also trace it as actually perceived through the music of the last six years or so and ultimately back to *The Sinking of the Titanic.*

Looking at Bryars' output from the vantage point of 1981, one is struck at least as much by its unity, consistency and tenacity as by its diversity, inconsistency and the point where he seems to be loosing his grip. He seems to believe that the process of 'justification', of making everything 'fit', really only began with the *Titanic.* It is true that he hit upon the integrated approach to an almost cosmic amount of detail for the first time in that piece and that this is one of the reasons why it is so important. But I hope I have shown that earlier works like *Private Music* and the realisations of *Plus-Minus* 'justify' themselves in something like the same ways, as well as exhibiting some of the other experimental qualities that are present in the later music too: the use of other people's music, especially that of composers 'from the world of "alternative" musical history'; the acceptance of sentimentality as well as system, and so on. Just as the young Bryars rejected improvisation as indulgent, so the older Bryars through the rigorous pursuit of 'justification' has conquered all temptation to indulge.

What is different about the music of the last few years? Where are the inconsistencies in Bryars' development? Well, for one thing all the recent music is fully notated, fixed and immutable in one version, except where material is transferred from one piece to another (as with the two Zaleski pieces). This is true even of pieces that were either originally intended to have an accompanying visual element in performance (the video, photographs, etc. in *Danse Dieppoise* which can be jettisoned) or which normally do have a visual element as an integral part of the performance (the slides used in *The Perfect Crime).* It's all dots now: no overcoats with objects hidden in the pockets or multiple rows of tape recorders relaying private messages.

There is both more manipulation of those dots and fewer 'uncontrolled variables'. In *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* Bryars took the song of an old tramp, made a tape loop of it and then gradually harmonised it over the course of the piece. Its length can vary from performance to performance but the tramp's song is exactly the same at the end as at the start and provides all the material. The listener's feelings at the end of a hearing of the work will undoubtedly be different from what they were at the beginning, as Bryars' harmonisation is extremely moving and suggestive of many things, some contradictory – pathos and parody, for example. *Jesus' Blood* is a one idea piece: all Bryars has done with the tune is to repeat and harmonise it. Uncontrolled variables in the work include the difficulty the live performers inevitably have in synchronising with the tape of the tramp, especially as he does not sing in strict tempo.

In *Out of Zaleski's Gazebo*, on the other hand, there is much more found material. The combination of Karg-Elert, Berners and Grainger in the same piece is bound to produce a more complex organism, for any good piece is more than merely the sum of its parts. The situation for the listener is in one respect much richer than with *Jesus' Blood*: not only is there more material but it does not proclaim itself nearly as much as the tramp's song does. Except for the Grainger cadences which stand out at various important structural points, the listener may be unaware that much of the piece consists of found material. Even in these, though, the effect of emerging briefly into a wry tonal clarity is richly ambiguous. Not only will each performance of the piece be the same length, but as far as uncontrolled variables are concerned, no performance seems likely to exhibit them any more or any less than a performance of any fully notated piece.

On the whole, found objects are more disguised in Bryars' later music. Tunes that one would expect to recognise may be slowed down and played out of step with their rightful harmonies. Sometimes the found object consists purely of a generalised harmonic source so obscure as to go unrecognised by all but the super-informed listener (Satie's Rosicrucian experiments in scale formation that are the basis for *Ponukelian Melody*); anyway, this is nothing like the same as quoting a complete piece of music or a tune.

The 'justification' process has meant more extra-musical references in the much more complex and rarefied atmosphere in which Bryars' music now moves. The result might appear from what I say above to be more musical, but concept and percept have not matched up on anything like a one-to-one basis for the listener, who must do an awful lot of homework unless he simply wants to wallow in Bryars' sentimentalities. Again the *Titanic* seems central. I implied earlier that in this work Bryars might have been moving in the direction of relating concept to percept, idea to musical surface, more completely. He cannot really be said to have achieved this goal; despite all the 'justification', he sometimes appears to have been too carried away by the ways in which 'facets . . . not directly related to aural events' seem to have become 'more and more attractive', 'an object lesson in aesthetic rightness'.[68] This is a lesson that sometimes only he can appreciate and which must seem to the average, even the non-average, listener to have nothing to do with the 'aesthetic rightness' that may or may not be present in the music. A lot of the most interesting things about the *Titanic* derive, it seems to me, from the concept of the piece having a musical basis. Later this is not always the case.

A reply to this could, of course, start by saying that perhaps there is no inherent reason why this should be the case. It could go on by pointing out that the one-to-one basis I referred to above is no proper basis at all for a piece of music, indeed for any work of art. The musical surface must work on musical terms; Bryars, like most composers, doesn't always achieve this. Schumann's musical surface was accepted at its face value for years before it was discovered that this apparently most intuitive of composers had concealed all manner of cryptic cyphers below the 'deceptive surface' of his music. The better the 'deceptive surface' on a clear musical level, the more successful it is at deception. From there we can only move into an argument about the 'meaning' of music.

The concept of privacy I brought in earlier now takes on new significance. From a *Private Music* with its privacy made public to the private 'Pataphysical meaning of *The Cross Channel Ferry* is a move that some would regard as retrenchment into the old experimental ghetto, Bryars being unwilling to move outside it and confront the real world: of politics, for example. But this is to beg the question that his music seems to be asking: what does 'real' mean anyway? Does it mean anything? Long ago, Bryars considered that the implications of his music were 'logical and hence necessary rather than literary, political, social, situational and hence tangential'.[69] Logic at least has its own necessity and necessities have a way of imposing themselves if they have integrity behind them.

Perhaps all Gavin Bryars' music is private music, as Thomson suggests. If so, I for one shall, for the moment at least, continue to rejoice in public that music of such integrity, refinement and wit is still being composed.[70]

I should like to thank Dave Smith, David Wright and, in particular, the composer for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

[68] Bryars, programme note for the BMIC performance of the *Titanic.*

[69] Quoted in Nyman, *Experimental Music,* p. 80.

[70] A new recording of music by Bryars (on the Belgian label Crépuscule) includes *My First Homage* (1978), *The English Mail Coach* (1980), *The Vespertine Park* (1980) and *Hi Tremolo* (1980).

Example 4

JOHN TILBURY

The Experimental Years: A View from the Left

INTRODUCTION

Late in 1960 Cornelius Cardew and I gave a concert of music for two pianos at the Conway Hall in London. The programme consisted of American music — by John Cage, Morton Feldman and Christian Wolff — and music by Cardew himself. It was my first involvement in experimental music and the first in a series of concerts which Cardew and I took around to various parts of the country. The predominance of American music in our progammes was of significance; in particular it reflected an attitude to the past which, like that of the Americans, was pure and simple: we rejected it. But at the same time we were ignorant of it: we did not understand how the music of the past had come about. We knew nothing of the changing social role that music had played across the centuries. We had no grasp of the concept of class values in relation to art.

The music of Cage and his followers embodied this anti-historical stance and naturally we took to it like fish to water. Personally, I had never been enamoured of the European avant-garde; I resented its musical dogma, its melodic and harmonic conventions alienated me, it seemed to me to be at once academic and aggressive, and it had neither wit nor soul. On the other hand, and paradoxically perhaps, in Feldman's music I was strongly aware of a *human* agency at work, of an imaginative musical mind, and the fact that the Americans had not banned certain chords and progressions from their work impressed me. True, in the last analysis they too had created artificial systems, but these did not seem to 'police' the music in the way that European serialism did.

For the experimentalists John Cage is the key personality whose influence cannot be overestimated, but in the 60s a new figure emerged in America, La Monte Young, who made an immediate and dramatic impact on the scene. Nowadays we hear only the residue and rarely the real thing: Young aestheticised or commercialised by a host of composers such as the Americans Philip Glass, Steve Reich and Terry Riley and, in England, Gavin Bryars, Christopher Hobbs, Michael Nyman and Michael Parsons. These are talented musicians, but the excitement and daring of Young's music in the 60s, to which they owe so much, was never recaptured during the 70s. Naturally there were other influences, but Young's radical single-sound aesthetic became the springboard for musical experimentation: in works such as *X for Henry Flynt* (1960), a loud, heavy sound — usually performed as a large piano cluster — repeated X times, *Studies in the Bowed Disc* for a four-foot steel gong (1963) and *The Well-Tuned Piano* (1964), each piece (or rather each process) consists of a characteristic sound in which the listener immerses himself. Young's influence has also, in my opinion, extended to the pop world, with devastating effects. 'Pioneer' groups like The Who became identified by their 'sound', not by the songs they performed, because the musical components — melody, harmony, rhythm — were obliterated for the listener by sheer amplitude. Pop was a *physical* but hardly an auditory experience. Young's music contrived to be both: the listener participated, he was not bludgeoned and rendered totally passive. The sounds were not only rich, complex and interesting; his music appealed aesthetically. People found *beauty* in it.

It was on the crest of the 'beautiful sound wave' that Terry Riley emerged and achieved during the second half of the decade considerable notoriety and popularity. Strictly speaking, Riley's music was not single-sound music, through like the blues it created that illusion. It was not radical and lacked the purity of Young's; the components were musically and aesthetically more conventional. It thus managed to bridge the gap between the experimentalists and the pop world: the repetitive nature and harmonious quality of the music appealed to the experimentalists, but its language was modal (*A Rainbow in Curved Air, 1966*) and tonal (*In C,* 1964), it used electric organs and saxophones and it had a beat. Riley's music became an important part of the new 'underground pop' movement in the 60s.

The Scratch Orchestra, which emerged a little later (in 1969, out of Cardew's composition class at Morley College in London), was an enterprising body of performers, playing all sorts of experimental music (Cage, Wolff, Riley, Young, Rzewski and their own works) in all kinds of situations for all classes of people: for Cornish farm-workers in village squares, for the young industrial workers of north-west England and for both urban and rural communities on the continent, as well as for the music lovers who frequented the Royal Festival Hall. The SO consisted of an assortment of people from various walks of life (some of them with considerable artistic talent) and there was no more enthusiastic, more committed and more serious collection of individuals working in the field of contemporary art at that time. During the first two years of its existence the SO's performance and compositional output was prolific. At the same time the nature and intensity of these activities engendered contradictions that eventually gave rise to a crisis. Feelings of discontent and frustration had accumulated and finally, at two long and harrowing meetings in September 1971, souls were bared, reasons sought and excuses offered. The guitarist Keith Rowe and I put forward an analysis of the situation, a conscious attempt to understand and explain our predicament. Rowe and I pinpointed a fundamental disunity of theory and practice in the SO as the primary source of discontent among its members. In theory we believed in integration and being gregarious, in practice we were isolationists and parochialists; in theory we rejected the musical establishment, in practice we asked for its support (Arts Council grants, BBC television and Festival Hall appearances); in theory we wished to be 'an instrument of inspiration', in practice we appeared to many as 'a pessimistic symptom of a system in decay';[1] in theory we wished to build an open society, in practice we had created a closed fraternity; in theory we regarded people as a source of inspiration and in practice we were suspicious of our audiences. And so on. We willed one thing and caused its opposite: the anarchist's dilemma! The members of the SO reacted strongly to our analysis. In particular, a passage we quoted from Christopher Caudwell generated considerable discussion and it therefore seems worth quoting it in full.

> In bourgeois society social relations are denied in the form of relations between men, and take the form of a relation between man and a thing, a property relation, which, because it is a dominating relation, is believed to make men free. But this is an illusion. The property relation is only a disguise for relations which now become unconscious and

[1] Phrases quoted from the Scratch Orchestra's 'Discontent File'.

therefore anarchic but are still between man and man, and in particular between exploiter and exploited.

The artist in bourgeois culture is asked to do the same thing. He is asked to regard the art work as a finished commodity and the process of art as a relation between himself and the work, which then disappears into the market. There is a further relation between the art work and the buyer, but with this he can hardly be concerned. The whole pressure of bourgeois society is to make him regard the art work as hypostatised and his relation to it as primarily that of a producer for the market.

This will have two results.

(i) The mere fact that he has to earn his living by the sale of the concrete hypostatised entity as a property right — copyright, picture, statue — may drive him to estimate his work as an artist by the market chances which produce a high total return for these property rights. This leads to the commercialisation or vulgarisation of art.

(ii) But art is not in any case a relation to a thing, it is a relation between men, between artist and audience, and the art work is only like a machine which they must both grasp as part of the process. The commercialisation of art may revolt the sincere artist, but the tragedy is that he revolts against it still within the limitations of bourgeois culture. He attempts to forget the market completely and concentrate on his relation to the art work, which now becomes still further hypostatised as an entity-in-itself. Because the art work is now completely an end-in-itself, and even the market is forgotten, the art process becomes an extremely individualistic relation. The social values inherent in the art form, such as syntax, tradition, rules, technique, form, accepted tonal scale, now seem to have little value, for the art work more and more exists for the individual alone. The art work is necessarily always the product of a tension between old conscious social formulations — the art 'form' — and new individual experience made conscious — the art 'content' or the artist's 'message'. This is the synthesis, the specifically hard task of creation. But the hypostatisation of the art work as the goal makes old conscious social formulations less and less important, and individual experience more and more dominating. As a result art becomes more and more formless, personal and individualistic, culminating in Dadaism, surréalism and 'Steinism'.[2]

The SO responded to this text because it summed up not only their own position but that of their contemporaries too. Many members agreed that if a solution to the problem was to be found, it would have to be within the political sphere. In finally recognising that the ideological factor in art was of fundamental importance, the SO delivered a crushing blow to the theory of 'art for art's sake', an idea with which the orchestra had hitherto managed to coexist. Political links were sought and the SO no longer existed as an autonomous artistic organisation. Study groups were set up to read the Marxist classics and those who supported the politicisation of the SO embarked on a course of self-education. The others (and it was about 50/50) drifted away to pursue their own artistic interests on an individual basis. Speaking for myself, I decided to read and study, and to think more and play less. This was not a hard decision because I no longer felt a strong commitment to a large part of the contemporary repertoire, for the reasons stated or implied in the passage quoted from Caudwell.

What follows below is a conglomeration of doubts and dogma which inform my present attitude not only to experimental music but to all music. The *general* nature of these considerations also reflects my stance against the idea of the autonomy of music.

[2] Christopher Caudwell, *The Concept of Freedom* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), pp. 11-13.

THE IDEOLOGICAL FACTOR

A study of music presupposes a study of man. Art is an active socio-historical *process* produced by the tension between changing social relations and outmoded consciousness. Works of art do not drop out of the heavens into the minds of geniuses. Nor can any individual work of art claim eternal life. A study of the *re-creation* of works of art is as necessary and illuminating as a study of their creation. True, Greek art survives, but nothing survives in the same form. Greek art as the Greeks understood it is dead because Greek society is dead.

Means and relations of production determine men's ways of life and condition, which in turn determine their psychology, their modes of thought and emotional make-up. These factors determine their works of art; social psychology is expressed in works of art as the cultural tastes of a given period.

> Every poetical work is an integral unity, in which sounds, ideas, imagery, etc. are component parts synthetically united. On the other hand, it is also a unity from the sociological viewpoint, since all the component parts and their synthesis taken together are *ideological reflexes* of a definite period and a definite class.[3]

CLASS

Much remains incomprehensible if we ignore class relations and class struggle. The artist will necessarily integrate the experience and voice the consciousness of that group whose experience in general resembles his own. Moreover, it is through *social* experience that our class attitudes can be changed: the individual psychology is a social creation. Beethoven was an ardent republican whose music served as a kind of rallying point, a sense of common experience and kinship, for all anti-feudal minds, for all who welcomed the conflicts of the time and found progress in them. Still in the context of class antagonisms, art can be used by one class as a weapon to help subjugate another. Writing in the 30s, Caudwell described '"Bad" art, "affective massage" which is offered to the masses, arouses and satisfies the instincts without expanding consciousness, perhaps even deadening consciousness, thus helping to keep people adjusted to an unpleasant economic situation.'[4] It thus thrives on the immaturity of its audience, hence the youthful appeal of much bad pop music. There are also examples of elaborate, 'high-falutin'' contemporary art music which fall into the same category and to which I shall refer later.

In terms of the appreciation and even the definition of music, members of a social group are taught what is considered good or bad music, beautiful or ugly music and proper behaviour towards music; for example, some groups listen to music in silence, others engage in all kinds of noisy activity while listening. In this sense, aesthetic emotion is deeply influenced by social and cultural factors, insofar as some people have learned from other people what to listen *for* in musical sounds and patterns: they are taught the language. It follows that conceptions of music as a 'universal language' are wholly idealistic. What is regarded as 'music' and what qualities are ascribed to it are matters of social convention which vary in time, in geographical location and according to class. At a school in the East End of London, children bracketed together most of the Western art music of the last 400 years and described it as 'bleedin' opera'. A piece like Debussy's *La Mer* they did not regard as being music at all. This phenomenon cannot be understood simply in terms of the children's 'ignorance'; ideas about music are intertwined with and underpinned by more general ideas

[3] From an address given by N. I. Bukharin to the First Soviet Writers' Congress, published in English in 1935 and quoted in David N. Margolies, *The Function of Literature: a Study of Christopher Caudwell's Aesthetics* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1969), p. 96.

[4] Quoted in Margolies, op. cit., p. 108.

and beliefs with regard to other spheres of life, such as religion, work and leisure. They are also related to concepts of morality, human dignity and utility.

MUSIC AND IDEAS

I cannot agree with Hans Keller — whose messianic belief in the autonomy of music has led, quite logically, to his 'wordless analysis' — that the 'laws of musical thought are definably different from the laws of conceptual thought'.[5] In fact I doubt that any such line of demarcation can be drawn up: the boundaries between musical and conceptual thought are fluid and music therefore enjoys a *relative*, not an absolute autonomy. To be sure, the ideas which music embodies are not

> the ideas which may be found in a scientific tract, but commentaries on a society showing what it means to live in it. They embrace developments in sensitivity, in the human's awareness of his own powers, and in the situation of internal freedom, as conditions change in the external world. In this way music joins the other arts in creating social consciousness, or the individual's awareness of the internal life he shares with society, and in revealing the internal history of society.[6]

Non-musical ideas, ways of thinking, even whole philosophies, inform musical composition. A definite relationship can be shown to exist between mechanical materialism and post-Second World War serialism. Mechanical materialism regards nature as a passive object, not as something subject to man's activity or the antagonist of his striving, but as something self-contained, shut in by its own necessities. On the one hand there is man, the subject, desirous, active, spontaneous and free; on the other there is the object, nature as known by man, a machine contemplated in splendid isolation. Thus subject and object are mechanically separated; their dialectical (that is, mutually determining) relationship is ignored. Mechanical materialism acknowledges the existence of the objective world but sees man's relationship with it as a one-way affair.

The parallel with serial composition is striking. According to the post-war serialist composer, his composition is a piece of nature obeying determinate laws (the series) so designed as to satisfy his wants (his artistic conscience) and to create use-value (for the art market). This self-contained work of nature fulfils a 'plan'; the plan is the composer's desire. The serialist composer cannot imagine himself free if the spontaneity of human desire on the one hand and the independent mechanism of nature on the other are in any way infringed. This preoccupation with the perfection of the object led to *total* serialism, where the performer was supposed to reproduce mathematically precise notations faithfully. But what happened was that the increasing demands of the notation engendered a proportionally increasing inaccuracy in performance. The contradiction was insoluble; the 'solution' which was eventually found merely intensified the composer's dilemma. By an iron logic, preoccupation with the object was transformed into preoccupation with the self, as in the cases of Stockhausen and, in a more subtle way, Cage: from Stockhausen's first four *Klavierstücke* (1953-54) to *Aus den sieben Tagen* (1968); from Cage's *Music of Changes* (1951-52) to his highly subjective dictum — 'Listen — you will hear music. Perform — you will make music.'[7] So the contemporary composer (and here we are talking about probably the two most influential living composers) abandons the object and seeks refuge and resolution in the subject (idealism, subjectivism, 'doing your own thing' and so on).

[5] Hans Keller, *1975 (1984 minus 9)* (London: Dobson, 1978), p. 141.

[6] Sidney Finkelstein, *How Music Expresses Ideas* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), p. 11.

[7] John Cage, *Silence* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966).

In both Stockhausen and Cage there is a remarkable consistency between their writings and their music. The writings render verbally explicit the ideas expressed in the music. For example, Cage's atomistic world outlook clearly relates to his compositional method for the *Music for Piano* series composed between 1951 and 1964 (random, individual notes and random relationships). That these two composers have an ideological standpoint cannot be denied, though its interpretation is naturally a matter for debate.

To some, my interpretation of Stockhausen's music and the metaphysical jargon in which he presents his ideas verbally may seem hardboiled and ungracious, but when the late Mao Tse-Tung described idealism and metaphysics as 'the easiest things in the world, because people can talk as much nonsense as they like without basing it on objectivity or having it tested against reality',[8] he hit the nail on the head. The banality of, say, *Hymnen* (1966-67) or *Klavierstück IX* (1954-61) (which Cardew rightly described as a 'weak, aesthetic version' of Young's *X for Henry Flynt*[9]) corroborates one's worst suspicions.

I therefore cannot take the idea of 'communion with the supernatural' at its face value; Stockhausen invokes it, I suggest, precisely because communion with the real world is impossible for him.[10] Similarly 'a vehicle to discover their inner selves' is, on the contrary, a vehicle to *intensify* the audience's feelings of separation, isolation and alienation from their fellow human beings. 'Discover what they have forgotten about themselves' exemplifies the old romantic yearning for a paradise lost, and the reference to going 'through the eye of a needle' is similarly a regression, the dream of returning to the primitive state. And when Stockhausen refers to the 'spirit of the cosmos' as a source of knowledge and enlightenment, I suggest that we would be more likely to be able to determine the origin and context of many of his ideas if we were to investigate the spirit of the art market and in particular the characteristic 'star' system that forms an integral part of it.

Cage's world outlook is quite explicit and there is no need to spell it out here. My point is that far from being an autonomous art, music expresses ideas about the world, and it is just those composers whose music embodies particular ideas in a convincing fashion who are taken up by society. Marx and Engels make clear the wider context in which this takes place:

> Insofar, therefore, as [the ruling class] rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.[11]

To discover other reasons for the propagation of the music of these composers, a note-by-note analysis *may* provide part of the answer but certainly not the whole truth; greater insights will be gained if we examine the *effect* of the music, its social role and its consequences. I do not believe in the neutrality of music. Neither did Beethoven, who expressed the wish that if social conditions were improved, his art should be used for the good of the poor. Nor did Schoenberg, who said 'I think

[8] *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1966), p. 212.

[9] Cornelius Cardew, 'One Sound: La Monte Young', *The Musical Times*, vol. 107, no. 1485 (November 1966), p. 959.

[10] 'Spiritual Dimensions: Peter Heyworth talks to Karlheinz Stockhausen', *Music and Musicians*, vol. 19, no. 9 (May 1971), pp. 32-39.

[11] *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology Part One, with Selections from Parts Two and Three, together with Marx's 'Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy'*, ed. C. J. Arthur (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1974), pp. 64-65.

[composers] are in the first instance fighters for their own musical ideas. The ideas of other composers are their enemies.'[12]

INDIVIDUALISM AND THE POLITICAL FACTOR

The previous quote is a militantly *individualistic* statement. First of all, let us not confuse 'individualism' with 'individuality'. They are not interchangeable. There is a world of difference between 'individuality' (strongly marked individual character) and 'individualism' (self-centred conduct, feeling; egoism), and we can therefore distinguish between the 'individuality' of the *Eroica* Symphony, the inoffensive 'individualism' of Schubert's *Winterreise* and the extreme 'individualism', the solipsism of Stockhausen's *Aus den sieben Tagen.*

On the Left the critique of 'individualism' is this: that one man's individualism is another man's de-individualisation. For example, an extremely individualistic score can lead to frustration and despair on the part of the would-be performer. And if audiences are bored or alienated it is often the *individualism* of much contemporary music that renders it unintelligible. But there is a political issue at stake here of fundamental performance. Ideologues of the Right (Christopher Booker, Paul Johnson, Hans Keller, Bernard Levin) have introduced a simplistic, individualistic/collectivist dualism. On this basis these gentlemen and their allies and masters in the media are laying siege to the collective ethos as part of an overall political strategy. The aim is to undermine and weaken the unity of purpose and the collective action which have been of necessity the *modus vivendi* of the majority. Keller, the musician, seems overwhelmed by a kind of panic or hysteria, with the inevitable Freudian overtones: he writes of '. . . the new left's commitment to violent collectivism, its regression to infantile depersonalisation and dehumanisation unnoticed by the victim . . . multiple regressions to group and gang behaviour under quasi-parental protection'.[13] What this outburst typifies is a *class* reflex to Left politics and in particular to Marxism, which E. P. Thompson described in *The Observer* last year in reply to an article by Conor Cruise O'Brien:

> I find Dr. O'Brien's lampoons against undefined Marxists, his tabloid style, his roads to ruin and his abyss, the tell-tale signs of an on-coming *grande peur.* Historians have not invented the *grande peur,* this is a real event, a psycho-social class spasm of irrationality analogous to the displaced sense of 'threat' in the neurotic personality. When it comes it can claim many victims, but the first victim of its formless passions is always the reason.[14]

We can see clearly, too, how Keller's politics inform his judgements on music, and his book *1975 (1984 minus 9)* provides many examples of the following variety: 'The metaphysical and/or psychological/operatic composer's utterances are of individual discoveries, whereas the Marxist, and quite especially the neo-Marxist, makes a collectivist statement for the purpose of propaganda.'[15] Perhaps, on reflection, the sheer intellectual crudity of this 'thought' embarrassed Keller, for in another passage he tries to free Nono and Shostakovich from the 'professed truth', the 'transpersonal dogma' of Marxism, and from the stupid masses: 'It follows ruthlessly that all Marxist music that does not go beyond its intentions (as Nono's or Henze's or, of course, Shostakovich's does) is music by the stupid for the collectively stupefied.'[16] Add Hanns Eisler to the group and Keller would probably spirit *his* Marxism away too: no easy task! After a recent performance of Eisler's chamber cantata *On the death of a Comrade* (1935), I reflected on its attitude towards the individual. Brecht's text is concerned with the individual and *others* not opposed or separated, but as a unity: 'To be together without fear, that's the start. We must stay together and must not allow ourselves to be separated . . . *Truth* and *brotherhood* shall replace the rule of lies.'[17] Brecht describes the death of an *individual* whose last thoughts embraced *others.* By contrast, Keller and other ideologues of the Right isolate and idealise the 'individual', who is separated from and opposed to 'others'. This dualism is precisely what characterises the relation of the contemporary composer and his audience.

THE RELATION OF MUSIC AND SOCIETY

In his paper on 'Music Historiography in Eastern Europe', Georg Knepler, an East German musicologist, made the following observation:

> Neither the common chord nor the prohibition of parallel fifths can be directly deduced from the social conditions of the society in which they originated; nor can they be separated from that society and reduced, say, to the workings of eternal laws of nature.[18]

The relation of art to society is a formidable subject, but part of a letter Engels wrote in 1894 might serve as a useful starting point.

> The further the particular sphere which we are investigating is removed from the economic sphere and approaches that of pure abstract ideology, the more we shall find it exhibiting accidents in its development, the more its curve will run in a zig-zag. But if you plot the average axis of the curve, you will find that this axis will run more and more nearly parallel to the axis of economic development the longer the period considered and the wider the field dealt with.[19]

What these two statements imply is that a highly complex network of psychological, cultural, ideological and economic phenomena has to be taken into account in dealing not only with the art in general of a particular period but also with the individual art work. For example, the notion of 'objective and subjective culture' is particularly relevant to present-day society where there is an apparent abundance of musics to enjoy. 'Objective and subjective culture' denotes what is objectively available at any given historical moment and to what extent social classes, groups and individuals make use of this availability.

ANALYSING MUSIC

The fact that music enjoys only a relative autonomy, that an anthropological category underpins all form and content, is anathema to the positivism of contemporary analysts who treat music as a self-contained, closed entity. The work is 'analysed' simply by showing the various harmonic, motivic and textural relationships within it. All the motivic material is derived from within the piece and the source is somewhere at the beginning. As befits a

[12] *Arnold Schoenberg, Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 265.

[13] Hans Keller, 'Thinkers of the World, Disunite!', part 3, *Books and Bookmen*, vol. 21, no. 1 (October 1975), p. 57 (part 1 in vol. 20, no. 9 (June 1975), pp. 27-31; part 2 in vol. 20, no. 12 (September 1975), pp. 15-17).

[14] *The Observer* (February 4, 1979).

[15] Hans Keller, *1975 (1984 minus 9)*, p. 254.

[16] Ibid., p. 255.

[17] Trans. by John Tilbury of the text of Hanns Eisler, *Vier Cantaten* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1973), pp. 22-23.

[18] *Perspectives in Musicology*, ed. Barry S. Brook and others (New York: W. W. Norton, c1972), p. 231.

[19] Letter from Friedrich Engels to H. Starkenburg, January 25, 1894, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Selected Correspondence*, ed. S. Ryazanskaya, trans. I. Lasker (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 2nd edn, 1965), p. 468.

positivist analysis the source or 'basic theme' is regarded as 'given'; that is to say, it is left out of the analysis. There is rarely any attempt at a genetic investigation of the source material; the point of commencement, the 'zero situation' of a composition is ignored by the positivist analysts. But if, as Schoenberg claimed, the genius learns only from himself, then only the heavens can lie beyond the masterpiece and the lowly analyst finds himself analysing an immaculate conception.

Suppose, however, we adopted the methods and the impartiality of ethnomusicology and abandoned our overblown and presumptuous theories of genius and 'universal music', which play no part in the history of folk music (or can it be that throughout the centuries the poor have produced no musical genius?); suppose we viewed the musical achievements of our own barbarous tribe as dispassionately as we do those of the Yoruba of West Africa, among whom works of art appear clearly as products of society rather than as personal creations. If such methods and approaches enabled us to describe the social function and the socio-psychological function of art music in Western society, they would already have answered questions of fundamental importance.

LISTENING TO MUSIC

To most people music implies at least two levels of articulation, each of which is comprehended or simply thrown into relief by reference to the other. This *referential* process lies at the heart of our musical comprehension. The first level is found precisely in the hierarchical structure of *socially* evolved musical scales constituting something analogous to language. The elements of the second level — the choice or arrangement of sounds according to a given technique or style — must already be endowed with meaning. They must have been systematised at the first level so that there are *a priori* conditions of communication. The first level consists of real, if unconscious relations. The modernist composer, however, has abandoned the first level of articulation and attempts to operate on only one level. Thus there is no *referential* system as in modal and tonal music, or the music of all other known cultures. What is the effect of this on the listener? One strives to share in the music's impulse, to respond to the power of its internal logic. But in this music the impulse often appears arbitrary and the logic is that of a game. The harmony has no discernible structural function, as in tonal music, and the melodic elements are now being asked to play a more fundamental role to compensate for the loss of syntax. If the piece is to succeed, these elements must be invested with extraordinary significance, a superhuman feat which perhaps only Schoenberg has achieved with any consistency, and this probably because of the traumatic nature of his message.[20]

THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

What then are the tasks facing committed young musicians today? Eisler recounts a story of his encounter with young English composers in London in 1961 on the occasion of a performance of his *Deutsche Sinfonie* (1934-47).[21] During his stay in England, Eisler met several prominent young English composers and listened to tapes of their music. The differences between the pieces seemed to him to be minimal; they were all basically on the 'doom and gloom' theme, sometimes made explicit through words. Tempos were largo, poco largo, molto largo and so on. When an andante passage came along Eisler was delighted. These were gifted young people with a real feeling for musical sound, but at one point he felt obliged to tell one young man that his music was so unremittingly sad he could hardly bear to hear any more. He asked him to go away and write an allegro, suggesting that with so much sadness his music was too one-sided. When the composer insisted that he was incapable of writing an allegro, Eisler told him to go for a walk and observe the world and that he would find an allegro. He probably did not intend his words to be taken literally but we can see what he was driving at. Unfortunately few of our composers today have heeded Eisler's advice. On the contrary, they wring their hands in despair, or worse still they create a fantasy world of game-like activity which provides a precarious retreat where they can hide not only from the real world but also from their real selves. I have heard some contemporary allegros, but the music has usually been silly and I do not think that is what Eisler had in mind. He once wrote:

> A composer is not 'progressive' simply because he uses the twelve-note method. The content of his music must be progressive. This means that the composer, through his music, must address himself to the problems of contemporary society.[22]

The student, too, through his study of music, should address himself to those problems. I have already intimated the kind of musical study I believe would bear fruit. Investigate the *content* of music. How can the history, sociology, psychology and the analysis and aesthetics of music be made to ask each other more exact questions? Should not students spend less time and energy on analysing the note-to-note procedure of Maxwell Davies's Symphony and considerably more time on trying to understand why contemporary British culture needs and promotes certain composers, and why, for example, the performance of a new Symphony, unloved by millions, should warrant publicity on national television news? Form study groups and organise seminars. Review the various critiques of current and fashionable trends in contemporary music. Initiate a reassessment of serialism, for example, with reference to its proponents (Schoenberg, Leibowitz, Perle, Rufer, etc.) and to its critics (Bush, Cardew, Eisler, Hindemith, Lévi-Strauss, Marothy, etc.). Always *know* the object of criticism. Never degenerate into philistinism. Subject your ideas to the criterion of practice. A lot of talk about art is abstract and formalist. It is tempting to use abstractions to obscure the true nature of our musical activity and they form a kind of escape route from the real world. We can dream of cosmopolitan audiences, universal music and posterity, but these are question-begging concepts. For what audience are we performing? Whose needs does this music serve? For what kind of 'posterity' am I composing?

Look for ways in which you can serve your local community with music. For example, there are plenty of old people's clubs you could contact. But never play down to people: talk about the music, create a congenial atmosphere and try to raise standards. If you have a political commitment to the Left, contact political societies at universities and trade union groups, and offer programmes containing some works with more explicit political content (Berio, Britten, Bush, Cardew, Eisler, Henze, Nono, Prokofiev, Rzewski, Shostakovich, Wolff) and initiate discussion. Above all, put your music to use.

Finally, in the light of my previous comments, I guess it would not be hard to deduce my present attitude towards experimental music. My disenchantment began when it finally dawned on me that this music bore precious little relation to the real world. Primarily its relation was to *other* music to which it responded at best with wit, charm and irony (as in the work of Gavin Bryars, Howard Skempton and John White) or at worst with a shrug, a giggle or a raspberry.

[20] For a more extended critique of serialism on these lines see Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Overture', *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969); see also the admirable theory of foreground and background in music in Keller, *1975 (1984 minus 9)*.

[21] Hanns Eisler, *Materialen zu einer Dialektik der Musik* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1976), pp. 307-309.

[22] Ibid., p. 135.

Bryars has correctly observed that much experimental music does not involve compositional argument. This lack of musical argument reflects the quietist philosophy which constitutes an important ideological component of experimental music. It presents a façade of neutrality, of disinterestedness, a 'take it or leave it' stance which is disarming. To attack it is like attacking a defenceless person, unless of course one considers its apparent neutrality a sham. In the 60s many composers of experimental music moved towards repetition and 'harmony', creating a haven for disenchanted musicians within the new flower culture, a rallying-point for drop-outs who required from music a more developed, more sophisticated aesthetic than pop music provided.

Experimental music provides therapy; it has no other role because it is not developmental. It provides a certain *content* which is in demand, and in this sense it has cornered part of the contemporary music market. The rich and complex psychological states of previous music (of, say, late Beethoven) are ironed out, 'normalised', made fashionable to fit smugly with the anaesthetised demands of an average culture. The modern audience above all demands therapy and so *extracts* from a work that which may serve a therapeutic purpose. In the case of experimental music the reductive process has already been completed by the composer, the music is pre-packaged and the customer receives the prescribed form of satisfaction.

C

Reviews and Reports

JOAN LA BARBARA

KAREN JENSEN

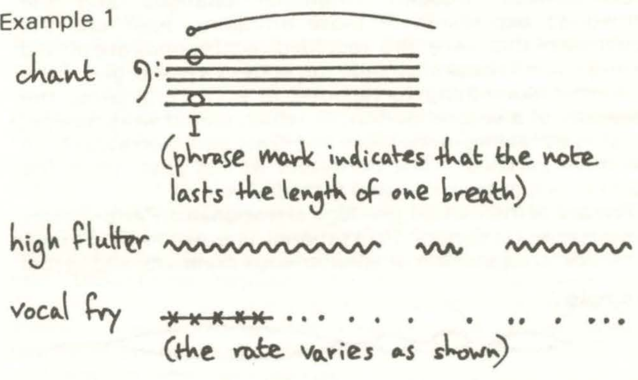
This young American is a singer–composer who believes that the act of performing puts body and mind in a state unlike any other in human existence. She therefore combines the two roles at the same time, allowing one to influence the other. This approach is very different from that of the composer who has a performing knowledge of an instrument, and also different from many forms of improvisation where attention is focused upon how known musical materials are combined. For Joan La Barbara improvisation is a means of discovering new sounds and examining her responses to those sounds.

> Other than the physical gestures of body language, voice was the original means of expression and until we reach a level of reasonably accurate telepathy it will remain the most intimate and sensitive. My work explores not only rediscovering the primitive part of the brain allowing for non-verbal communication, but also the intense affection we feel for the sound of the voice itself. Voice is the original instrument, the most timbrally flexible and the most universally appealing.[1]

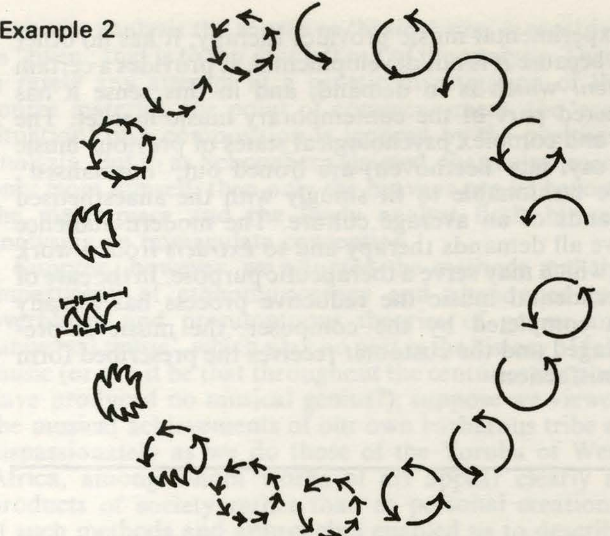
As with many American performers her studies began at university. After earning a teaching degree she studied opera but soon became disenchanted with classical music and turned to jazz, where she found there was more emphasis on enjoyment than criticism. Interest in the avant-garde developed through her ability to alter her vocal timbre, and through the unlikely experience of imitating a Japanese housewife for a radio commercial she attracted the interest of Steve Reich. In Reich's *Drumming* (1971) her voice is used as a percussion instrument, and he demanded a similar imitative approach in *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ* (1973). After working with Philip Glass in much the same way (for example, blending with soprano sax and capturing vocally the brightness of the sound), La Barbara began writing her own music. Her early music was, in the words of the New York critic Tom Johnson, 'presented more in the spirit of investigation than as a work of art'.[2] *Voice Piece: One-Note Internal Resonance Investigation* (1974) is a 20-minute exploration of tone colour on one pitch. The pitch is chosen before each performance, according to the state of the vocal instrument at the time (La Barbara states that it is not otherwise important). She explains that she imagines the pitch 'as a solid object, like a ball which I focus or place, rolling it around into different resonance areas'.[3] In her performance at York during the 1979 SPNM Weekend she demonstrated this technique and achieved some remarkable effects. There were regular, short attacks, each different in quality and dynamic, as well as longer departures into split-tone octave chant (also called 'Tibetan chant'), and reinforced harmonics. The split-tone technique involves producing two notes with the voice simultaneously, an octave apart (notated as shown in Example 1); although La Barbara chanced upon it in a tape-recorded improvisation, it has been use by Tibetan monks and lamas for centuries. It is also possible to sing an interval of a fifth, a seventh, or a triple octave using this technique. Reinforced harmonics are part of Mongolian chanting tradition, and occur when an individual harmonic from the overtone series is brought into prominence by using the appropriate vowel shape. This is not a type of vocal multiphonics since the vocal chords produce only one fundamental. Stockhausen calls for reinforced harmonics in *Stimmung* (1968).

Another very early work is *Circular Song* (1975) which relates to the idea of circular breathing. Whereas wind instrumentalists achieve constant sound by using the cheeks and tongue to expel air through the mouth while taking in breath through the nose, La Barbara generates continuous sound by singing on the inhalation as well as the exhalation of breath. There is a perceptible change of direction, and this is used to vary the ascending and descending glissandi which cover the entire vocal range and which are the main features of the piece. She begins at the top of the voice, sliding down on the 'exhale' (her own term) and up on the 'inhale', gradually adding more changes of direction of breath with each sweep of the vocal range. At the maximum rate of change of breath direction, she stops to sing multiphonics, usually aiming for the split octave on inhaled and exhaled pitches in a sequential descending perfect fifth pattern. The entire process is then reversed, creating a 'circular' form which is notated as shown in Example 2. This circular singing technique is very difficult at first, according to La Barbara, but she has managed to bring it to a state of refinement where the quality of tone is almost exactly the same on the inhalation and the exhalation. It takes great control to use the technique continuously, and

Example 1



Example 2



some singers find it very uncomfortable. It has obvious limitations as a means of achieving uniform, continuous sound: it is unavoidably broken by changes of breath direction, and it is difficult to sustain because of dryness (though closing the mouth somewhat can help the throat to retain moisture).

La Barbara has developed other vocal techniques, and concentrates primarily on vocal sounds rather than facial or body sounds. A prominent example is the 'high flutter' (notated as shown in Example 1), which characterises much of her music; producing this sound, a complex oscillation of notes above high C, involves a high degree of air pressure and general tension. Electronic equipment is used to enhance the vocal material in her tape pieces, but she has avoided the use of distortion or any effects which might disguise the original vocal sound source. *Autumn Signal* (1978) uses inhaled 'vocal fry' (notated as shown in Example 1), which is filtered orally by changes of vowel shape: the addition of slight reverberation and sufficient amplitude gives this sound an interesting percussive quality. Other sound sources in this work include a multitrack drone of sub-octaves and fifths, tongue flutters, 'bark multiphonics' and effortless, straight-tone, descending glissandi.[4]

The paucity of written scores of Joan La Barbara's works reflects the nature of her compositional approach. Tape pieces such as *Autumn Signal, Klee Alee* (1979), *'-uatre petites bêtes' q-* (1979), and *Shadow Song* (1979) are performed and constructed by La Barbara and require no score. Other pieces such as *Voice Piece: One-Note Internal Resonance Investigation, Space Testing* (1977), *Responsive Resonance with Feathers* (1979), and *Performance Piece* (1979) are based on the circumstances and subjective reactions which arise in the performance state, and they have very flexible formal outlines. In both tape and performance pieces, the electronic equipment is used as 'something to react to' and La Barbara relates her compositional–performance style to the 'stream-of-consciousness'[5] technique in modern fiction.

Space Testing is different at each performance since it is an exploration of the acoustical properties of the room in which the performance takes place. La Barbara uses a variety of sounds including 'glissandos which sweep the entire vocal range, percussive sounds, long and short sounds, to determine the pitch that the room responds to'.[6] *Responsive Resonance with Feathers* is also primarily about the response of one performer to one particular set of circumstances. Sudden emotional changes and the immediate expression of those emotions determine the structure of this piece. Pre-recorded vocal sounds are played through small speakers inside the body of a piano, giving the performer something to respond to and 'eliminating the necessity of a second performer which would work against the solitary feeling of the piece and draw attention away from the main persona'.[7] The performer in this case, plays the piano in response to her own recorded voice.

The use of instinctual, pre-logical response in *Performance Piece* is openly examined in a rational, linguistic way through the quick juxtaposition of spontaneous creativity and verbal descriptions of the impetus that gave rise to the sound, the performer's perception of it, the reasons for changing it, and the influence of the audience. La Barbara states in her programme note that the descriptions derive from the part of the brain which controls logic, although they are delivered in a 'stream-of-consciousness' form.[8]

Twelvesong (Zwölfgesang) is a multitrack voice piece commissioned by Radio Bremen. Since recording it in 1977 La Barbara has rescored it for five singers (originally the Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble and the composer herself), so that it can be performed 'live'. This score provides a glimpse into her compositional and vocal techniques, and is called *Twelve for Five in Eight*. The foundation of the piece is a constant drone sung by two singers, centred on the E flat above middle C, and fluctuating within a semitone above and below that pitch. The two voices tune microtonally to create beats, which can be varied in speed. The closer the two voices come to perfect unison, the slower the beats. This provides a kind of rhythmic structure for the piece, and the 'beat rate' is indicated graphically (see Example 3). (This is not strict graphic notation, since the 'waves' do not represent distance in pitch, but the speed of the beats. Thus, the larger the 'waves' the slower the beats. This is somewhat confusing since the two pitches must move closer to a unison to create slower beats, and the two lines almost automatically suggest pitch divergence as they separate.) The drone is maintained by continuous singing on the inbreath as well as on the outbreath, with the two singers overlapping the changes of breath direction. La Barbara states that the drone is really more constant and more effective with three voices, since even with two, the circular singing technique does not create an even sound.[9] However, the use of circular singing permits a true live version: in the original, pre-recorded, version the drone could easily have been generated electronically or by means of a tape-loop (the latter would of course limit the variability of the beats).

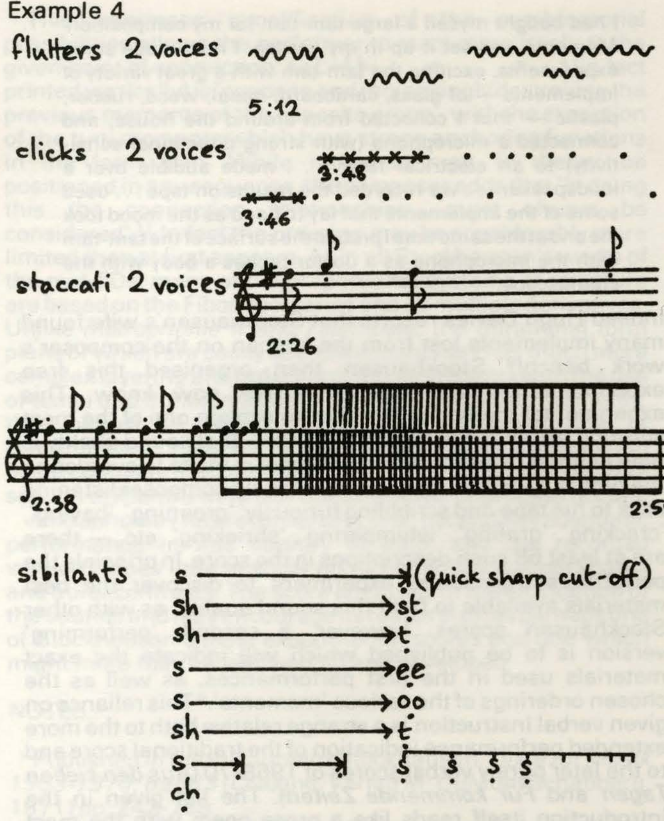
To the basic element of the drone are added various vocal techniques, 'all placed on the sound canvas as a painter adds certain colours, gestures, and strokes'.[10] The use of split-tone octave chant on an A below middle C (see Example 1) occasionally adds harmonic material as well as a particular vocal quality. Two voices use chant simultaneously in all instances, except one, where the three voices enter consecutively. Smooth glissandi, all descending, appear frequently, and La Barbara states in the instructions that the 'singer who moves from high flutters to easy, descending glisses should notice that the gliss serves not only a musical but a physical function of relaxing the muscles that tensed to produce flutters'. She adds that 'all glisses . . . are to be done evenly, effortlessly, like breathing or sighing on pitch but not with breathy sound – clear tone, no shake, no vibrato'.[11] The glissandi are indicated by definite pitches joined with a line. Pitches are also indicated in the staccato patterns of descending intervals and accelerating repeated notes. Occasionally two voices use the same sound in overlapping patterns (see Example 4).

These techniques are scattered throughout the piece, whose form is far too sketchy to be considered essential to the work; more importance is placed on the individual vocal gestures and their sensual qualities. Enjoyment of the music depends on attraction to the sounds themselves, and any attempt to rationalise them leads to the conclusion that La Barbara's music is episodic and lacking in form. Her early works are admittedly technical investigations, and represent a kind of basic research into vocal possibilities. Later works that are not explorations of performance itself represent a development of her discoveries, and most of these pieces are constructed with visual images in mind. *Klee Alee* was inspired by a painting by Paul Klee and its various layers of structural detail. *'-uatre petites bêtes' q-* 'has visual and imagistic connotations within the overall context of movement of sounds',[12] *Shadow Song* uses 'visual images to create the sonic phrases', and La Barbara's 16-track realisation of Cage's *Solo for Voice 45* uses pitches as 'calligraphic strokes'. Each of these works is a kind of collage of vocal gestures.

Although La Barbara has stated that her work has nothing to do with religion, meditation, or yoga, her concentration during performance resembles a kind of restful alertness similar to meditative states of consciousness. Her purpose in concentrating on visual images and relaxation is to coordinate mind, body, and voice, so that they work together as a unified whole. Her workshops are designed to help others to sensitise both mind and body so that they enhance rather than impede the voice. After a series of stretching and

Example 3

Example 4



loosening exercises (spine, neck, jaw, tongue, etc.), La Barbara suggests visual images to be used with vocal sounds as a freeing and directing force. In this way she hopes to increase general awareness of personal abilities and responses, and it is clear that this is an important facet of her work: it reflects her concern with the act of performing as a means of self-expression which, for her, often becomes an overriding concern. This is especially apparent in those works where the emphasis is on the process of performing (*Performance Piece, Space Testing, Responsive Resonance with Feathers*), since the musical results are not guaranteed to be as interesting as the processes that gave rise to them. This approach is partly what is meant by Theodor Adorno's phrase 'fetishism of the means',[13] where the instrument takes precedence over the music. Adorno states that modern compositions, rather than expressing absolute musical values, are concerned with those sounds which are most suitable and most effective for a particular instrument. This is certainly true of all of La Barbara's music, both performance pieces and tape pieces, since the vocal techniques are the dominating force in her work.

La Barbara's researches into vocal possibilities have resulted in the following techniques: high flutter, split-tone octave and fifth chant, clicks, circular singing, breath sounds, reinforced harmonics, and bark multiphonics. Apart from the idiosyncratic high flutter, these techniques have become widespread and are basic elements of the extended vocal techniques repertoire. Although La Barbara's researches may have led to her own discovery of these sounds, they were already known by ethnomusicologists, voice scientists, the singers of the Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble in California, and other composers and performers such as Berio, Peter Maxwell Davies, Roy Hart and Stockhausen. Nor has La Barbara's major contribution been in the field of composition as such, since she has placed such emphasis on performance that her compositions are dominated by the means of production of her vocal sound sources and by the experience of performing.

Formal structures are sketchy and unassertive, and are subservient to the type of personal expression being explored.[14] Her most significant contribution lies in highlighting the act of performance as a creative process and the resulting recognition of the performer's need for artistic fulfilment beyond that afforded by technical achievement. In turning to the creation of new sounds and exploring their expressive qualities La Barbara has found a rewarding outlet for her artistic abilities, one that is more personally satisfying to her than standard repertoire and singing technique. La Barbara has also provided an opportunity for others to understand more about the subtler aspects of performance: in seeing it as a state of being, apart from normal existence, there is the realisation that it is a kind of heightened experience where sensitivity can be at its peak. Also, in treating performance as an instinctive act to be examined rationally (as in *Performance Piece*), La Barbara has shown that to some extent, performance is a response to a specific situation, and not a pre-planned presentation which could not have been otherwise.

La Barbara has no interest in showmanship, and in choosing an open format for performance she admits that she risks the exposure of her most personal feelings. Using her voice (in live performance and in the studio), she seeks to discover more about its communicative qualities and how it is deeply and personally expressive. In a recent article entitled 'Je suis un objet d'art', La Barbara explains:

> L'improvisation était la part essentielle de mon travail... Je voulais que ma voix soit mon professeur. J'ouvrais la bouche et je laissais des sons s'échapper. Je tentais de 'vocaliser' mon émotion.[15]

NOTES:

[1] From the composer's programme note for the Holland Festival, June 19, 1977.
[2] Tom Johnson, 'Research and Development', *The Village Voice* (January 27, 1975).
[3] From a lecture by the composer at the 1979 SPNM Weekend in York.
[4] 'Vocal fry' refers to the clicking sound made by gently setting the vocal chords in motion, using less breath pressure than would be necessary to produce a discrete pitch. 'Bark multiphonics' are breathy, forceful ejections of semi-voiced sounds.
[5] 'Phrase coined by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to describe the ceaseless, chaotic, multi-levelled flow that characterizes human mental activity.' Martin Seymour-Smith, 'Stream of Consciousness', *Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought,* ed. Alan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass (London: Collins, 1977), p. 605.
[6] From the composer's programme notes for the Festival d'Automne à Paris, October 5-6, 1979 (in the original English).
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Information given by La Barbara to the author in an interview at the 1979 SPNM Weekend.
[10] From the composer's programme notes for the 1979 Festival d'Automne à Paris.
[11] From the composer's explanatory notes to *Twelve for Five in Eight.*
[12] From the composer's programme notes for the 1979 Festival d'Automne à Paris.
[13] Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music,* trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Bloomster (London: Sheed & Ward, 1973), p. 172.
[14] In one of her most recent works, *Shadow Song* (1979), it seems that formal structures take a more dominant role. Perhaps this represents a new compositional phase.
[15] Joan La Barbara, 'Je suis un objet d'art', *Le monde de la musique,* no. 16 (October 1979), p. 41.

STOCKHAUSEN — MIKROPHONIE I

SIMON EMMERSON

It is often true that important ideas are based upon misconceptions or misrepresentations of the truth. From 1964 to 1966 Stockhausen broadcast a series of lectures on West German Radio under the general title 'Do you know music which can only be heard over loudspeakers?'[1] In each lecture he covered a particular studio and its key works: the first series, broadcast monthly, covered GRM and Studio Apsome (Paris); WDR (Cologne), RAI (Milan); Warsaw and Brussels; Stockholm, Helsinki, Reykjavik, Copenhagen, Toronto; Tokyo and Columbia-Princeton (New York). It is significant that by 1964 the polemical comment on — and even outright rejection of — 'non-purist' electro-acoustics had almost entirely disappeared. Although still two years before the shatteringly pluralist ideas of *Telemusik* and *Hymnen*, Stockhausen had already moved, as we shall see in examining his 'live electronic' works of the mid-1960s, from the 'additive' synthesis of the electronic *Studien* (1953-54),

through the impulse-based synthesis of *Kontakte* (1959-60) to the 'subtractive' synthesis of *Mikrophonie I*: the sound object is given in all its complexity and is then manipulated to even greater differentiation of its richness.

However, in the very first lecture Stockhausen said:

> We hear now the composition *Tam-Tam IV* of 1950, by Pierre Henry, for many years one of Schaeffer's closest associates. I understand by the title that for this piece Henry recorded sounds of a tam-tam on tape and then proceeded to work on the taped material . . . If however one transposes such a sound very high (from a recording), as at the beginning of the following work, its entire character changes beyond recognition. It is thus clear that quite new sounds are obtainable through the transformation of natural (let us rather say, 'familiar') sounds.[2]

I have quoted the text quite fully, as both the misconception and the creative consequences of it are in evidence. In 1950 and 1951 Henry created a collection of short 'essaies concrètes' under the title *Le microphone bien tempéré*. Five of these 'essaies' have the title *Tam-Tam* and all are simple transformations of 'prepared piano' sounds! Henry had 'discovered' the prepared piano in about 1948 quite independently of John Cage, whose first trip to Europe was made in the very year of the foundation of the 'Club d'Essaie', the precursor of the Groupe de Recherches Musicales at French Radio. Listening to *Tam-Tam IV* in hindsight, it is too easy to be surprised at this extraordinary slip of the ear.Henry's work is full of metaphors: to Bach, to jazz and, more importantly, instrumental metaphor. Henry studied (as did Stockhausen) with Messiaen, and while Messiaen's *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum* is interestingly contemporary with *Mikrophonie I*, his use of the tam-tam and 'gamelan' groupings of percussion instruments can be seen as early as the *Turangalîla* Symphony of 1948. Henry's piano is prepared to an extreme degree — see the record sleeve photograph to the reissue of the work on the INA/GRM label[3] — and the title *Tam-Tam* is intended to cover a multiplicity of sounds within the 'framework' of the piano, just as the real tam-tam stands at the root of Messiaen's 'gamelan'.

Therein lies the creative consequence for Stockhausen in the 1960s. For indeed the final sentence of the quotation above was at least one line of development for the composer, and although there remain very important differences in the approach to order and structure of these transformed 'sound objects', it was still a giant step towards a position he had apparently forsaken after the 'concrète' *Etude* of 1952.[4] If *Mikrophonie I* is in some senses the fruit of this rediscovery of the given 'object', then it comes as no surprise to see Chion and Reibel writing in *Les musiques electroacoustiques*:

> A violent and massive work, *Mikrophonie I* illustrates well how an apparently banal procedure like amplification can surpass more refined electronic treatments in acoustic and musical consequences . . . *Mikrophonie I* belongs, with *Stimmung*, to the family of monolithic works of Stockhausen, in which it is not a question of experimenting with mixing and integrating opposites, but of affirming one thing and one alone.[5]

To which I must add my own feeling that while *Mikrophonie I* was perhaps the nearest to the French approach that Stockhausen had come for years, he never truly developed this 'monolithic' one. The text book view of electro-acoustic music history is confused. In moving away from the rigidity of the 1950s — the 'additive' system noted above — to *Mikrophonie I*, one cannot simply argue that the 'musique concrète/elektronische Musik' divide has vanished. And to argue further that the materials in *Telemusik* and *Hymnen* are 'found objects' in the sense of the French school is to ignore a whole dimension of their associative meaning. In short, the path is not straight from pure electronics to collage, but very crooked with several culs-de-sac and even more 'through roads' only partly trodden. *Mikrophonie I* lies in this last category. A new and diverse generation of composers has carried on this work almost unnoticed.

The mid-60s were a time of great experimentation for Stockhausen, who referred (in relation to *Mixtur*, written in July and August 1964, hence during the preliminary composition of *Mikrophonie I*) to 'the freshness and gaiety of those adventurous days'.[6] While, of course, all Stockhausen's works contain an element of surprise, a new idea exploited, it is to this period that such experimentation with the physical materials of 'live' sound excitation are confined. The original experiments were carried out by the composer and Jaap Spek in the summer of 1964:

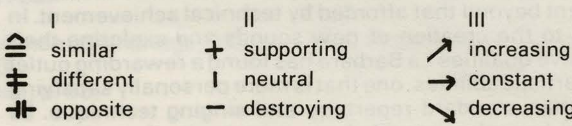
> I had bought myself a large tam-tam for my composition *Momente* and set it up in my garden. I now made some experiments, exciting the tam-tam with a great variety of implements — of glass, cardboard, metal, wood, rubber, plastic — that I collected from around the house, and connected a microphone (with strong directional sensitivity) to an electrical filter . . . made audible over a loudspeaker . . . we recorded the results on tape . . . used some of the implements that lay to hand as the mood took me and at the same time I probed the surface of the tam-tam with the microphone as a doctor probes a body with the stethoscope.[7]

Indeed Hugh Davies reports that Stockhausen's wife found many implements lost from the kitchen on the composer's work bench![8] Stockhausen then organised this free experimentation into the work we now know. This experimental method partly goes to explain one of the most startling attributes of the printed score: that sound quality is now defined in words and no attempt is made to overdefine the timbre. One can imagine the startled composer listening back to his tape and scribbling furiously: 'groaning', 'baying', 'cracking', 'grating', 'whimpering', 'shrieking', etc. — there are at least 68 such descriptions in the score. In principle the performers themselves experiment to discover the best materials available to fulfil this sound quality; as with other Stockhausen scores, however, a second, 'performing' version is to be published which will indicate the exact materials used in the first performances, as well as the chosen orderings of the various 'moments'.[9] This reliance on given verbal instruction is a strange relative both to the more extended performance indication of the traditional score and to the later purely verbal scores of 1968-70 (*Aus den sieben Tagen* and *Für kommende Zeiten*). The list given in the introduction itself reads like a prose poem with the most immediate association for the reader.

Mikrophonie I is performed by two entirely symmetrical groups of three performers. Two of each group are firmly on one side or the other of the tam-tam. The first performer of each activates the tam-tam with the materials assembled, according to instructions in the score; the second wields the microphone (sometimes with a resonator, such as a tube or cup) and the score indicates both the distance of the microphone from the source of vibration and the distance from the tam-tam surface in a clear graphic manner. The third performer of each group sits in the audience at the centre of the four-speaker amplification system, operating the band-pass filters and potentiometers (i.e. loudness controls) for sound distribution. This antiphony is the least developed of the work's large-scale parameters; with some exceptions (the 'tutti' moments) the groups play alternately, albeit interlocking their individual moments to those preceding and following. Nonetheless the spatial dimension does allow a considerable degree of differentiation of sound structure to be underlined.

The moments themselves, as in *Mixtur* and in *Momente* itself, are intended to be self-sufficient and musically independent of each other. (I refer readers to other fuller discussions on 'moment form' in Stockhausen's work.)[10] They are therefore in unnumbered loose-leaf form ready for the montage of a performance version. Most are titled by the sound-description words already mentioned; one refers to the moment 'Schnarrend'. As in *Mixtur* and *Stimmung* (but not *Momente*), the moments are of equal value and may be slotted into the given 'connection scheme' with a few a priori conditions. It is at this point that *Mikrophonie I* makes a unique contribution to the notation of musical interaction.

In 1963 Stockhausen composed *Plus-Minus*. While being a breakthrough in terms of the free notation of parameter change ('+' = higher, louder, longer, etc.; '–' the opposite), the score is complex and unwieldy, relying on the performers to write out a given version. In *Mikrophonie I* Stockhausen developed his idea of 'Veränderungsgrad' ('scale of rate of change') so that this itself becomes a simple parameter of music. Each connection between two moments is defined by the combination of three 'operators', one from each of the following three columns:



I	II	III
≙ similar	+ supporting	↗ increasing
≠ different	I neutral	→ constant
⊣⊢ opposite	— destroying	↘ decreasing

This enormous simplification of the combinatorial possibilities allows the performer to react more freely at the given point of connection; so (⊣⊢ , — , ↗) (in fact printed vertically) is 'opposite and increasingly destroying the previous moments of the opposite group', with the exception of the tutti moments which have strong anchoring functions in the form plan. While moments may, in theory, be positioned in any sequence, the composer adds that 'in doing this the connection relationships... must always be considered'.[11] In fact the ordering may be considerably more limited than at first appears. As in all Stockhausen's works of the mid-60s, many of the proportional systems of structure are based on the Fibonacci series and its multiple derivatives. Unlike *Mikrophonie II* and *Telemusik*, the durational form plans of which are easily seen, *Mikrophonie I* has much more complex layering and ordering of its components with the use of tempi and duration scales. There are three tutti moments, the longest of which, Tutti 157, embodies one of Stockhausen's recurrent ideas: the use in one short section of the complete materials of the whole composition. There is a section of *Mantra* in which the same type of process occurs.

Mikrophonie I has received only one, not entirely adequate, performance in this country to date, and the recorded version[12] does little to show off its extremely diverse spatial and aural contrasts. The score does help in the elucidation of the sounds and may encourage its reappraisal as perhaps one of Stockhausen's most experimental scores and one which might more fully be followed up and developed.

NOTES:

1 Published in full in Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Texte zur Musik 1963-1970, Band 3* (Cologne: Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1971) pp. 242-289.

2 Ibid., p. 244; also quoted (in English translation) in Robin Maconie, *The Works of Karlheinz Stockhausen* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 186.

3 Pierre Henry, *Le microphone bien tempéré* (INA/GRM AM006.08) (UK distribution by Harmonia Mundi).

4 No. 1/5 *Etude* (Konkrete Musik), 1952, created in the Paris 'musique concrète' studio.

5 Michel Chion and Guy Reibel, *Les musiques électro-acoustiques* (Aix en Provence: Edisud, 1976), p. 159 (translated by the author).

6 *Texte... Band 3*, p. 52; also quoted in Maconie, op. cit., p. 189.

7 *Texte... Band 3*, pp. 60-61; also quoted in the introduction to the score (Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Mikrophonie I* (London: Universal Edition, c1974), UE 15318, p. 3).

8 Hugh Davies, 'Working with Stockhausen', *Composer*, no. 27 (1968), pp. 8-11.

9 *Mikrophonie I 'Brüsseler Version'*, UE 15319. The moment-order choice and connection scheme for the Brussels version are given in the score already published (see note 7), p. 7.

10 Notably Roger Smalley, 'Momente', *The Musical Times*, vol. 115, no. 1571 (January 1974), pp. 23-28; no. 1574 (April 1974), pp. 289-295.

11 Introduction to the score (see note 7), p. 6.

12 *Mikrophonie I* (CBS New York 32110044, Paris S77230, London 72647).

TEXTE ZUR MUSIK 1970-1977, BAND 4 by Karlheinz Stockhausen, edited by Christoph von Blumröder (Cologne: Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1978)

BRIGITTE SCHIFFER

Now that Volume 4 of Stockhausen's *Texte zur Musik* has been published, a total of 25 years of his life and work have been covered, and this comprehensive survey provides invaluable information on his works and projects. This is the first time the *Texte* have not been edited and prefaced by Dieter Schnebel, but the editor of this new volume, Christoph von Blumröder, has retained the usual format. The book is a collection, divided into five sections, of writings practically all of which have been published before.

Section I, 'Introduction and Projects' which, with 320 pages, occupies almost half of the book, consists of some 50 programme notes, record-sleeve notes and prefaces to scores. The three texts in Section II, 'Electronic Music', include Stockhausen's lecture called 'Four Criteria of Electronic Music', one of the most important items in the book. Section III, 'World Music', a new theme, is concerned mainly with Japan, but also with other non-European musical traditions, which are treated in a very personal and sometimes rather arguable way. Section IV, 'Suggestions and Attitudes', contains a number of interviews on various subjects, some of them previously unpublished. Section V, 'Contributions to the Work of Others', 24 pages in all, includes Stockhausen's introductions to the Mahler biography by Henry-Louis de La Grange[1] and Robin Maconie's book on Stockhausen's own works.[2] A discography, a filmography, a list of all the works published to date and an index of names conclude this admirably comprehensive collection of texts, letters, photos, illustrations, diagrams, drawings, extracts from scores and performance instructions.

Many of the texts presented in Volume 4 are in the form of interviews, which occupy more than 200 of the book's 697 pages. An interview with the composer by his new editor stands in place of an introduction. This is the only entirely new part of the book and it is also the most significant and revealing one. Asked by Blumröder which subjects he would choose if he were asked to write another two or three texts, Stockhausen sums up the preoccupations nearest to his heart at present and outlines the direction in which his mind is moving. There are, first of all, the 'unbelievably exciting experiences of the last two or three years' generated by his work on 'new melody-composition' (*neue Melodiekomposition*), in particular *Sirius* and his experiments with a big new synthesizer; he describes this field as 'perhaps the greatest compositional discovery in my work so far', which he would like to set down on paper. He would also like to write about 'spatial music' (*Raummusik*), that is, about the distribution of sound in space, if only to encourage other composers and technicians to participate in musico-spatial research. Having already for some time past integrated intensity into the structure of his compositions, he is also eager to write a paper about the technical possibilities and demands of 'intensity-composition' (*Lautstärkekomposition*). Timbre seems to be another of his present interests, and he would welcome the opportunity to write about his discoveries with timbral melodies – melodies of formants ('Formantmelodien'), which can be heard independently of simultaneous pitch melodies. Lastly, he would deal with the stage as an independent structural factor in composition (*szenische Musik*), an idea that occupies an increasingly important place in his output, though little has yet been said about it.

Melody, space, intensity, timbre and movement on stage, therefore, seem to be the five parameters he is most concerned with at present, but there is, of course, also the time factor always at the forefront of his thought, and if that has been omitted here the reason is probably that this area has been covered in detail in Jonathan Cott's collection of conversations with the composer.[3]

In many respects, *Sirius* emerges as the major work of the period covered by *Texte* Volume 4. On the one hand we learn that 'it is based entirely on a new concept of spatial movement'; on the other that it is built 'on the perceptible expansion or compression of a formula'. The work has also contributed to the development of 'new melody-composition', and timbral melody in counterpoint with pitch melody is used in *Sirius* for the first time. *Sirius* is also the subject of a conversation with Japanese musicians, which took place in Japan in 1976. When asked whether the tonal aspects of the melodies in *Sirius* were specific to this work or if they represented a new principle, Stockhausen admitted that he had never before faced such difficulties as he did in his attempt 'to realise the complex transformations that were necessary', and he went on: 'If one attempts to create something as complex as this with a new technique, the transformation must be carried out on something relatively simple so that it is recognisable.' In so far as the process seems, in many of his recent works, to take priority over the material to be processed, this statement offers a key to the puzzlement caused by some of his new music. Not all parameters seem to be treated on the same level, and it remains to be seen how this disparity will be affected by greater familiarity with the new techniques.

Like the previous volumes, this book is highly informative. It is beautifully presented, and, although most readers will have come across some of the texts before, they will welcome the opportunity to view them as a whole; the book will help them to gain a deeper insight into Stockhausen's thought and ideas.

NOTES:

[1] Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Mahler: a Biography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973).
[2] Robin Maconie, *The Works of Karlheinz Stockhausen* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).
[3] Jonathan Cott, *Stockhausen: Conversations with the Composer* (London: Robson, 1974).

DEBUSSY AND WAGNER by Robin Holloway
Eulenberg, 1979

CHRISTOPHER WINTLE

Robin Holloway's study of the relationship between Wagner's music and Debussy's really comprises two books: an academic thesis on the one hand, and a personal, precompositional manifesto on the other. The second emerges most powerfully as he draws conclusions from the first, and its presence accounts not only for the highly selective, and even tendentious, approach to his materials, but also for the high degree of commitment which he brings to the undertaking as a whole. It is a curious book, but a remarkable one: impeccably literate (what other composer has ever written with this elegance?), fascinating in its methodology, and topical in its concern with the question of musical inheritance. It also provides a key to the mentality that governs Holloway's own fertile, allusive music.

Strangely, the declared subject of the book is its least novel feature. Debussy's work, Holloway reminds us, is parasitic upon three of Wagner's later music dramas: *Tristan, Parsifal* and, to a lesser extent, *Götterdämmerung.* This dependence can be traced throughout Debussy's life: it first became apparent in *La damoiselle élue* and the Baudelaire songs, emerged centrally in *Pelléas et Mélisande,* receded for a decade or so, only to surface again in two late stage works, *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* and *Jeux.* Yet, Holloway argues, however deep this dependence may be, it is not a straightforward one, for Debussy's music appears to derive its individuality from denying the power of exactly that which it loves in Wagner.

To unravel the complexity of this proposition, Holloway unfolds his argument in stages. He begins by identifying, through simple comparative analysis, the self-evident musical echoes of Wagner in Debussy. He then suggests that these allusive fragments discharge into their new contexts essentially the same meanings that they embodied in their old ones. This provides the occasion for comparing the sensibilities of the two composers, which he does from a primarily literary point of view. The strikingly complementary contrasts that emerge lead to a depiction of Debussy's music in terms that also define the differences between French and German cultures at the turn of the century. The reserve, discretion, good manners, etiolation and so forth in Debussy's music mirror the opposite characteristics in Wagner's. These two oppositions – Debussy to Wagner, France to Germany – are finally interpreted in relation to the model of the father–son complex, according to which the son shows his greatest love through his most profound and sustained opposition. This Holloway sees epitomised in the attitudes of the two composers to the Tristan chord. What for Wagner represented the yearning for a life-enhancing eroticism became for Debussy a symbol of all that is 'repressive, inhibitory, harsh and claustrophobic'. (How interesting it is that 30 years later it meant the same thing in Act 3 of Berg's *Lulu*!).

How accurate is this picture of Debussy? To answer this question it is first necessary to ask another: what kind of self-portrait is Holloway presenting in the second of the books he is writing here?

In the reaction against Wagner that he imputes to Debussy, Holloway has drawn upon the comparable reactions of the turn-of-the-century literary world, and has discovered his own creative persona through them. The Debussy/Maeterlinck sexuality that depicts 'human loneliness, lack of connection... in the end a frigid nihilism' is E. M. Forster's. The erotic which 'lingers on the fantasy rather than on the act of love, then lingers in nostalgia for its own velleity' is the creation of a Huysmans decadent. The dreamer whose wan, enervate chastity argues a craven absorption with sensuality is a poet of the Celtic Twilight betraying his Pre-Raphaelite ancestry.

The same is true of Holloway's critical models. The interpretation of musical energy in terms of sexual intumescence and detumescence derives from Freud, not from Adler or Jung. The significance he attaches analytically to short musical fragments recalls not only Nietzsche (who saw in Wagner's oeuvre 'a host of short fragments from five to fifteen bars each': *The Case of Wagner*) but also Eliot ('These fragments I have shored against my ruins': *The Waste Land*). He is a critic in the line of Tovey, considering that the 'bloom' of music is 'inexplicable to analysis', and that 'the unutterable will be – unutterably – contained in what has been uttered'. And his appraisal of Wagner has all the introverted fervour of a Lawrence: 'in *Tristan* the external world doesn't count' (it does, of course, for Wagner resolves the inner/outer life dichotomy by – as usual – having his cake and eating it: Tristan and Isolde are united in the next life, and not in this).

But to defend a brave old world is not necessarily to carry a stigma. Holloway's sympathy with the turn-of-the-century culture leads to fruitful insights, just as, in his composition, it ensures a continuity with a tradition that others have been too anxious to renounce. He is very good when discussing librettos. He is right to insist upon the centrality of the *Jeux* scenario. He extends our idea of opera theory by proposing Debussy as a kind of *Wunschkind,* transforming opera into the drama that Wagner envisaged but never achieved. He articulates vividly the new, frenzied sexuality of Golaud's music. And he uncovers with great sensitivity the Wagnerian sources of Debussy's fragments (especially in *Pelléas,* Act 2, first prelude), only rarely lapsing into the factitious (Chapter VII, for example, Examples 1a, 1b). Indeed, the book's central theme highlights the shift in hermeneutic practice between the 18th and 19th centuries, as a universal system of conventionalised *Affekten* yielded to a universal obsession with the idiosyncrasies of a single composer – Wagner.

On the other hand, the book's problems arise from the circumscriptions inherent in the same critical approach. The ramifications of Debussy's indebtedness to Wagner are far greater than Holloway suggests here. It has nothing to do with the range of the echoes, which extends into the nature music, as well as to the Sirènes, Syrinxes, and Little Shepherds. Rather it concerns the nature of Debussy's musical language, which, along with that of Strauss, Schoenberg and Berg, responded deeply and permanently to traits found pre-eminently in Wagner.

Holloway describes, for example, the first simultaneity of *L'après-midi d'un faune,* a minor triad with an added sixth, quite accurately as a version of the Tristan chord. There is ample precedent for this in Wagner, notably Brangäne's tender, coaxing (but not, surely, 'narcissistic') 'Wo lebte der Mann' (Act 2 scene 3). The ambiguities of the whole opening passage, so often discussed, derive from this chord: the ambivalance of the tonic (C sharp minor/E major), and the suggestion of other, controlling formations (diminished seventh, whole-tone scale) that come to the fore later in the piece. But this framework of ambiguity – so much more complex than the relatively straightforward ambivalences of Brahms – persists even into those pieces whose surface is apparently quintessentially French, and which are excluded from Holloway's canon of 'Wagnerian' works. A case in point is the tenth of the late piano Etudes, 'Pour les sonorités opposées'. The ambiguous tonality is achieved by the infiltration of the prevailing C sharp minor/major by F minor/major in each section; the Tristan chord is used as a recurring pivotal harmony. This is Debussy's music at its most mature. At every level, the Wagnerian influence has been digested, absorbed, and surpassed.

Indeed, Holloway generally is elusive on the subject of tonality. He pays lip service to the symphonic logic of the Austro-German tradition, without pursuing the issue into the music of Wagner and Debussy, and without mentioning any of the relevant literature (Lorenz's *Tristan* of 1926, for example): 'Wagner's leitmotifs are his musical material, just as Beethoven in the first movement of the IXth Symphony had his material, which they both proceed, in their respective contexts, to develop. Wagner's context is, naturally, the development of the drama, and does not follow a scheme of tonal ratiocination.' Of course, parts of Tristan *are* difficult to encompass within a larger tonal framework. But other parts – and not only of *Tristan* – are not: Act 1, for example, is referenced throughout on C minor which cedes to C major with the arrival of King Mark.

The reasons for evading these issues are not hard to discern. To highlight the importance to his thesis of the Debussian borrowings, Holloway draws parallels with Musorgsky's 'prosody opera', and with 'moment form' (a derivation from Boulez's writings on Debussy). Both these

celebrate the concrete musical utterance at the expense of the less immediately apparent large-scale schema. This has been one theme of his writings about composition generally. Similarly, he has preferred to defend his own obscure, uncertain syntaxes in the face of some of the more straightforward certainties (particularly of twelve-note theory) thrown up in recent times. For all this, however it is still the case that he has not addressed himself to the richer proposition, that Debussy, especially in his instrumental works, is master of the larger breath, and a direct heir to the German techniques of prolongation.

It is his conclusions, though, that reveal the extent of Holloway's private, compositional involvement with the thesis. Debussy is presented as a proto-Stravinskian kleptomaniac, a magpie filching what he loves in Wagner in order to preserve and bury it in his own work. What appears in Debussy as – surely! – the common vice of unassimilated influence becomes in Holloway the principal virtue, as his various indebtednesses to Schumann, Schoenberg, Brahms, Debussy, Wagner and so many others testify. Holloway still retains the attitude of the early-20th-century modernist, caught in the spell of Wagner, searching for the paths that will lead him away from Bayreuth. Debussy's father-son complex is in part also his own (and, more locally, is reflected in some recent remarks for and against his own teacher, Alexander Goehr). The eventual appearance, therefore, of his opera *Clarissa* will inevitably send critics back to this book as the most extended exposition of an attitude to composition that places music in its widest and most humane context. It also represents a stimulating and imaginative addition to Debussy scholarship.

POP MUSIC IN SCHOOL, edited by Graham Vulliamy and Ed Lee

2nd edition, Cambridge University Press, 1980 (hardback, £8.50; paperback, £4.25; reel-to-reel tape, £8.00 + VAT; cassette tape, £6.50 + VAT)

IAN BARTLETT

The first edition of *Pop Music in School,* which appeared in 1976, was reviewed in some detail in *Contact 18.*[1] This new edition of the book is an updated version of the 1976 publication. The chapters that formed Part I of the first edition – Dave Rogers, 'Varieties of Pop Music: a Guided Tour'; Graham Vulliamy, 'Definitions of Serious Music', and 'Pupil-centred Music Teaching'; Ed Lee, 'A Note on Conventions of Notation in Afro-American Music', and 'Pop and the Teacher: some Uses and Problems'; Piers Spencer, 'The Blues: a Practical Project for the Classroom', and 'The Creative Possibilities of Pop'; Malcolm Nichols, 'Running an "Open" Music Department'; and Tony Robbins, 'The Presentation of Pop Music' – remain essentially unchanged, though the opportunity has been taken to correct one or two minor errors.

Part II of the book consists mainly of an extensive bibliography and discography. The revised edition takes account of the kaleidoscopic flood of new material which has inevitably appeared during the last four of five years. In a brief 'Postscript' to his contribution to the first edition, Dave Rogers outlined the changes that had taken place in the world of pop music between the writing of his chapter and the going to press of the book in December 1975. In an amplified version of that postscript, 'Pop into the Eighties', he once again deftly guides the reader through the ever-changing scene up to April 1979. He identifies a variety of recent trends, among them the 'new wave', the advent of punk rock, the growth of interest in, and the wider dissemination of, reggae, and the increasing exploitation of electronic sound by groups such as Tangerine Dream.

In common with many other fields, popular music has evidently been enriched (or contaminated?) by the information explosion that has erupted in the contemporary world. The bibliography includes more than 100 books relevant to the subject which have been published since the first edition was prepared. The helpful notes by Ed Lee called 'Using the Bibliography' have been appropriately expanded. As some of the titles listed in the first edition have been omitted in the second (where a policy in favour of new publications was adopted), a student who wishes to explore a particular area as fully as possible would benefit from having access to both editions.

The editors have met convincingly the challenge of organising a daunting mass of material into reasonably coherent categories. Sufficient references are provided under most headings for even the most committed and voracious researcher. However, in the untypically short list of entries under 'How to write songs' (which includes, strangely one might think, Deryck Cooke's contentious *The Language of Music,*[2] on the grounds that it is concerned with melodic formulae, and quotes (very few, in fact) examples from popular music) omissions may be identified, namely two characteristically constructive articles by Michael Burnett, 'Making up a Pop Song',[3] and 'Music Stand's Patent Pop Song Kit'.[4]

The discography, formerly nine pages long, now extends to twice as many. Stimulated perhaps by enthusiastic pressure groups such as the quaintly designated Vintage Rock'n'Roll Appreciation Society, recent issues have considerably increased the stock of currently available records representing the older styles. A much expanded section on reggae and its offshoots 'dub' and 'toasting', and new categories covering new wave in general and punk rock in particular have also contributed to the *embarras de choix* if not always *de richesses* displayed here.

The most significant developments in British music education from the mid-sixties onwards were often spearheaded by the assertion of rather narrowly based ideologies. The controversies engendered by the sometimes powerfully persuasive forces of change (the 'progressives') and their defensive but frequently vociferous opponents (the 'traditionalists') rarely achieved the status of constructive dialogue. Recently, however, the dust seems to have settled. A quieter national mood has been conducive to a more balanced and rational appraisal of the real issues in music education. The need to think deeply through the problems of music education and to focus the attention of teachers on basic principles has been recognised and acted on, most notably by Keith Swanwick in, for example, his article 'Belief and Action in Music Education' for *Music Education Review,*[5] and his book *A Basis for Music Education.*[6] It is now not only evident but also clear that there is no incompatibility between an imaginative and discriminating use of pop(ular) music within the curriculum and the fundamental aims which should unite all secondary school music teachers.

In this context, *Pop Music in School,* with its lucidly argued, broadly based, impressively demonstrated and committed yet dispassionate approach to the subject, seems as valuable a contribution to our thinking now as it did when it was first published.

NOTES:

[1] *Contact 18* (Winter 1977-78), pp. 26-28.
[2] Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).
[3] Michael Burnett, 'Making up a Pop Song', *Music Stand,* vol. 1, no. 1 (1974), pp. 21-23.
[4] Michael Burnett, 'Music Stand's Patent Pop Song Kit', *Music Stand,* vol. 3, no. 1 (1976), pp. 33-35.
[5] Keith Swanwick, 'Belief and Action in Music Education', *Music Education Review: A Handbook for Music Teachers,* ed. Michael Burnett, vol. 1 (London: Chappell, 1977), pp. 63-82.
[6] Keith Swanwick, *A Basis for Music Education* (London: National Federation for Educational Research, 1979).

IMPROVISATION: ITS NATURE AND PRACTICE IN MUSIC, by Derek Bailey
Moorland Publishing, 1980 (£6.95)

HOWARD RILEY

To begin with a conclusion: Derek Bailey's *Improvisation* is, to date, simply the best book available concerning this subject. Other books have referred to improvisation in passing, of course, but here it receives the depth of discussion and the understanding it undoubtedly warrants. It is perhaps not coincidental that a musician has achieved this. In addition to possessing a keen critical faculty, Derek Bailey is a guitar player who has deservedly won a reputation as an innovative improviser during the past 15 years. So the book deals with improvisation from the musician's vantage point – a welcome change from the musically illiterate inanities that often pass for criticism in the media when this activity is discussed.

The book is divided into sections dealing with the use of improvisation in Indian music, flamenco, Baroque music,

church organ playing, jazz, rock, and contemporary Western composition, and finally with free improvisation itself. Along the way relevant topics are confronted – the relationship between composition and improvisation, the audience, improvisation in the classroom. What makes the book so valuable is that in each section practising musicians talk to Bailey about the nature of improvisation and their own idiomatic use of it (some of this material comes from a series of radio interviews). There are insights here that could only be imparted by practitioners for, despite the implications of the current populist vogue, certain types of musical information become apparent only through playing. A balance is achieved between specifically technical and more general discussion – not always an easy thing. Yes, it's a good read as well, although there are absolutely no traces of the fanzine syndrome.

I admit to certain misgivings when I first received the book. Improvisation, by its very nature, seems to me to be a self-sufficient activity which almost defies verbal explanation or justification. But, in the context of what is a predominantly literary culture, verbal discussion can hopefully lead on to the hearing and/or playing of music, and I see this as being one of the strongest merits of this work. Also, most of the inherent pitfalls of such a study are admitted and faced fairly in the text itself. Thus, there are no music examples for, as Bailey puts it, 'transcription, it seems to me, far from being an aid to understanding improvisation, deflects attention towards peripheral considerations' (p. 4).

Subjectivity and objectivity are well balanced. It would have been unrealistic to expect Bailey, a practising musician, to be purely objective in his approach. Naturally, most of the subjectivity surfaces in the free improvisation and general discussion sections. Given this, I would have welcomed even more subjective opinions by the author on the differences between idiomatic and non-idiomatic improvisation, and especially on how a non-idiomatic improviser can avoid becoming idiomatic – in other words, how he can create his own points of reference without working within a recognisable overall tradition.

To summarise: improvisation has been consistently misunderstood or ignored by the 'serious' sections of the musical world, and has never been given the documentation it deserves as one of the major catalytic forces in this century's music. Derek Bailey's book is, I hope, the first of many projects to redress the balance, for there is no reason why it should not set a shining example for others to follow in the future. My main regret after reading it was that there wasn't more of it, for inevitably any single book has to be selective in its material; all the more reason, of course, for future work by others with different viewpoints. For now, though, I can thoroughly recommend all readers of this magazine to buy, read and absorb Bailey's book. At the very least you'll find it thought-provoking, and it could even be revelatory.

JOHN CAGE FESTIVAL
BONN, JUNE 6-10, 1979

WILLIAM BROOKS

Most people who attended the John Cage Festival in Bonn seemed to have heard what they expected. Cage's personality and ideas are so well known by now that it's easy to fit the music to the man. Hearing the music as if it were by an unknown composer is difficult. I apparently heard things differently from most. Perhaps this was the result of my own expectations: I've recently been studying Cage's music as I would a stranger's, with as little reference as possible to the personality or the writings. Whatever the reason, it seemed to me that the resident experts (Heinz-Klaus Metzger, Dieter Schnebel, Hans Otte, Jürg Stenzl, Reinhard Oehlschlägel, and others) largely misperceived most works, hearing the philosophy rather than the sound.

In five days there were nine concerts of over 25 pieces, ranging from *Bacchanale* (1940) to the world premiere of *Hymns with Variations*. The full range of Cage's compositional techniques was represented, with the exception of the percussion music and the early chromatic pieces. There were four two-hour discussions, two of them attended by Cage himself. These in a peculiar way took on the qualities of the works presented: thus the session on *Empty Words* was quiet and probing, while that on *Musicircus* was chaotic and often abrasive.

Near the end, Stenzl noted the extreme diversity of Cage's work and wondered what, if anything, these different pieces

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DENT

had in common. 'If there is a connection', Cage replied, 'it takes place at the point of silence, in the fact of duration being the basic musical element. If we have emptiness as a basis for music, then other things can enter in.' Quite right, and a response Cage has given often. The importance of this festival for me, however, was its confirmation that the 'other things' that 'enter in' are not merely unexpected sounds. They include relationships between sounds – textures, structures, continuities – which find their way into the music primarily because of Cage's compositional clarity and consistency. Cage turns out to be, in a strange sense of the word, a melodist (as Christian Wolff long ago predicted: 'No matter what we do, it all becomes melody.') The key concept in comprehending his work is not acceptance, but discipline. The structural rigour which controlled sound in the prepared piano pieces has continued, in the later chance works, to control the process of decision-making. For that reason even the most open works, if properly performed, show great sonic unity.

Among the many events, five stood out as particularly interesting: a full-scale rendition of *HPSCHD;* the Ensemble Musique Vivante's performance of the *Sixteen Dances* and their coupling of a superb performance of *Atlas eclipticalis* with a wretched *Cheap Imitation;* the peculiar theatre that unexpectedly accompanied Paul Zukofsky's brilliant playing of the recent *Freeman Etudes;* Cage's own all-night reading of *Empty Words;* and the final evening's rendition of four recent works: *Lecture on the Weather, Reñga* with *Apartment House 1776,* and *Hymns and Variations.* Each illuminated in its own way the central issue of coherence, and raised in addition many peripheral questions about interpretation and performance practice.

The week centred on *HPSCHD,* which occupied a central aesthetic position as well, half way between the minimal specificity of *Musicircus* (which is an idea only, not even written down) and the exactness of most early and some recent works. The Bonn performance used the full complement of 52 channels of tape and seven amplified harpsichords. As in previous large versions, the loudspeakers were scattered around the perimeter of the space and the instruments placed on scaffolding at various angles and elevations. The scaffolding supported as well some 38 screens; three others were suspended from the ceiling. On these were projected slides and films, primarily of what were apparently abstract paintings. Tidy, arty, and tastefully arranged, these were washed away by the sound; only a black and white film of the Rhine, shot without editing by a stationary camera, was sufficiently concrete to act as counterpoint.

This was my first chance to see and hear *HPSCHD* as an audience member, although I have participated in two other performances as a player. I found it exhilarating, for very conventional reasons. At the discussion the following day several individuals remarked on the work's density and complexity. On the contrary, it seems to me, it would be difficult to conceive a work for those forces that would be more simple and uniform. The envelopes and spectra for the electronic sounds were derived by rigorously examining the timbre of the harpsichord; thus there is complete consistency of colour throughout. The tapes consist of reiterations of various lengths and shapes of these harpsichord-like sounds; the structure of any particular series of events is therefore extremely simple. One harpsichord part, for an electronic instrument, is simply a transcription of what could have been a tape part. It thus acts as a link between the live and pre-recorded sounds. Another allows its player to perform or practise any Mozart sonata he wishes. The other five are based on Mozart's 'dice-game' music (which may not be by Mozart), in which measures are chosen from columns and then strung together to make a minuet. One of these five is simply 20 minutes' worth of the dice game: in two others, measures from Mozart sonatas gradually 'erase' the dice-game original; in the final two, the dice game is similarly erased, but this time by a selection of music from other composers, arranged chronologically.

I go into this detail to indicate how consistent the material is, and how extensively it is dominated by Mozart. Moreover, a large proportion of the Mozart that is heard consists of the dice game. This itself is a set of elaborations of a 16-bar harmonic phrase, repeated ad infinitum. It's in C major; and because *HPSCHD* is overwhelmingly dominated by it, *HPSCHD* is in C major as well. This was perfectly evident in the Bonn performance. If one stood in the middle of the space and listened carefully, the material disposed itself in layers – dice-game music at the centre, Mozart materials in C and related keys next, then other Mozart materials, then historical material, and finally the tapes.

In fact, it is largely the constant major tonality and the triple lilt of the minuet that give *HPSCHD* its festive quality. Fred Rzewski remarked afterwards that he had tried improvising freely, rather than following the score, but had stopped because it seemed 'dissonant'. It was, of course, just as a major triad would be dissonant in *Ionisation.* If one went to *HPSCHD* expecting a chaotic jumble of sound – randomness sonified – no doubt one could hear this. Clearly many did. But if one emptied one's mind of prejudgments and personalities and simply listened thoughtfully (and surely this is what Cage wants), the music became extremely clear and coherent. It is in this sense that it is 'open' – not so much to extraneous sounds (it does not accept improvisation, for example), but to tonal relationships and structures that result from compositional procedures unrelated to tonality.

Atlas eclipticalis raises similar issues. At Bonn it was played simultaneously with an extremely spacious (eight minutes per line) version of *Winter Music* by seven pianists. *Atlas* was played by twelve members of the Parisian Ensemble Musique Vivante, without the optional electronics: the whole was directed by Cage himself. The resulting music was classically beautiful, with carefully etched details and an elegant balance. It was one of the finest Cage performances I've heard, and I found myself moved by it in the same way I have been by brilliant performances of Webern or Satie. In a work composed by superimposing star maps, so classical a result is astonishing: whence comes the lyricism in this impersonal structure?

The parts to *Atlas* provide the players with aggregates of pitches to be played in whole or in part. Within each aggregate the order is free; thus an aggregate is in a sense a collection of possible melodies. The pitches, which are often microtonal, are notated with large or small note-heads to indicate loud or soft sounds. Most sounds are soft. Numbers above the aggregates indicate the proportion of pitches that are to be long or short. More are short than long. A player normally decides in advance which pitches will be taken to be long, though in performance, of course, these may not be played.

Ensemble Musique Vivante has played *Atlas* under Cage several times. Most of its members have much experience with improvisation: many are very close to each other both professionally and personally. Their performance of *Atlas* was very much a collective effort: while each player was extremely attentive to the details of his instrument and his part, each was also very responsive to the choices and inflections made by the others. The performers were, in effect, improvising brilliantly, achieving unity and continuity by collectively realising textures and melodies as any fine improvisation group can. Unlike *HPSCHD, Atlas* accepts improvisation: in this performance, the score was less a set of directions than a set of constraints that minimised the likelihood of obvious or uninteresting responses.

But *Atlas* did not set out to be a melodic work. Cage's articulated intention was to create a situation in which each instrumental sound would be centred in itself, and in which the whole would be beyond anyone's control. The fact that *Atlas* can be made into collective melody is a measure of the extent to which the work is open, as I have said, not merely to a variety of sounds, but to sound relationships and continuities. In this extremely focused rendering, it was this larger openness that was emphasised.

In a sort of opposition is *Cheap Imitation.* Here the melody is explicit – indeed, it is all there is. But because its content is very precisely specified, there is little room for adjustment. It is no longer a question of the individual's responding to another's action, but of fusing with it. To do this, every player must be able to anticipate precisely the actions of all other players, and this requires a sensitivity that no ensemble has yet achieved; both the economics and the psychology of the professional music world make impossible the kind of rehearsals required. *Cheap Imitation* has, by all reports, been a consistent failure in all but the solo versions. It failed again in Bonn.

In discussion later, Cage remarked that Paul Zukofsky, who conducted it, had had only two rehearsals to prepare the performance. Confronted with certain disaster, he had offered to play a solo violin version instead. 'In that case', Cage explained, 'the music would have sounded beautiful but we wouldn't have been able to know what the state of our society is.' When *Atlas* was first played, the performance was a shambles; two decades later, music and the world have changed sufficiently to permit this avowedly non-continuous work to be elegantly disarmed into melody. The society

necessary to play a simple tune like *Cheap Imitation*, however, will be a long time coming.

Ensemble Musique Vivante made one other important contribution to the festival – a solid, though not stunning, rendition of the rarely heard *Sixteen Dances* from 1951. These pieces are at the watershed of Cage's aesthetic. Their material is a rich collection of timbral aggregates, carefully chosen by Cage according to his taste: in this they look back to *The Seasons*, the String Quartet and the prepared-piano works. But these aggregates are often juxtaposed according to a complex system of rules which are essentially arbitrary: in this they anticipate the many indeterminate procedures that followed. Because the notation is so precise, and the dialectic between well-chosen sounds and unchosen sequences so clear, the dances often sound far more disjunct than less rigid works like *Atlas*. They are less open to melody, but more open to the arbitrary or unexpected. We heard them in the recital hall below the Kulturforum exhibit. People came and went, and noises from the lobby and elsewhere were common. The performance, to my ears, suffered not at all.

In recent years, Cage has returned to a notation almost as precise as that of the *Sixteen Dances*, notably in the *Etudes australes* and the *Freeman Etudes*. Four of the latter were the first pieces heard at the festival, played spectacularly by Paul Zukofsky in the same recital hall. These are concentrated, intense works, which make virtuoso demands on both player and listener. I do not know the composing method used, but each of the four had a distinct quality to it, even to the extent of apparent restrictions on pitch content.

One might have expected the *Freeman Etudes* to be at least as open to ambient sound as the *Sixteen Dances*. Quite the opposite was the case. Just before Zukofsky was to begin, a late arrival opened the door to the hall: as it shut, it creaked slowly and rhythmically. Zukofsky waited. Another arrival produced another series of slow creaks. Zukofsky began. Subsequent comings and goings further activated the portal percussion. The situation was striking: nearly everyone in the hall, including Zukofsky, was distracted by the sound. For any other composer's music, the door would either have been shut or propped open; but Cage was there, and no one was willing to assert in his presence that the unexpected sound was a nuisance. The only person who felt unrestricted by Cage's philosophy was Cage himself, and before long he walked to the door and wedged it open with a book.

Several days later he was asked about this incident and explained: 'What you have is an extremely complex situation, like poetry condensed in time. You only have a brief moment to hear a very complex situation which, it is true, is open to noises; but I don't want to hear them because I don't know these pieces very well yet and I don't have very many chances to hear them.' Though this may be true, it seems a bit sophistical. The *Freeman Etudes*, at least as Zukofsky plays them, are open to melody, but not to noise. The arbitrariness of the compositional procedure is not audible in performance: the individual notes, arrived at independently, become a continuity which can be (and was) interrupted. In the *Sixteen Dances*, on the other hand, the arbitrariness is sufficiently clear to make melodisation difficult: other sounds are therefore admissible.

There was much coming and going that evening, as well, when Cage gave the first complete reading of *Empty Words*, a massive text-piece in four sections, in which excerpts from Thoreau's *Journal* become increasingly fragmented and sparse. In Bonn the parts lasted for two and a half hours each and were separated by half-hour intervals in which juices, wholemeal breads and other Thoreauvian comestibles appeared. Drawings from the *Journal* were projected on the stage of the dark hall, while Maryanne Amacher played tape recordings made at Walden Pond (immediately recognisable to one who has been there by the distinctive combination of church bells and motorway noise). A tardy mayfly hovered around a shaded lamp illuminating Cage as he half sang, half spoke the text. People listened, dozed, came and went, like shadows round a camp-fire, and for the last part, the source texts of which concern dawn, the outside doors were opened. I very foolishly left early, but it was clearly a transcendental evening.

Again, however, the intention is easily misread. *Empty Words*, in such a performance, is aesthetically an extremely classical piece – an elegant and detailed setting of a major philosophical text. In the portion which I attended, my associations were with Tibetan chant, with Satie's *Socrate*, even with *Parsifal*. Cage's music perfectly expresses the content of Thoreau's words, helping the listener to understand them in a new way. It matters not at all that they become, in the process, unintelligible.

Indeed, a very great deal of Cage's music in recent years has been explicitly programmatic, expressive, or didactic. *Lecture on the Weather* (which was performed on the final evening) uses the elements of *Empty Words* in a blatantly descriptive way: Thoreau's text is drowned out by tapes of a thunderstorm, while his drawings are projected in flashes, like lightning. A preliminary essay discussing society's unwillingness to consider Thoreau's advice makes the parable unambiguous.

In a similar way, *Apartment House 1776* is a commentary on American culture, with four individuals from four subcultures presented in relief against a competitive background of quartets that are partly-'erased' performances of early American music. These erasures illustrate another facet of Cage's recent work: not only does it comment on other music, but in some cases other music is actually its referent. Thus *Cheap Imitation* is not only a statement about the difficulties of social action, but also a kind of 'setting' of Satie, and it can become a kind of meta-music if one knows the original well enough to hear its ghost behind the alterations. The *Hymns with Variations*, given their first performance in Bonn, use the erasure techniques of *Apartment House 1776* to the same effect while posing performance problems similar to those of *Cheap Imitation*. Thus they are both a critique of choral singing and an elegant 'setting' of an earlier music: they illuminate early American hymnody in the same way that *Cheap Imitation* illuminates Satie, or *Empty Words* illuminates Thoreau.

Of the final evening's music, only *Renga*, which was performed with *Apartment House 1776*, is an abstract work like, say, *Atlas eclipticalis*. Like *Atlas*, it can, I think, be sparse and elegant, though one wouldn't know that from the Bonn performance: *Renga* and the *Hymns with Variations* both received miserable treatment at the hands of the WDR orchestra and choir. The playing of *Renga*, in particular, was reminiscent of the infamous *Atlas* premiere by the New York Philharmonic: Dennis Russell Davies now, like Bernstein then, seemed unwilling or unable to stem the tide.

I am sorry the festival ended in that way. It was an ambitious and adventuresome undertaking all around, and much of it had obviously been carefully considered and rehearsed. In sum, the good performances far outweighed the bad, and the diversity and density offered an unprecedented opportunity to grasp Cage's work as a whole. The intersection between the pieces, it seems to me, is broader than Cage suggested. It is true that they meet 'at the point of silence' and that, because of this, other things, not originally planned, can enter in. But these other things, I am convinced, include most, if not all, of the characteristics of less radical music. Cage's work is becoming melodic and coherent, despite itself; and increasingly there is room in it for description, emotion, even a sermon or two. But these often appear not because Cage put them there but because he made room for them; thus, although the result may resemble the music that came before, there is an important difference.

Cage noted this difference years ago, in the *Lecture on Something*: 'there is not one of the somethings that is not acceptable. When this is meant one is in accord with life, and paradoxically free to pick and choose again . . . New picking and choosing is just like the old picking and choosing except that one takes as just another one of the somethings any consequence of having picked and chosen.'[1] The same difference is even more crucial to one of his favourite stories: 'Before studying Zen, men are men and mountains are mountains. While studying Zen, things become confused. After studying Zen, men are men and mountains are montains. After telling this, Dr Suzuki was asked, "What is the difference between before and after?" He said, "No difference, only the feet are a little bit off the ground."'[2]

John Cage started in music as a composer of beautiful and useful things. Then, for a while, things were a bit confused: he was an aesthetician, a social critic, a poet, a philosopher. It's now clear that he is a composer of beautiful and useful things again – and, furthermore, that that's what he was all along. The feet may be off the ground, but the shoes still fit.

NOTES:

[1] *Silence* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966), pp. 132-133.

[2] Ibid., p. 88.

WORKSHOP FREIE MUSIK
BERLIN, MARCH 19-23, 1980

MARK LOCKETT

The contribution and importance of the Workshop Freie Musik, devoted to improvised music by piano–percussion duos, to a not-so-small minority-appeal area of German musical life was undeniably great, and was very much more than simply a promotional venture for FMP records.[1] One strong impression left by the five-day workshop is the extraordinary diversity of musical languages lumped together under the heading of 'free jazz', and their even more extraordinary interactions. The tense, dissonant avant-gardism of the free jazz of early 60s America is just one aspect of this. Another is the conglomeration of styles and ideas about sound production and the theatre of performance, which ten years ago might have raised the perennial and pointless question 'But is it jazz?' Well maybe not; but it is a multi-faceted language in which hidden axioms, diverse references and implied old codes suddenly stand revealed and are subsequently dropped.

'Out of creative anarchy emerges the new synthesis', wrote Koestler in *The Act of Creation*. The duo is perhaps the ideal medium for a clash of different styles as it is analogous to the most basic cell of relationship. The possibilities offered by the diversity/unity of the duo are comparable to the advantages of binocular vision, of a second language, of binomial-theory mathematics, or of the double proofs of geometry; for relationship is always the product of double description. The interaction of the improvising duo is similar to that of two eyes: each can give an independent monocular view; combined they give a single binocular view in depth. The members of a duo can play 'together', against each other (consciously), or quite independently: in the case of the last, a third 'vision' may belong exclusively to the outside listener, the players themselves being unaware of the music's composite direction. But most importantly, the duo has at its disposal the gamut of varied and unpredictable phenomena of relationship which cannot be internal to one person.

The solo, the monologue (and in jazz the monologue often predominates in larger, less intimate situations), when presented to an audience, is usually a theatre of formality, a considered statement delivered with a certain self-confidence. The dialogue is immediately less stable. Californian composer Robert Ashley has been concerned with exploring this precarious intimacy in his 'conversation pieces' – spontaneous conversation, including all its errors, ineloquence and embarrassed silences, as peformance. In the duo, unlike the monologue, there is a mutual interference whose friction itself creates material for the continuation of the improvisatory process – a self-perpetuating chain of stimulus, response and reinforcement.

The workshop took place in the spacious ideal setting of the modern Akademie der Kunste in the Hansa quarter of Berlin, in a bare white room with low ceiling and wooden-tiled floor, which looked as if it may actually have been a workshop at one time. The five consecutive evenings all followed the same format: four duos each played for about an hour. Despite this uniformity of presentation, each evening had a remarkably different character, from the rather awkward and tentative beginnings of the Wednesday to a peak of exuberance and intensity on Saturday. The last night, Sunday, felt by contrast curiously subdued and expectant, but produced some of the most refined and articulate, if not the most ebullient, music of the entire festival.

The duos:

Keith Tippett – piano
Louis Moholo – drums

Bobby Few – piano
Muhammad Ali – drums

Ulrich Gumpert – piano
Günter Sommer – drums

Misha Mengelberg – piano
Han Bennink – drums

Martin Theurer – piano
Achim Goeke – drums

Irène Schweizer – piano
Paul Lovens – drums

Bernhardt Arndt – piano
Manfred Kussatz – drums

The percussion playing was extremely varied, ranging from the typical free jazz 'drums-as-energy' sound to the continuing exploration of anything that can be struck, scraped or dropped. It was interesting to note the often very clear division into 'drummers' and 'percussionists', who marked out very different territory for themselves, the 'drummers' sometimes becoming increasingly experimental. Manfred Kussatz demonstrated this particularly, and by his last performance (perhaps inspired by observing his fellows) had added some corrugated plastic sheets, wooden balls on strings and a beaten-up cymbal to his immaculate Premier kit.

It became more and more noticeable that there exists an inherent imbalance between the limitations and monochromy of the piano and the freedom and variety of the percussion. The pianists were restricted to one instrument and its particular timbre. (The piano itself was, in any case, totally inadequate and deteriorated markedly with each successive evening, needing more and more frequent tuning. It was unfortunate that a better instrument could not have been provided, especially since some of the sessions will no doubt feature on future FMP releases.) The imbalance was extended by the dynamic nature of much of the percussion playing and the percussionists' use of acoustical space (Günter Sommer's spinning gongs, Achim Goeke's running about the hall with thundersheets, and the antics of Han Bennink), by contrast with the necessarily static nature of the piano, and the fact that it is a more or less fixed sound source with only one acoustical perspective.

It was Hume who first distinguished between two basic forms of association: association by similarity and association by contiguity, the former creating a world of resemblance, closed systems and paradigms, the latter processes of logic (such as those of Western linguistics – words are formed by combinatory permutations of letters and phonemes). The Western mind is contiguity-biased because of its reliance on language: as signs are felt to acquire 'meaning' only through transliteration into the verbal code, it follows that the rational mind works by contiguous association. Indeed, when dealing with analogy, 'scientific' minds are extremely cautious, as this type of free association – by similarity – is almost (dare it be said?) non-scientific. Simile and metaphor are the devices of poetry and defy rational explanation. In the words of Paul Valéry, 'To summarise a thesis is to retain its essence, to summarise a poem is to lose its essence'.

Will anti-rational music defy our ingrained logocentrism? In some circles, reading a musical score is considered a comparable experience to actually hearing it – a useful skill, maybe, and one that makes it more possible to abstract the musical process to an idea or concept. However, the music of the workshop was a music of continuously evolving and unrepeatable process, not in any way fixed or 'edited' on the time domain through arbitrary substitutions. The sets often involved an hour of continuous playing, seamless, epic structures which were not concerned with economy or brevity (such as is sometimes found in the work of Fred van Hove or Iskra 1903) – the only way, I suppose, that an improvisation can be conceived as an 'object'.

Despite our insatiable desire to convert experience into words, a work of art will mutely resist description and analysis. Perhaps it is for this reason that much music of recent years, in overcoming the extreme formalism of an earlier generation, has retreated into a cosy world of self-reference. The similarity association seems to be highly favoured in new music: it can be found not only in repetitive and minimal/process musics but also in more academic styles of contemporary composed music, in the abundant use of pitch-matching and masking, and the use of homogeneous groups of instruments. It can also be found in improvised music: instrumental combinations of similar timbre and – the cliché sine qua non – close imitation between players, which often leads to a false feeling of security. Is this not contrary to the notion of music as language? Homogeneity of material fosters an unhealthy emphasis upon relationships internal to a given structure at the expense of communication of aesthetic substance. Furthermore, it shrinks the limits within which a player may bring an idea to its proper fruition. Of much greater interest in the improvising situation are the potential differences between diverse sources and ideas. Within whatever sensational range is adopted, discontinuities – forms of material opposition – are crucial to the clarity and communicability of the end result.

It was this difference, discontinuity and inherent dialectic, that manifested itself so clearly at the Workshop Freie Musik, within the narrow range of the piano–percussion combination. Differences between the duos, and between the members of each duo and their various kinds of dialogue and interplay, were laid against a background of ambivalent relationship between the instruments themselves, a combination laden with contiguity-based implications: piano

as percussion instrument, drums as melody instrument, common acoustical delay characteristics, the jazz 'rhythm section' or cocktail trio without the bass, and the strong precedents for piano-drums combinations in free jazz, such as many Cecil Taylor groups since 1961, the Don Pullen–Milford Groves duo of 1966 and others. However, such acoustical and historical points of contact did not overshadow the value of the work done here, but rather gave it greater depth. (In a common alphabetic/phonetic code there will always be shared forms and semantic cross-references.)

So to consider some of the duos individually: Martin Theurer and Achim Goeke represented the characteristic brand of German free jazz, using elements derived from contemporary American jazz and the European avant-garde, with emphasis on speed and nervous energy. Despite the feeling of having heard it all in different form before – the energy and density of free jazz, the metreless rhythm, and the abrupt contrasts introduced by echoes of European art music – the listener was struck by the closeness of the relationship between the two as an improvising duo. Although not widely known over here (Theurer's first record, *Moon Moods*, has recently been issued by FMP), they have played together as a duo for six years and during that time have sought to explore and develop points of correspondence between piano and percussion. Thus Theurer's piano playing is deliberately percussive, with a lot of fast alternating-hands technique, powered by wrists and forearms rather than finger articulation. This technique developed from a conscious decision to play percussively, to imitate stick technique (Theurer likens his stiff fingers to vibraphone mallets) and to make use of the key-action noise and high partials that come from loud playing. The main disadvantage of this, as Theurer pointed out in conversation, is the inability to gauge intervals and play scalic runs. However, it is clear that Theurer thinks in terms of blocks of sound rather than in sequential abstract pitches or harmony. Though he claims that the music is 'atonal' (an atonality derived from ballistic accident rather than from the deliberate avoidance of all that is 'tonal'), the dynamic extremes, unusual use of pedal washes, and simple but very effective piano preparations, coupled with a leisurely progression from one sound area to another, lent an epic quality to the music purely on the sound level, quite overshadowing any conscious manipulation of pitch content, if indeed there was any at all.

Achim Goeke's playing makes little or no reference to the conventions of jazz drumming, 'free' or otherwise, but instead takes sound exploration and timbral contrast as its starting-points. He uses a conventional kit in conjunction with other pitched instruments of varying degrees of resonance and sustain, including crotales and an enormous rack of home-made or found metal objects, and various mobile instruments – spinning gongs, cymbals to be thrown, sheet metal to be dragged across the floor, and, at one point, a thundersheet at which the audience was invited to throw stones. Though his playing tends to be more disjunctive, often demarcating the larger structural changes as well as contributing to its busy surface texture, he, like Theurer, leaves much to kinetic chance. Both of them use gestural motion, variations on simple body movements which have a high degree of unpredictability and randomness as to the actual notes that result, but their playing retains its cohesion (albeit one step removed from the physical involvement) through the strong musical intent and motivation.

The other West German duo, Bernhard Arndt and Manfred Kussatz, worked from the same starting-point of effusive energy, speed and contrast, but their approach was more overtly 'jazzy', and I think their music suffered because of it. It sounded rather like 'genre' music, as though they had defined for themselves the free jazz idiom but were uncomfortable with it. The random, ideo-kinetic playing of Theurer was quite different from Arndt's deliberate chromaticism, where the extensive use of seconds, sevenths and ninths and other patterns of obviously gestural origin seemed to have settled into clichéd formulas of notes. He tended to use the right hand for atonal runs or repeating patterns and the left hand as a harmonic support, often with chromatically shifting fourth chords sounding like rather aimless McCoy Tyner pastiche. Kussatz played a conventional drum kit, creating a continuous barrage of tensile and metreless rhythm, but it was all much too loud for a proper balance with the piano, particularly the high-pitched bass drum whose persistence gave the music an unintentionally monotonous under-pinning (a drawback with some of Cecil Taylor's live recordings from the 1960s). The constant turbulence had a strange effect on the ears. After not many minutes the music would seem quite flat and monochrome; it was only when this prevailing condition was left behind that other things stood out. Some of the most interesting moments occurred on the Sunday night, when Kussatz brought in additional percussion instruments to augment his kit, opening up possibilities of timbral contrast and abrupt changes of texture. Also the use of vocal sound (a lengthy monologue delivered into the piano), long silences between rapid bursts of sound, and a remarkable hand-percussion duet (drums, clapping, piano case and interior) developing from an infectious three-against-two rhythm, made this their most memorable performance.

The Lovens–Schweizer duo were, by contrast, a model of poise, balance and gracefulness and, arguably, were the most accomplished both expressively and technically. Although they came together as a duo only very recently, their improvisations sounded polished, almost like pre-structured pieces. The music was powerful yet never overbearing, avoiding the condition of perpetual restlessness of some of the other duos. I think the reason for this was partly that each change was very clearly articulated and that sound material for a section was used selectively yet explored thoroughly. The diathesis of free jazz as fast and loud was not taken for granted; when this type of movement was favoured it seemed to be the result of a conscious decision. Above their natural empathy as sensitive improvisers, they remained surprisingly individual and different from each other. Lovens's playing is quite linear in conception and non-repetitive, commanding a huge and constantly changing dynamic range. His kit is comparatively small and is made up almost entirely of Chinese and Indian drums. It also incorporates a number of small instruments and objects strewn over the floor around his feet – miscellaneous cymbals, pieces of wood, metal, bamboo, etc. – which are picked up, placed on drums or piled on one another. This modular arrangement and Lovens's own style seem geared to exploring dichotomies of flow/stasis, sustain/decay, and continuity/disjunction. Thus texturally dense and varied passages are interpolated with periods of sparsity, dry sounds with sustained sounds, timbral richness with functional drum-strokes. There was a curious contrast between the non-resonance of the drums used and the varied and refined techniques of sustain, such as very even rolls (often with one hand) played on the riveted casings or rims with notched sticks. Irène Schweizer's playing, on the other hand, was more episodic: having defined a particular area or idea, she explored it exhaustively, often by means of repetition, before moving on to the next. I sensed a certain uneasiness on the part of Lovens at Schweizer's bold use of syncopated and 'jazzy' sections, stolidly refusing to play time, but these sections worked nevertheless.

Bobby Few and Muhammad Ali were the only Americans among all the Europeans, and their approach was very different – free jazz as ritual or ecstatic communion rather than 'musical genre'. Musical rapport seemed coincidental to the extraordinary energy and abandon which they possessed as individuals, converging on an emotional level rather than a musical one (perhaps this explains the often amusing non-correspondence of tempos and transitions). They used their voices for much of the time as part of this communion, and the shouts and cries were a natural extension of the instrumental music. This particularly cast doubt on the idea of vocal and instrumental music as being quite separate, each having its own autonomous history and culture – an idea propounded by Curt Sachs and later taken up by writers in *Musics*. Here, as in many tribal cultures, the singing was an integral part of a refined muscular activity. The music moved fluently from metred to non-metred sections (the latter usually the result of the former no longer being able to be 'contained'), and incorporated fragments of composed material, mostly from an open-ended piece by Bobby Few called *Continental Jazz Express*, which consists of sections in diverse styles and moods, connected by a simple theme representing a train on its journey from one place to another – a type of free jazz *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

The work of Misha Mengelberg and Han Bennink as a duo is now fairly well known through their FMP recordings. There were three opportunities to hear their bizarre incidental music; incidental, that is, to a spontaneous and hilarious theatre (but perhaps the question of which comes first is not really important). The absence of this visual theatre is the one – unavoidable – fault of their records. Their performances were, needless to say, the most visually entertaining of the whole festival, and brought to the fore, even parodied, the

dynamic (in both sound and movement senses) imbalances of piano and drums. Bennink not only used the whole stage area for hitting, throwing, bouncing, rattling and jumping, but the entire hall. Mengelberg, on the other hand, spent much of the time in comparative inertia, hunched at the piano with coffee and cigarette, just contemplating the keyboard, sometimes tentatively trying a few notes, a snatch of tune, listening thoughtfully. His languor and subtle changes in facial expression were totally opposite to the vivacity, slapstick aggressiveness and enormous spatial distribution of Bennink's playing, and that arrant disconnection between two people who were meant to be playing as an ensemble was perhaps the funniest thing of all. When unable to compete, Mengelberg walked around, did keep-fit exercises or encouraged audience applause and participation. At times their disparity seemed positively antagonistic – Bennink's yells and loud crashes came at Mengelberg's quietest moments, and once Mengelberg stomped off the stage to retaliate by rattling the cloakroom coathangers noisily, returning only to find Bennink applying sticks to the keyboard – yet beneath all this there was a strange unity and moments of perfect synchronisation which made them both smile in spite of themselves. The music was a pastiche of different gestures, clichés, styles and idioms, haphazardly but authoritatively assembled. Mengelberg's playing included snippets of Beethoven sonatas, perverted cocktail pianism, jazz standards with curiously elongated changes and unresolved cadences which would take on their own ridiculous form, and fantastic parodies of practising and of fists-and-elbows free jazz pianists. Bennink likewise parodied the more exuberant free jazz drummers, knocking over most of his kit in the process, played swing on floor and biscuit tins, stamped out rhythms on the resonant makeshift stage, played his drums with wet towels, other peoples' with showers of dried beans.

Though at quite the opposite pole from the extrovert theatricality of Mengelberg and Bennink, the Keith Tippett-Louis Moholo duo were among the best actual performers, being musically varied yet qualitatively consistent in spite of unfavourable circumstances – Tippett's illness with flu, and the fact that they were, in all three appearances, the last duo of the evening, starting at a time when most of the audience was ready to leave to catch last trains or because of plain (and understandable) saturation. Nevertheless, they felt responsibly obliged to provide – and succeeded in providing – on each occasion a marked contrast with the rest of the evening's performances, never sacrificing their stylistic integrity. While making occasional reference to modal playing, fragments of blues, dense and heavily disguised chord changes, and the 'rhythm-as-energy' school of free jazz drumming, this was no tribute or pastiche, but rather an acknowledgement of common roots which have put forth strikingly individual growth. They demonstrated the quality, often lacking in free jazz, of musical strength without violence, control and quiet insistence rather than eruption and ferocious density, and avoided typical shock tactics of loud sounds dramatic crescendos and cut-offs and abrupt changes. This is not to say that the music was relaxed; just the opposite in fact, it was very dense in terms of numbers of notes, but it was a density that built and declined slowly in huge waves, balancing urgency with a sense of epic design. The performances generally followed a distinct format: periods of exploration, in which ideas were thrashed out – dealt with one by one, sometimes tentatively and disjunctly – alternated with periods of dynamic or tonal stasis, in which repeating or slowly transforming patterns of rapid notes, often distilled from the preceding exploration, became hypnotic or obsessive. These passages had a tendency to become longer and longer and increasingly selective in the use of material, while the exploratory passages assumed the function of transitions between them. Whereas free jazz piano style has often stressed the essential independence of the hands, both from jazz cliché and function (left hand for harmony, right hand for melody) and from each other, Keith Tippett's technique is largely derived from investigating their mutual interdependence. Both hands are almost always involved in the same task, whether this be 'locked-hands' chordal playing (echoes of Brubeck and Garner) or building up a single complex line by means of alternate notes or note groups in each hand. Much of his playing involves interlocking isometric patterns with the hands on top of each other (a technique associated more with the playing of process music than with free jazz), which can also develop freely in any number of directions. Their last peformance, on the Sunday night, which also concluded the whole workshop, was a curiously haunting example of this free jazz process music, where instrumental patterns merged with vocal sounds echoing nocturnal animal calls and emerged again to create a continuum of unpitched noise (prepared piano and cymbals), providing a quietly fitting end to the night.

NOTE:

[1]Free Music Production (Behaimstrasse 4, 1000 Berlin 10; tel. 030 341 5447) is a specialist label issuing recordings of European improvised music. Its main outlet in the UK is Collets Folk/Jazz Record Shop, 180 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2; tel. 01 240 3969.

SELECTIVE DISCOGRAPHY:

Ovary Lodge, Keith Tippett (piano), Julie Tippett (voice), Harry Miller (bass), Frank Perry (percussion). (Ogun 600)
Family Affair, Keith Tippett (piano), Harry Miller (bass), Marc Charig (cornet), Louis Moholo (drums). (Ogun 310)
Keith Tippett's Ark, 22-piece orchestra. (Ogun Ogd 003/4)
Boundaries, Elton Dean Quintet, with Marc Charig (cornet), Keith Tippett (piano), Marcio Mattos (drums), Louis Moholo (drums). (Japc 60033)
The Unlonely Rain Dancer, Keith Tippett (piano). (Universal Productions 2LS 48)
Echos von Karolinenhof, Ulrich Gumpert Workshop Band. (FMP 0710)
...Jetzt geht's Kloss!, Gumpert-Sommer duo. (FMP 0620)
Hörmusik, Günter Sommer (percussion). (FMP 0790)
Moon Mood, Martin Theurer (piano). (FMP 0700)
Working, Arndt-Kussatz duo. (FMP 0750)
Few Coming Thru, Bobby Few (piano). (Sun SEB 001)
Continental Jazz Express, Bobby Few (piano). (Jazz Today 5/Vogue 405)
Diom Futa, Bobby Few (piano), Cheikh Tidiane Fall (percussion), Jo Maka (soprano saxophone). (Free Bird FB 209/FRL 001)
Mengelberg/Bennink Duo. (ICP 010)
Han Bennink Solo. (ICP 011)
Brötzmann/Mengelberg/Bennink. (FMP 0670)
Einepartietischtennis, Mengelberg-Bennink duo. (FMP/SAJ-03)
Han Bennink Solo: West Ost. (FMP/SAJ-21)
Pech Onderweg, Misha Mengelberg (piano). (Bvhaast 016)
Tetterettet, ICP-Tentet (ten-piece band with Mengelberg and Bennink). (ICP 020)
ICP-Tentet in Berlin. (FMP/SAJ-23)
Messer, Irène Schweizer (piano), Rüdiger Carl (saxophones), Louis Moholo (drums). (FMP 0290)
Hexensabbat, Irène Schweizer (piano). (FMP 0500)
Was it Me?, Paul Lovens-Paul Lytton percussion duo. (Po Torch 1)
The Very Centre of Middle Europe, Schweizer-Carl duo. (Hat Hut 10)

30th Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik
Darmstadt, July 20 to August 5, 1980

ROGER HEATON

Darmstadt, the mouthpiece of all that was urgently important in post-war music, shows only a pale image of its former glory. My expectations were, of course, based on its past reputation, yet, even in the absence of those 'angry young men' of the fifties and sixties, I looked forward to a refreshing experience.[1] I was disappointed; I was also shocked at the strength and influence of the new neo-romantic movement.

The course itself was divided into two: the Composition Studio (Ferneyhough, Gerard Grisey, Wolfgang Rihm) and the Interpretation Studio (Caskel, Deinzer, Gawriloff, Henck, Kontarsky, Armin Rosin, Werner Taube), with morning and afternoon sessions on every day of the two week course. The first week of the Interpretation Studio was spent in some excellent master-classes on solo works, and as more of the participants' scores were handed in, selected (by a panel of all the tutors), and distributed, group rehearsals were prepared for the ten Studio concerts given in the last four days of the course. The Composition Studio divided into morning lectures and afternoon workshops where participants could briefly present their own work. Until Ferneyhough arrived in the second week, the Composition Studios seemed to lack enthusiasm (Ferneyhough, incidentally, was the only

composer to give individual consultations), and a general criticism, particularly from the Americans, was that there was no leading personality. By the end of the first week we badly needed the rejuvenating presence of a Kagel or a Ligeti.

Grisey, who opened the course, talked about his own music, whereas Rihm concentrated on participants' presentations. A great deal of the music presented was of an undergraduate standard, and the discussions of works therefore centred cautiously on aesthetic issues where in some cases a practical approach as to why the piece was unsuccessful would have been more useful. I assume that more detailed course structures, such as those that governed Stockhausen's composition courses at Darmstadt,[2] could not be worked out because of the numbers involved (some 100 composers and 100 performers).

The analysis sessions were also unsatisfactory. Wlodzimierz Kotonski presented a general introduction to the younger generation of Poles (those born since 1950), and Wolfgang von Schweinitz, Salvatore Sciarrino and Tristan Murail each presented his own music. One hoped for explanation of process and structure rather than vague description.

Of the composers who participated, those of Eastern Europe and Japan seem to fall clearly into national groups. Apart from West Germany, the best-represented country was Roumania with 25 composers and a string quartet which won the performers' part of the Kranichsteiner Musikpreis. Two types of music came from this group: one tonal, non-contrapuntal and folk influenced, and the other strongly coloured by the Polish school of the sixties, including Penderecki's string techniques. The younger Poles have tried to move as far away as possible from their more famous elders. Some of the new pieces described by Kotonski were given in a concert by the Warsaw Music Workshop; two others were played in the Studio concerts: *Tricorne* (1978) by Pawel Buczynski (b. 1953) for two flutes, cello and harpsichord, and *Study III* (1975) by Andrzej Krzanowski (born 1951) for solo accordion, performed by the composer. Both these pieces (and many others heard during the lecture) juxtaposed sections of strangely unpassionate free atonality with extended phrases of diatonic harmonic progressions in a neo-Baroque style, with apparently no attempt at fusion. The call of the past here seems overwhelming (whole sections of the accordion piece sounded like transcriptions of Baroque organ music); but unlike Rihm, who has created a complete vocabulary based on an earlier sound world, or Stravinsky, who reinterpreted older techniques within his individual language, the Poles rely heavily on pastiche. Briefly, the Japanese as a group provided the most convincing and consistent atonal language, particularly in a series of passionate solo violin pieces, which were brilliantly played by Akiko Tatsumi.

The two most interesting concerts by participants came from composers of the Cologne Feedback group, and from an East German composer-improviser Hans-Karsten Raecke, who won part of the composition prize. Raecke (b. 1941) presented a complete late-night concert (45 minutes) of five solo pieces written between 1977 and 1980. He makes his own single-reed wind instruments, one of the most amusing being the Gummiphon, a rubber serpent-like instrument closed at the bell and partly filled with water; while Raecke played, the water gradually emptied out through the finger-holes (the piece was entitled *Wassermusik*). The final piece, *So...?, ...oder so?* for bamboo pipe, tape and slide projection, was the strongest of the five works. (All the pieces were structured, so that Raecke always improvised within a framework). In this piece a photograph of the world was gradually distorted into pure white light and then refocused again; the improvisation followed the same arch form to a frenetic climax, at which point the tape, playing synthesized sounds throughout, gave way to the sound of soldiers marching. All the pieces were powerful and committed, as one might expect from an Eastern European improvising musician, yet Raecke's musical vocabulary was not as imaginative as, say, that of Evan Parker; nevertheless the concert was one of the most stimulating of the course.

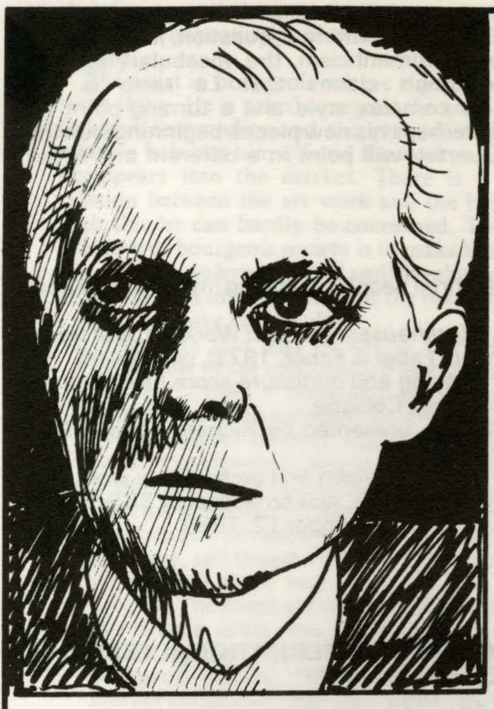
The Cologne concert contained three pieces: Mesias Maiguashca's *Agualarga* (1978) for two pianos, one percussionist and amplification, John McGuire's *Pulse Music III* (1978–79) for tape, and Clarence Barlowe's *çoğluotobüsíşletmesí* (translated as 'Bus Journey to Parametron (all about "çoğlu...")') (1975–79) for solo piano (Herbert Henck), which won the composition prize. Maiguashca's piece was a colourful work in arch shape, containing three constants: a rhythmic constant (semiquaver = 232), four pitches, and a fifth pitch repeated on marimba to enable the pianists to synchronise events. The work started and finished with tiny cells of material around the given pitches, in which stopped harmonics from inside the piano were frequently used. McGuire gave us a process tape piece of the utmost clarity and beauty; hugely dense diatonic chords covering a vast range exploded at three- or four-minute intervals (the chords themselves moved in simple harmonic progressions), leaving complex, high bell sounds repeating in subtly changing patterns.

Barlowe's piano piece with the unpronounceable name is an almost incomprehensibly complex 30-minute work of highly differentiated polyphony, in which several layers of pointillistic, melodic, chordal, rhythmically articulated material run simultaneously at different speeds. Barlowe states that 'the music can vary from tonal to quasi atonal, metric to quasi ametric, eventful to sparse', these different areas phasing into and out of each other smoothly and continuously. The work uses quarter-tones, obtained by the retuning of several notes in each octave, apparently to give the impression of Middle Eastern intonation; on this first hearing it sounded rather as if it were being played on an out-of-tune piano. The composition of the work was a large-scale project preceded by months of preparation and composed with the help of a computer. Barlowe explains that by using an acoustic theory of consonance and dissonance together with an algebraically defined system of tonality he has found a compositional method of creating tonal fields of differing strengths. *Çoğluotobüsíştemesí* is so difficult to perform that it forces even the best of players (and Henck is certainly that) into an approximation of the score; for this reason it also exists in a computer realised tape version. Though the concept of the work is fascinating, I found it aurally almost unbearable.[3]

Grisey (b. 1946) and Murail (b. 1947) presented their work in some detail. Both are exclusively interested in building pieces out of an orchestration of the harmonic series. Simply, they electronically analyse single sounds and try to reproduce these spectra in an ensemble of traditional instruments. For example, at the opening of Grisey's *Partiels* (1975), for a chamber orchestra of eighteen, the double basses and trombone continually play E in a small, ever-changing rhythmic pattern; then there is a gradual flowering of the harmonic spectrum on this fundamental in the rest of the ensemble, with piccolos and E-flat clarinet at the top of the pyramid of sound, which then quickly disintegrates. These two events form a unit which is repeated some 50 times, with the rhythmic cell and the order of entry and prominence of voices in the pyramid changing each time. These changes follow a carefully structured plan of contrast between rhythmic periodicity and aperiodicity, the basses exploiting the former and the pyramid the latter. *Partiels* is the third in a series of five pieces, under the general title *Les espaces acoustiques*, in which each piece enlarges the acoustic field of the preceding one; they can be performed separately or continuously. In the opening concert of the course, given by the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Cracow, we heard the fourth piece in the cycle – *Modulations* (1976–77) for 33 players. The form and material here are built from the processes of sound modulations taken from the harmonic spectra, the spectra of partials, white noise, filtering and so on. Further material is taken from the 'synthetic' reproduction or reconstruction of the sound of muted brass, which is central to the sound world of this piece. Again the fundamental is E and again there is much use of periodic duration, with an emphasis on what Grisey calls psychological time – the relative value and passage of events – rather than chronometric time.

In his lecture Murail called this kind of composition 'synthetic composition', and he seems to take sound simulation still further. In his piece *Memoires/Erosion* for horn and nine instruments, he cleverly copies simple electronic techniques, particularly the tape loop and feedback. Besides his orchestral piece *Gondwana* (1980), given in the first concert, we also heard Murail's *Treize couleurs du soleil couchant* (1978) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano in a stunning performance by Levine, Riessler, Gawriloff, Taube and Kontarsky. This piece gave perhaps the clearest demonstration of the incredible ear for colour and brilliance of orchestration which both these Frenchmen have; it contains such subtleties as individual pitches from a clarinet multiphonic being highlighted and then 'orchestrated' by the rest of the group.

This emphasis on colour and harmonically static yet ravishing sonorities is far removed from the preoccupations



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of Ferneyhough. His lectures were, in fact, the most interesting. In four morning sessions he analysed *La terre est un homme* (1976–79). We were – and Ferneyhough was aware of this – 'blinded by science'. The compositional systems, the number games, became so engrossing in themselves that at the end of each session one was suddenly startled back into the reality that the man was supposed to be writing music! With reference only to this piece doubts were voiced by many concerning its 'musicality', not because of the compositional pyrotechnics but rather because of the actual sound, which is impossibly dense and which therefore renders the plethora of detail redundant. Ferneyhough himself admitted that he could not hear the detail, but that this was less important than the basic concepts and the overall effect. Every possible facet of the work is strictly controlled by different numerical systems all emanating from a basic seven-note row and the rhythmic possibilities of the number seven. Rhythm, pitch and register are ruled by the Fibonacci series up to 21 (seven integers), and many permutations and expansions are formed and then treated further by other systems to allow the adding together of groups, vertically and horizontally, in a meaningful way. However, Ferneyhough still allows for a certain instinctual compositional procedure to correct any clumsy simultaneities which the systems might have produced, to round off the rough edges as it were.

Ferneyhough, with his reinterpretation of integral serialism, suggested that neo-romanticism is not the right way forward, yet Wolfgang Rihm (b. 1952) is a very important figure in Germany today as the leader of a movement that represents music's contribution to what is a general trend in the arts. This trend seems to be a reaction to the 'economic miracle' of post-war Germany – that stable and wealthy society, which built anew, experimented, and forged ahead in the arts through the fifties, sixties and early seventies. It is a reaction to the technical complexity of modern life as expressed in 'difficult' modern music. The manifestation of this trend in literature has been called 'Innerlichkeit' (inwardness) – a looking back to the sources of modern art before the turmoil of the political sixties. In music the source is turn-of-the-century Viennese romanticism. This movement is not of course exclusive to Germany, but it is, I feel, at its strongest and most explicit there. Aribert Reimann has summed it up in this way: 'Everybody is tired of making music which is cool and so cold, of intellectualism and experiments: it's boring. People are longing to hear music again. I think to have the trust in melody and the trust to write melody without shame, I think this is a very big step forward.'[4]

To judge aurally, the two most important influences on Rihm must be Mahler and Berg. I gathered from the little Rihm said about his music that the compositional process for him is structureless and instinctual; the music seems simply to flow from him and, as a consequence, his pieces tend to be hyperemotional and rather long. His catalogue bears out this characteristic: at 28 years old he already has an opera, three symphonies, three string quartets, seven piano pieces, and numerous other works to his name. We heard three pieces: *Cuts and Dissolves* (1977) for 29 players, the Third String Quartet 'Im Innersten' (1976) (its subtitle very much in keeping with the idea of inwardness), and Klavierstück Nr. 7 (1980). The quartet is the best example of Rihm's style. It is in six movements, of which two are in two sections, making eight in all; four are designated *con moto* and four *adagio*. The *con moto* movements are contrapuntally atonal, motivic, fierce, thickly textured with much octave doubling, and the whole moves in waves of romantic gestures. The first *adagio* of the piece, the third movement, is an exact stylistic replica of Mahler in both tonality and atmosphere. One expected from the final *adagio* an overwhelming self-indulgence, but this extensive movement seemed to take the final page of Mahler's Ninth Symphony as its starting-point, fragmenting and stretching the long tonal phrases towards an expressive understatement which is rare in Rihm's music.[5] The new Klavierstück was disappointing by comparison; it comes straight from the Liszt tradition of virtuoso solo piano writing, and its incessant crashing octaves and random moves in and out of consonance are, to say the least, inane.

Neo-romanticism in Germany is being taken very seriously, particularly by the younger composers who seem to feel that the free atonal language of the last 30 years has run its course, and that, in the absence of anything else, one must now look to the past, to rediscover tonality. What Darmstadt showed was a tremendous stylistic instability and a general regression (an avoidance of theatre music and electronic and computer techniques); it is clear that those who are still trying to master and utilise the language of music evolved since 1955 are beginning to question, in the light of this strong wave of romanticism, the vocabulary of their teachers. Ferneyhough claims that *La terre* is the culmination of his complex style and a turning-point for music in general. Perhaps his new pieces, beginning with the Second String Quartet, will point in a different and better direction.

NOTES:

[1]Incidentally, only three people, including myself, came from Britain.
[2]Karl H. Wörner, *Stockhausen: Life and Work*, ed. and trans. Bill Hopkins (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), pp. 243-46.
[3]It is available in playing and miniature score formats from Feedback Studio Verlag, Cologne.
[4]'Fire in the Phoenix', presented by Richard Mayne, BBC Radio 3, October 29, 1979.
[5]*Lichtzwang* (1975-76) for violin and orchestra, a work very representative of Rihm's style, was broadcast by BBC Radio 3 in 'Music in our Time' on December 12, 1980.

24th WARSAW AUTUMN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC
SEPTEMBER 19-28, 1980

HILARY BRACEFIELD

The first-time visitor to the Warsaw Autumn cannot but be impressed by the length, scope and presentation of this well-established 20th-century music festival. The first-time British visitor will long remember the large and committed audiences, the concentration on *recent* contemporary music, and the chance of meeting most of Poland's leading composers and musicians from eastern Europe. The first-time visitor writing about the festival, however, is at a disadvantage in that his experience of Polish music is restricted to that which has travelled beyond the country. Not every composer is represented in each festival, and it is quite possible that a particular bias comes across in one autumn presentation by accident.

Be that as it may, the Polish music for larger ensembles heard in the 24th festival showed again the trends noticed by John Casken in his review of the 23rd: a mellowing in the music of many of the composers who excited in the 1960s and early 1970s, and less of an interest in sonority and texture for their own sake.[1] We heard seven world premieres, six Polish premieres of works mostly heard only once elsewhere, and 14 other quite recent pieces. Nearly all showed a preoccupation with one or other of the following: a return to thinking within classical forms, a basis in tonality or modality, use of ostinati for sustained effect, and a kind of romantic expressiveness; practically none exhibited any of those 1960s Polish characteristics which became world-famous.

There were several examples of what John Shepherd in his Warsaw reviews calls 'colouristic' music.[2] *Icarus* (1980) by Grażyna Pstronkońska-Nawratil was unashamedly a tone-poem, Icarus representing human dreams and desires, according to the composer; the well-judged orchestral writing redeemed it from the charge of over-obviousness. Tomasz Sikorski's *Strings in the Earth* (1979-80) was a strangely attractive work for the excellent Polish Chamber Orchestra (conductor Jerzy Maksymiuk); a sparse string piece of fluctuating but barely moving lines of limited range, romantically intense. I was unable to hear Wojciech Kilar's *Grey Mist* (1979) and it was not recorded on the cassette tapes which could be bought during the festival. It was written especially for the baritone Andrzej Bachleda with chorus and orchestra. The mainspring of the work, as so often in Kilar's music, was a folksong, from the Tatra mountains. Kilar said that he was not intending to follow this line of development any more, but he may not be able to restrain himself.

The one world premiere of a large non-Polish work also really fitted into this category. Stephen Montague's *Varshavian Spring* was written in Warsaw in 1973, but it was performed at the festival in a revised version. Like several of the works played, it experimented with orchestral positioning, having four groups of voices and instruments,

and played the Poles at their own game with its long-held notes slowly and minimally changing. It was particularly well received by the audience who were prepared to enter into its atmospheric sound world.

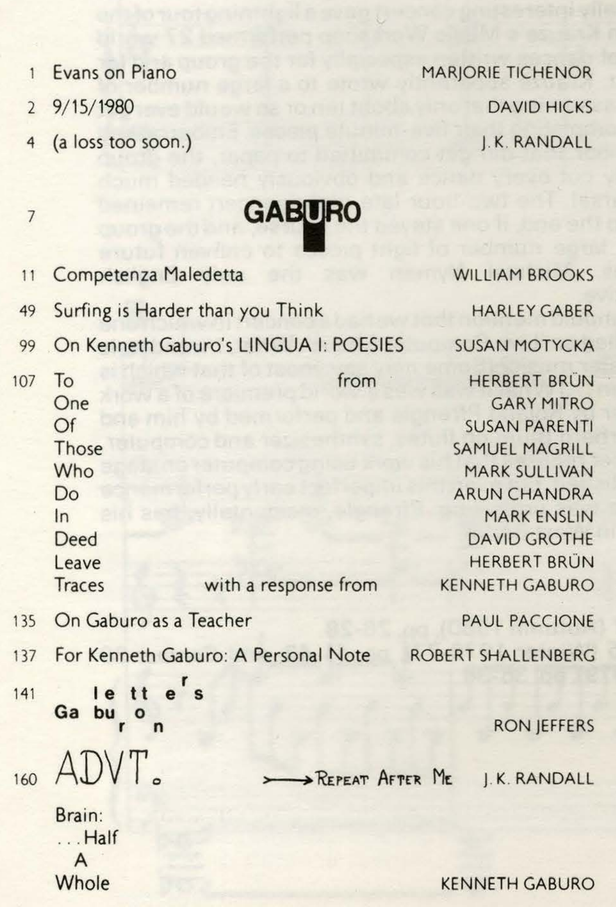
Two quite different works had religious themes. The charmingly simple *Carmen biblicum* (1979-80), was written by Augustyn Bloch for his wife, the soprano Halina Łukomska, and was performed by her and members of the London Sinfonietta. It impressed by its very simplicity and the well-judged relationship between the voice, singing chant-like psalm settings, and the different tone-colours of the instruments. Górecki's long and intense *Beatus vir* (1979) was obviously written with great emotion. Commissioned by the Pope, while he was still a cardinal, to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the martyrdom of St Stanisław, also once Bishop of Cracow, it was first performed in 1979 in Cracow Cathedral by the Cracow Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir in the Pope's presence. The same forces, with baritone Jerzy Artysz and conductor Jerzy Katlewicz, gave it in Warsaw. Although I missed this piece as well (it was the one concert out of 25 that I didn't attend), I have the tape of the performance, and the emotion still comes through. The rather well-calculated effect is based largely on two constantly repeated chords (C–E flat–C, B–E flat–B), which build up an overwhelming fervour. I would judge that this work, which lasts about 35 minutes, would immediately appeal to English choral societies and their audiences.

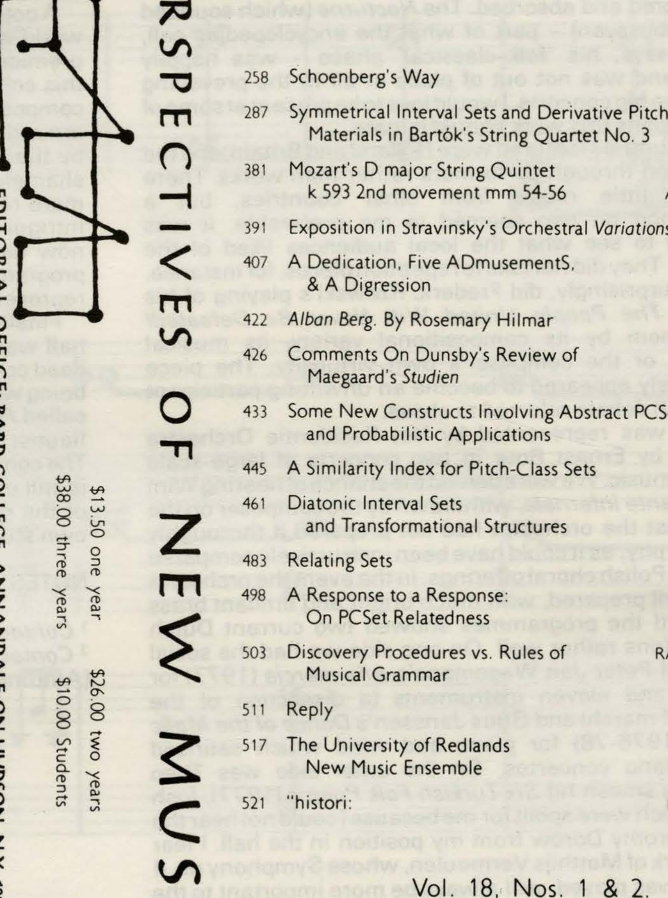
A significant number of the new Polish works presented themselves as symphonies or concertos. Nothing wrong with that, but few appeared less than uneasy in both form and style. In fact the surest essays were those of the most senior composers – Kazimierz Sikorski's new Symphony no. 5, an uncompromising statement and strongly realised, and Zygmunt Mycielski's Symphony no. 4 (1972), not symphonic in form but working out austerely the implications of a particular series of notes. Aleksander Lason's Symphony for Wind Instruments, Percussion and Two Pianos, written in 1976 (and winner of a UNESCO competition), was cast in a more familiar contemporary European mould and created a record for the number of percussion players on stage during the festival – nine were needed for the second movement, not counting the pianos. Aleksander Glinkowski's *Sinfonia mesta e tranquilla* for alto, choir and orchestra (1979) was back among the ostinati.

There were three works for violin and orchestra. Zygmunt Krauze's Violin Concerto (1979-80), played by Konstant Kulka and the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, had an electrifying opening two minutes, an intense and quite romantic statement for full orchestra, which turned out to be the only material used for the whole work, the solo violin interpreting it in an almost gypsy style. The other violin concerto, that by Edward Pałłasz written during 1977 and 1978, had as soloist Wanda Wiłkomirska. It came in a long and difficult programme given by the Silesian Philharmonic Orchestra who were not originally engaged. This particular work seemed to suffer from lack of rehearsal time and received a performance that became slower and slower; but its quite interesting elements were never integrated. Zbigniew Bujarski's *Concerto per archi* (1979) for violin (Miss Wiłkomirska again) and string orchestra was the most backward-looking work in the festival, the composer falling victim to the romantic possibilities of the string instruments. I rather liked Dobrowolski's offering this year, a *Passacaglia* (1978-79) for full orchestra, a gradual working-out and transformation of a theme heard first on the strings. Others found it overlong, and it was certainly unrepresentative of most of his music known in Britain.

What then of the most well-known of Polish composers, Lutosławski and Penderecki? One of the causes célèbres of the festival was the withdrawal by Penderecki of his Second Symphony from the opening concert. It had already been heard, of course, in New York and Edinburgh, and rumours flew as to why Polish audiences were to be denied the chance of hearing it. Officially all that was said was that Penderecki had withdrawn it for 'revision and *extension*'. The only Penderecki work played was therefore a slight *Capriccio* for the tuba player Zdzisław Piernik, who must have been disappointed at the unadventurous nature of a piece for which he had been waiting some years.

Lutosławski was received with much respect, the festival offering two works which had had recent premieres elsewhere. The Double Concerto for oboe, harp and chamber





orchestra (1980) has now been heard in Britain, performed, as at Warsaw, by the soloists for whom it was written, Heinz and Ursula Holliger. I find it difficult to write about this three-movement work. A long time gestating in the composer's mind - 15 years, he said - it is beautifully written, shows off both solo instruments, and places them exquisitely against the chamber orchestra, particularly the percussion; but it has just not remained in my mind - not the rhapsodical first movement, juxtaposing soloists and scrubbing strings, the 'night music' middle movement, or the grotesqueries of the final march. Lutosławski's short *Epitafium* (1979) for oboe and piano, premiered in London in January 1980, was also presented to the Poles, by Holliger and Szabolcs Esztényi, and was immediately encored entire.

There is no doubt that the use of brilliant new sounds, the striving after effect, the flashy, have largely gone from the Polish scene. The romantic simplicity that prevails, if I may be so bold as to reduce all I heard to two words, seemed a rather inadequate substitute, and not much of a pointer to the future. It was interesting, in fact, to find how often the name of Szymanowski was invoked and his music cited, and how often his musical ideas actually surfaced in modern works (notably in a string quartet by Andrzej Krzanowski). One felt, however, that the mood was part not only of the world-wide reactionary movement, but also of a particular nationalistic ferment common to all Poland's affairs, not just its music, at present. Composers write out of the society in which they live. Thus the works heard in the 1981 festival may well build constructively on the more tentative ideas of 1980.

It did not help, perhaps, that all the Polish electronic music, and that of other composers, was bundled into 'ghetto' concerts on two afternoons, not even billed in the official programme. Schäffer's only piece in the festival appeared in these concerts, as did works by a number of the younger composers. The early-evening and late-night concerts also turned up some interesting works - there was a worthwhile essay for piano and percussion by Krystyna Moszumańska-Nazar, a percussion work by Zbigniew Rudziński which I liked, and an interesting string quartet by Marek Stachowski.

The whole debate about the paths of Polish music was provocatively opened up by the mischievous presentation by Witold Szalonek of a *Nocturne* for string orchestra, harp and baritone, which he *said,* in his programme note, had been written in 1953, lost, and reconstructed here from the recently found sketches. I wonder. He deplores the fact that composers are abandoning new techniques before they have been explored and absorbed. The *Nocturne* (which sounded almost Debussyan) - part of what the encyclopedias call, Szalonek says, his 'folk-classical' phase - was happily received, and was not out of place at all in the prevailing sound of the big concerts. I would love to be present at some of the discussions this work *should* initiate.

Other countries featured were Holland and Britain, and the Soviet Union through performers rather than works. There was very little music from other countries, but a concentration on two seemed to me preferable. It was interesting to see what the local audiences liked of the unfamiliar. They did not take to repetition pieces, for instance, and nor, surprisingly, did Frederic Rzewski's playing of his variations *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* impress them by its compositional variety, its musical intentions, or the composer's own virtuosity. The piece unfortunately appeared to become an unwitting participant in the Polish debate referred to above.

Holland was represented by Het Residentie Orchestra conducted by Ernest Bour in two concerts of large-scale orchestral music. We were denied the chance of hearing Wim Laman's *Canto infernale,* withdrawn by the composer on the grounds that the orchestra had not prepared it thoroughly enough - a pity, as it could have been instructively compared with all the Polish choral offerings. In the event the orchestra seemed well prepared, with much bright and brilliant brass playing, and the programmes showed two current Dutch preoccupations rather well. On one side we had the social comment of Peter Jan Wagemans's *Alla marcia* (1977) for tuba solo and eleven instruments (a dissection of the elements of march) and Guus Janssen's *Dance of the Malic Matrices* (1976-78) for piano and wind which satirised classical piano concertos. On the other side was Theo Loevendie's smash hit *Six Turkish Folk Poems* (1977), lush settings which were spoilt for me because I could not hear the soprano Dorothy Dorow from my position in the hall. I fear that the work of Matthijs Vermeulen, whose Symphony no. 4 (1940-41) was played, will always be more important to the Dutch than to the outside world. The most exhilarating work of the whole festival for me was Otto Ketting's Symphony for saxophones and orchestra (1977-78), a joyful piece of extended repetition, building to marvellous brass climaxes, and *not* liked by the Poles. Why, I do not know, for its writing for saxophone quartet and for the brass was brilliant and the piece made its musical statement in unashamed delight. It may pall on a second hearing: I hope I get a chance in Britain to find out.

The English music was generally well received. It was all for small ensemble as the one large piece promised, David Bedford's *Star Clusters,* was a casualty of the change of orchestras for the last two concerts. Both the London Sinfonietta (under Ronald Zollman) and Electric Phoenix, however, gave concerts of a high standard, and showed off the work of six of the younger generation of British composers - Bedford, John Casken, Michael Finnissy, Robin Holloway, Roger Marsh and Nigel Osborne. Between them the works showed a sure handling of the small ensemble, a quite different musical language from that of the Polish works, and yet six individual voices.

Apart from the odd piece here and there, it was left, curiously, to the Russians to provide nearly all of the older music heard in the festival. The presence of Sviatoslav Richter and his playing made a highlight. A solo retrospective of the piano music of Prokofiev from 1913 to 1947 was followed by a recital in which Richter appeared with viola player Yuri Bashmet in Shostakovich's Sonata op. 177, with the soprano Galina Pisarenko in Szymanowski's *Songs of a Mad Muezzin* and with the Moscow Conservatory Ensemble in Janáček's *Concertino.* Incidentally the Szymanowski performance won the prize for the best interpretation of a Polish work in the festival. Finally, Richter appeared with Oleg Kagan (violin) and the Ensemble again in a demanding concert of Hindemith's and Berg's chamber concertos and an arresting Violin Concerto by Alfred Shnitke, written in 1976, which rather showed up the concertos for this instrument heard in other concerts. The Conservatory Ensemble, students and recent ex-students, played impeccably. The playing of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra (conductor, Veronica Dudarova) was disappointingly lacklustre, although last year's find, the cellist Ivan Monigetti, impressed in the Shostakovich Second Cello Concerto. A dreadful 'public' work by Vyacheslav Artyomov, *The Road to Olympus,* was also offered. The composer, interestingly enough, talked in the press conference the next day of his participation, with two or three other composers, in an improvisation ensemble.

A potentially interesting concert gave a lightning tour of the world when Krauze's Music Workshop performed 27 world premieres of dances written especially for the group and for this concert. Krauze apparently wrote to a large number of composers assuming that only about ten or so would ever get around to completing their five-minute pieces. Embarrassed by the number that did get committed to paper, the group shamelessly cut every dance and obviously needed much more rehearsal. The two-hour late-night concert remained intriguing to the end, if one stayed the course, and the group now has a large number of light pieces to enliven future programmes. Michael Nyman was the only English representative.

Finally, I should mention that we had a concert in which one half was billed as 'Live Computer Music'. What, I wonder, is dead computer music? (Some may say, most of that which is being written . . .) What it was was a world premiere of a work called *Felder* by Roland Pfrengle and performed by him and flautist Eberhard Blum on flutes, synthesizer and computer. The composer realises that his work using computer on stage is still unpolished, but even this imperfect early performance of the piece was promising. Pfrengle, incidentally, has his own studio in West Berlin.

NOTES:

[1] *Contact 21* (Autumn 1980), pp. 26-28.
[2] *Contact 15* (Winter 1976-77), pp. 41-42, and *Contact 20* (Autumn 1979), pp. 35-36.

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FRIEDRICH'S LULU

DOUGLAS JARMAN

The world premiere of the complete, three-act version of Berg's *Lulu* in Paris in February 1979 generated what, for a 20th-century opera, must have been an unprecedented amount of interest. Performances were broadcast and televised, radio programmes were devoted to discussions of the work and the background to the opera was described in detail in the press. Nor was this interest confined to the specialist periodicals and music programmes, the arts pages of the 'quality' newspapers or those other sections of the media that one might expect to concern themselves with an artistic event of this magnitude. It would be naïve to assume that the enormous amount of publicity that preceded the premiere sprang entirely from an interest in Berg's music. The risqué subject of *Lulu* and its tortuous posthumous history – the composer's death while scoring the last scene of the opera, the intervention of the Nazis when engraving was already under way, the eventual refusal of the composer's widow to allow anyone to complete, or even to see, the score of the final act (and the intriguing and newly revealed possibility that this refusal could, in some way, be linked to her knowledge of her husband's extra-marital affairs), and finally a scholarly dispute that, in one way or another, involved many of the most respected composers and musicians of our time – had all the elements of a perfect press story.

The first night was universally acknowledged as an event of historic significance. *The Observer*, for example, described it as 'a red-letter day in the annals of opera' while *The Guardian* declared it to be 'the musical event of the decade, if not of the post-war years'. Yet, despite their recognition of the importance of the event, the critics were unanimous in their condemnation of the production which the work received at the Paris Opéra. Patrice Chereau's staging, said *The Observer*, was 'the real weakness of the evening', and according to *The Financial Times* it created 'more problems than it solved'. It was, said *The Guardian*, a 'wilful...perverse...and finally defective production', a production which, *The Sunday Telegraph* observed, 'perversely contradicted the stage directions of the libretto'. Arthur Jacobs, in *Opera*, questioned how Pierre Boulez, who conducted the premiere, could have 'tolerated (indeed presumably nominated) a producer prepared to distort the composer's essence'.

Many critics must have hoped that the Covent Garden production of the complete *Lulu*, which received its first performance on February 16, 1981, would obliterate the memory of the disastrous Paris production. They seem not to have been disappointed for, with few exceptions, the critics greeted Götz Friedrich's production with considerable enthusiasm. 'First rate...with many subtle touches of character', 'outstanding' and 'a production that shows itself true to Berg' are typical of the comments with which most critics favoured Friedrich's production. 'For the whole achievement of the production there can be little but gratitude and admiration', said *The Times*, while *The Spectator* headed its review of what it called 'a thoroughly responsible production of a twentieth-century masterpiece' with the title 'Thank You'.

The critics' enthusiasm and gratitude are misplaced. Friedrich's production may, as *The Guardian* said, be 'a smashing piece of theatre' but it is by no means a production that is 'thoroughly responsible' or 'true to Berg'. Indeed, it is a production that displays a shocking ignorance of the most elementary principles of Berg's musico-dramatic organisation.

Throughout Berg's score the entrances and exits – sometimes even the individual movements – of the different characters are precisely indicated. In Act II scene 1, for example, the points at which the Manservant enters, the Schoolboy and the Acrobat move, and Countess Geschwitz appears and disappears are all clearly marked in the score, and each of these movements on the stage is accompanied by a fragment of the music associated with the character concerned. Throughout the opera there is no entrance or exit that is not musically indicated in this way. In Friedrich's production, however, Berg's stage directions count for nothing: Berg's characters appear before or after their musical cues and wander freely around the stage when they should be invisible to the audience. Moreover Friedrich introduces a host of figures (dancers, workers, attendants to the Prince) who have no place in the opera and thus, unlike all the characters in Berg's score, no musical identity.

To insist that a producer respect Berg's demands about the way in which a scene is staged is not pedantic. The musical structure and the dramatic effect of Berg's score depend on the observation of his stage directions. Berg's directions are not unworkable, 'academic' requirements of a kind that can be ignored by those who regard themselves as 'practical men of the theatre'.

Towards the beginning of Act 2 scene 1 there is a moment when, Dr Schön having departed for the Stock Exchange, the stage is empty. Countess Geschwitz, who has left the stage some time before, re-enters, crosses the stage and hides behind the firescreen, where she remains undetected until much later in the scene when Schön pulls it aside to reveal her whereabouts. The moment at which Geschwitz re-enters is clearly indicated in the score by six bars of the music associated with her, which accompany her movement across the stage. As she disappears behind the firescreen her characteristic music disappears also, and it is not heard again until she reappears from her hiding-place later in the scene. In Friedrich's chaotic production of this scene, however, the Countess is unremittingly active – she appears in the background during the number which precedes Schön's departure and prowls around ceaselessly during that section of the scene when she is supposed to be hidden from view. Indeed, almost the only time when the Countess is not on the move is during those bars when Berg specifically requires her to cross the stage: the music of the six bars which should accompany this movement thus loses its raison d'être and is reduced to a meaningless accompaniment to an action performed by another character.

The correlation of music and stage action, to which Berg devoted so much care and which he took great pains to indicate precisely in his score is totally destroyed in Friedrich's production. 'Sometimes I feel that there's almost no connexion between what's happening on the stage and what I'm doing in the pit', remarked Sir Colin Davis in an interview that appeared in *The Times* on the morning of the Covent Garden premiere. In the event it proved to be a comment that had a significance other than the one intended.

Such a cavalier attitude to the composer's requirements inevitably changes the dramatic effect of the whole opera. According to Berg's directions for the second half of Act 3 scene 2, Schigolch goes off to the pub leaving the Countess alone on stage. The Countess sings a short solo number which ends as Jack and Lulu enter, exchange some remarks and cross the stage. Jack and Lulu then go into another room leaving the Countess alone once more. The Countess, kneeling in front of Lulu's portrait, sings her 'Nocturno'; this ends with the words 'I'll go back to Germany; I must study law and fight for women's rights' – words that draw attention to one of the main subjects of the opera. Immediately Lulu, off stage, screams. The Countess rushes to help Lulu, meets Jack in the doorway and is stabbed. Jack washes his hands and leaves. The dying Countess, once more alone on stage, sings her final 'Liebestod'. Thus, in any authentic production of this scene Countess Geschwitz – the only person to help Lulu and the character who, as much as Lulu herself, is the tragic heroine of the opera – is the centre of the audience's attention. Alone on stage for much of the scene, she becomes the emotional and dramatic focus of the last moments of the opera.

In Friedrich's production of this last scene, however, the figure of the Countess (whose presence was so noticeable in the scene in Act 2 when Berg required her to be hidden) is all but lost from view. Instead of being alone in the centre of the stage she is relegated to a corner of the set (and, indeed, nearly disappears into the wings) while, accompanied by the 'Nocturno', Jack attempts to destroy the portrait and then, in the centre of the stage, dances a slow waltz with Lulu. Since the set does not allow for the existence of another room to which Lulu and her clients can retire, Lulu is murdered in full view of the audience. The entire emotional and dramatic balance of the scene is thus destroyed, and Berg's score is again reduced to background music.

One of the few features of the Covent Garden production to which most critics took exception was Friedrich's handling of the Animal Trainer, a figure who, in Berg's Prologue, introduces us to the different beasts in the menagerie but who, in this production, also appears repeatedly, whenever a character dies. The real objection to such a treatment of the figure of the Animal Trainer is not, however, as the critics said, that it is a 'vexing intrusion', or that it makes impossible one of the doublings required by Berg, or even that it is insultingly crude (which it undoubtedly is), but that it destroys

one of the basic ideas underlying the opera. In Wedekind's two *Lulu* plays Alwa is a writer, the author, it is revealed in the second play, of the first. In Berg's opera Alwa is a composer, the composer of the very opera we are watching. 'One could write an interesting opera about this', muses Alwa in Act 1 scene 3; as he does so the orchestra quotes the opening chords of *Wozzeck*, thus specifically identifying the composer Alwa as Alban Berg himself. Consequently, of all the characters in the opera only Alwa is not identified as one of the beasts in the Animal Trainer's menagerie. As the composer of the opera Alwa owns the menagerie and, by rights, Alwa himself should appear as the Animal Trainer and introduce his beasts to us in the Prologue. But Alwa has to sing the opening words of Act 1 scene 1 when the curtain rises immediately after the Prologue. Thus, the Animal Trainer has no real identity of his own but simply acts as Alwa's representative, as is made quite clear by that fact that on the occasions when Alwa's music does appear in the Prologue it always does so in association with the figure of the Animal Trainer. In Friedrich's production the Animal Trainer, by appearing throughout the opera, acquires a separate existence and usurps Alwa's role. The appearances of Alwa's music in the Prologue become meaningless and it no longer matters whether Alwa is a composer, a writer or anything else.

Faced with such basic mistakes it hardly seems worth mentioning those details of the production to which one might otherwise have take exception. Given Friedrich's apparent lack of understanding of even the most essential features of Berg's opera, such things as the amplified rain sounds which make inaudible every appearance of the barrel organ music in Act 3 scene 2, the absurd handling of Alwa's death at the hands of Lulu's second client, and Schigolch's constant asthmatic wheezing (when the points at which he is supposed to gasp for breath are precisely indicated in the score and are always accompanied by a characteristic 'asthma rhythm') are little more than minor irritants.

Patrice Chereau's Paris production fully deserved the adverse critical reception that it received, but it is difficult to see in what ways the Covent Garden production can be regarded as superior to, or as having taken 'far fewer and far less flagrant liberties' than that of the Paris Opéra. The 'circus' set at Covent Garden is as destructive of Berg's intentions as were the widely criticised sets designed for the Paris performance, while Friedrich has not only adopted some of the more vulgar details of Chereau's production (such as having Lulu astride Schön's back at the end of the letter-writing scene of Act 1 scene 3) but has actually surpassed Chereau in the number of irrelevant extras he has managed to introduce into the opera.

If Friedrich has respected Berg's demands about the way in which the performers playing the roles of Lulu's husbands in the earlier acts are to reappear as her clients in the final scene of the opera (Chereau gave the role of Lulu's first client to a dwarf, a performer who had not appeared before in the production), he has, nonetheless, introduced other, unrequired doublings of his own. Friedrich's use of the same performer for the Wardrobe Mistress (Act 1 scene 3) and the Mother (Act 3 scene 1) and, even more mysterious, his doubling of Schigolch and the Clown in the Prologue are totally meaningless and only serve to undermine the significance of those double and triple roles that Berg stipulated, and which play such an essential part in the musical and dramatic design of the work.

Having waited so long for a complete *Lulu* in Great Britain, we shall now, in all probability, have to wait much longer before we have a chance to see a 'thoroughly responsible production' – one which enables us to appreciate the extraordinarily detailed and perfect fusion of music and action that Berg achieved, and the overwhelming emotional and dramatic effect of this, his final masterpiece.

NEW MUSIC DIARY

BRIGITTE SCHIFFER

The Diary in Contact 21 *went up to March 31, 1980, but for reasons of space it was decided to hold over Brigitte Schiffer's coverage of the MusICA series with which this instalment begins. (Ed.)*

Sunday November 4, 1979

There is, in London, no lack of opportunity to hear contemporary music of various kinds, but to hear experimental music, to find out what is being done in this field in other countries and to meet artists from abroad one has to turn to the ICA and Adrian Jack's second season of MusICA concerts. Like all people committed to a cause, Jack is always ready to take risks, and 'taking risks' seems the primary condition for progressive and adventurous programme planning. Among the previous year's MusICA concerts, some were exciting, informative and on a high level of skill and technique, others brought frustration and disappointment in their wake, but the large audience that gathered at the ICA for this season's first concert, a recital by the American pianist and composer Frederic Rzewski, seemed ready to take their share in the risk-taking business.

For those who knew him before he settled in Rome and became involved with Musica Elettronica Viva, this was the long awaited return to the concert platform of one of the most brilliant pianists of our time, and in this respect the concert turned into a grand occasion: but in this respect only. The programme also demonstrated his return to a pianistic style rooted in the 19th century. As if this two-fold return was not enough, 'Return' or rather *Wiederkehr*, was also the title of the first piece, written early in 1971 by Luca Lombardi (b.1945). Unfortunately, this futile return to tradition for the sake of a 'new comprehensibility and formal clarity', far from filling old barrels with new wine, resulted in a highly derivative style of sorts, saved only by Rzewski, who succeeded in breathing some life into even this cliché-ridden confection of pianistic nostalgia.

Two other Italian works were played in the first part of the programme: the *Suite No. 10 (KA)* by Giacinto Scelsi (b.1905), a set of seven movements made out of minimal material and played by Rzewski with maximal precision, and *Sofferte onde serene* ('Sorrowful yet serene waves') by Luigi Nono (b.1924), 'a record of the sound of bells echoing through the mist and off the water of the Giudecca', where Nono lives, and performed against a tape from the pre-recorded playing of Pollini, to whom the piece is dedicated. This performance more than anything else brought home the notion of Rzewski as the great pianist, 'in the contemporary and avant-garde repertory perhaps without peer', whose unforgettable performances as a young artist have never been surpassed, hardly ever equalled.

The entire second half of the programme was devoted to the first London performance of Rzewski's own *The People United Will Never Be Defeated*, 36 variations on the Chilean song 'El Pueblo Unido Jamas Sera Vencido': a mixture of all styles, idioms, techniques and origins, long, repetitive and undistinguished, behind which one tried in vain to discover the man whose intelligence, musicianship and integrity had never before been questioned.

Exactly one week earlier, Rzewski had given the British premiere of the piece at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, an occasion which prompted the publication of an interview with Richard Steinitz in *The Guardian*. *The People United* was, so the composer says, commissioned for the American Bicentennial; looking back, he really believes that the piece did help to promote reflection and discussion of the Chilean question in this context. How this should be is difficult to believe, however, as the piece itself is linked by its style with a quintessentially bourgeois tradition (if such a phrase must be used), with the grand Romantic virtuoso tradition; the title of the piece is all that refers to the Chilean situation. The 'synthesis' of diverse musical traditions is Rzewski's way of making the music more accessible, and the haphazard mixture of styles is used by him as a symbol, an instrumental illustration for the mixture of groups and classes in Chile. Such naivety from an artist of this rank is not only disarming but also alarming. There seems only one way to listen to the variations and that is to forget all the literature and to let oneself be carried away by the

performance. As for the music itself, it cannot have any other motivation than the display of purely pianistic artistry, and of a grand manner long dead and now grotesquely resuscitated.

Sunday November 11

The second MusICA event took place one week after the first, when the American S.E.M. Ensemble played works by Jackson MacLow (b.1922) and Phil Niblock (b.1933), the latter's music being accompanied by, but not synchronised with, film. Hardly any communication was established between the performers and the audience and no reaction was recorded.

Sunday November 18

The second S.E.M. event, one week later, unfortunately clashed with a concert at the Round House, so that there was only a very small audience to listen to the first British performance of the setting of Gertrude Stein's *Many Many Women* by the Czech-born, 37-year-old Petr Kotik, the director of the group. Nancy Cole's one-woman show *Gertrude Stein's Gertrude Stein*, played in the early afternoon, was only mildly amusing and had too strong a flavour of déjà vu to captivate the audience.

Sunday January 20, 1980

After the Christmas holidays, the MusICA concerts were resumed with performances by Music Projects/London of two rarely heard but major works of John Cage: the hour-long *Sixteen Dances* (1951) for an ensemble of nine players and *Atlas eclipticalis* (1961-62) in a 24-minute version for an ensemble of twelve instrumentalists, combined with *Winter Music* (1957) for piano.

The concert was one of these happy occasions, when one feels free to relax and even enjoy oneself. The players were ready to let the sounds come as they were, without adding anything of their own, be it expression or so-called interpretation. Richard Bernas, the American born and London based conductor-pianist, led the ensemble of nine (piano, two strings, two winds and four percussion) through the kaleidoscopic changes in rhythm and design of the *Sixteen Dances* in the same unfussy, gentle, yet firm manner, that he used for the twelve players of *Atlas eclipticalis*, whose notes were derived from maps of the stars and redistributed among the parts with the help of the I Ching. *Atlas eclipticalis* is one of Cage's most influential indeterminate scores and one of his earliest attempts to free music from the composer's conscious controls. Far from resulting in a 'free for all', such a score demands the greatest attention to dynamics. Having set the notes free, it is up to the performer not to infringe on this newly gained freedom by pushing or deliberately projecting the sounds. Music Projects did neither. They refrained from any gesture of expression, played softer than ever before, added no glue to the seemingly unconnected notes, took their time and produced some beautiful sounds, something Cage had not asked for but would certainly not have objected to. He would, no doubt, have liked the performance and so did the audience, without exception.

Sunday January 27

Lontano, directed by Odaline de la Martinez, with the soprano Karen Jensen from Electric Phoenix, gave at the ICA a programme of new works by young and not yet established composers from Ireland (Raymond Deane), Wales (Brian Noyes) and London (Sinan Savaskan and Jane Wells). Most of the composers were in their twenties and it is as essential for the composers as for the audience that such works be performed regularly and under conditions as optimal as they were on that evening, with the best artists available and the most careful preparation.

Among the three first performances, that of *Voyages*, a 17-minute piece for six instruments by Brian Noyes (b. 1949), was the least significant, and the little substance there was in *Under the Redwood Tree* by Jane Wells (b. 1952), a kind of dramatic scena for soprano and five instruments, will be remembered mostly for the splendid acting/singing/reciting of Karen Jensen. The work that left the deepest impression was *Many Stares through Semi-Nocturnal Zeiss Blink* for nine instruments by Sinan Savaskan (b. 1954), who is presently engaged in improvisation and experimental workshops. It is difficult to see why this minimalist, soft, dreamy and at times very beautiful music, which drew from Lontano a most lovable performance, should have such a bizarre title but apparently there is more to come, for we were told: *'Many Stares through Semi-Nocturnal Zeiss Blink* consists of 180 sections. The four sections being performed are Numbers 60, 180, 210 and 340'! Whatever the total number may be, I would gladly listen to some more sections, though not all of them at a time. The magic of this kind of music is cumulative and unless one can listen in a leisurely way, quietly and peacefully, one misses the best part of it.

The work of the German-trained Irishman Raymond Deane (b. 1953) also had a bizarre title, *Lichtzwang*, derived, according to the programme note, from the poet Paul Celan, to whom the work is dedicated. In the seven-minute piece, extremes of register, dynamics, density, mood and idiom ranging from Webernian sparseness to Bergian lyricism are explored in a concise and imaginative manner by Deane, a pupil of Gerald Bennett and Earle Brown in Basel, Stockhausen in Cologne and Isang Yun in Berlin. After a brief argument between the two instruments the piece faded away into no-man's-land before one could get tired of it.

Sunday February 24

The second MusICA Lontano concert, given with the American soprano Beth Griffith, was entirely devoted to the music of Gerald Barry (b. 1952), another partly German-trained composer who after having studied with Peter Schat in Holland and Friedrich Cerha in Vienna ended up in Cologne, where he has joined the very active avantgarde and experimental movement centred upon Stockhausen and Kagel. Though this was not really a discovery, Barry having been discovered as long as eight years ago, when he won the first prize in the Dublin Symphony Orchestra competition, and rediscovered at the 1978 Dublin Festival of 20th Century Music and the 1979 Saarbrücken Festival of New Music, his music was a novelty for London, where little is known of young Irish composers.

The two instrumental pieces performed on that evening are based on minimal material and of entirely linear character but the processes devised by Barry are of a fascinating inventiveness, concerned with coordination, decoration and line rather than with texture, timbre or dynamics. His titles, a horizontal line for the ensemble piece and an oblique line through a small circle for the two-piano piece, are typical for his approach to pattern and design. ———— *for Ensemble* (1979), played on this occasion by three clarinets, two violas, two cellos and piano doubling harpsichord, but which may be performed by any group of instruments with the appropriate register, is based on a melody played four times and gradually emerging from rising scales to provide strategic points of rest against the thickening lines of parallel rising thirds and sixths reminiscent of medieval fauxbourdon and even older and more alien traditions.

The piece for two pianos is described by Barry as an étude in coordination (the problem of playing exactly together) and, at the same time, as an exploration of ornamentation. Though I do not quite see how, 'in this piece, the ornamentation becomes the melody', I do see the amount of concentration and of coordination needed to play simultaneously on two pianos the single line first alone, then in simple and later in double octaves and make it sound as if they were played on a single instrument. The synchronisation reached by Odaline de la Martinez and Sheilagh Sutherland was an astonishing tour de force, notwithstanding the hazards of tuning, which may well add some spice to the otherwise rather uniform piece but seem to have been disregarded by the composer.

The two other pieces, *Décolletage* for soprano and *Things that gain by being painted* for singer, speaker, cello and piano gave Beth Griffith, a consummate singer-cum-actress-cum-diseuse, ample opportunity to display her amazing talent. A few days earlier, at a lecture-recital organised by the British Music Information Centre as part of the 'Sense of Ireland' Festival, Barry had tentatively given himself a demonstration of *Décolletage*. But stripped of all the trimmings, the piece, starting with an almost clinical analysis of the actress's body, was rather embarassingly narcissistic; the little music there was justified neither the title of music theatre nor of instrumental theatre. By comparison, *Things that gain by being painted* displayed a typically Kagelian sense of humour; Beth Griffith gave a very exhilarating performance.

More Irish composers were presented by the BMIC, namely Brian Boydell (b. 1917), Professor at Trinity College, Dublin, a prolific writer of songs, chamber, orchestral and film music, James Wilson (b. 1922), who represented Ireland in 1979 at the Warsaw Festival and Frank Corcoran (b. 1944), for eight years Inspector of Music in Dublin and at present guest of the

Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst in Berlin. Of Corcoran's compositions I particularly liked a piece for solo flute played on a eight-note whistle that combined birdcalls with quotations of Debussy, Messiaen and Varèse. A piece for percussion and voice was also very appealing and his Piano Trio, written for the 1978 Dublin Festival, creates a challenging performance situation, each voice going its own way and in its own time, with three different time signatures. He also deserves to be better known in this country and now that a first contact has been established, it is to be hoped that closer links with Irish composers will follow.

Sunday March 16

At the ICA Dennis Smalley presented pieces for tape alone and for tape with instruments, all dating from 1973-76. *Gradual* for tape and clarinettist doubling bass clarinet and trombone and *Cornucopia* for tape and horn, both magnificently played by Roger Heaton (clarinet) and James MacDonald (horn), provided further extensions of already considerably extended techniques, adding many new layers but little new substance or progress to the uneasy relationship between tape and performer. For the three tape pieces, Smalley, responsible for sound diffusion, was also his own performer; to watch him at the console, trying to control all the variables between tape and ear in order to achieve a smooth passage through all the stages along the electro-acoustic chain, was most instructive. Whether this ideal passage was achieved, is difficult to tell; the lack of adequate criteria and familiar vocabulary makes it as difficult for us to talk about such works in any other than entirely personal and subjective terms as the composer finds it difficult to say anything that might enlighten the listener.

Thursday April 3

In their recital at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Singcircle, a vocal group with 16 members, was joined for the first time by Circle, its instrumental counterpart with nine. Singcircle performed music by Bartók, Berio, Gerhard, Ligeti, and Arne Mellnäs, a Finnish composer strongly influenced by Ligeti; Circle played Stravinsky's Septet. Though the performances were impeccable the evening was something of a disappointment. The theatrical dimension inherent in most of the works was missing, the direction was conscientious without being inspired, and there was no fun, no spark and not the slightest sense of humour. Gregory Rose, the conductor of both groups, is a very serious young man, and as long as he fails to come to terms with all the intricacies, tricks and secrets of the theatrical, his ensembles will find it difficult to compete with others, equally good and much more lively.

Saturday April 5

The first performance of Erica Fox's *Paths where the Mourners Tread* was given by the Lontano Ensemble directed by Odaline de la Martinez. How strange that the composer should have chosen an instrumental ensemble (two woodwind, four strings, harp and percussion) to evoke an ancient Eastern, entirely vocal tradition - Jewish liturgical chant - and yet this choice allows her to gain a certain distance from her model and to integrate into her structure skilfully devised patterns of ornamentation and melisma. The little singing there is - some soft humming and vocalising by the instrumentalists - adds atmosphere to this attractive piece, in which all the pitfalls of exoticism and local colour are carefully avoided by the composer. The duration (23 minutes) is slightly out of proportion to the substance, but this may be a deliberate attempt to recreate some sort of Eastern time-scale, so totally alien to Western audiences.

Sunday April 6

For the last concert of the MusICA series Adrian Jack invited Karel Goeyvaerts from Brussels to introduce a concert of works from the early fifties given by the Koenig Ensemble with Gustave Fenyö (piano). From the day of his first arrival at Darmstadt in 1951 Goeyvaerts (b. 1923) formed a close relationship with Stockhausen, another newcomer to the Kranichsteiner summer course, for whom he analysed his latest work, the Sonata for two pianos. Stockhausen, who had been so deeply impressed by Messiaen's *Quatre Etudes Rythmiques* when he heard a recording of the work brought to Darmstadt by Antoine Goléa, was immediately aware of the far-reaching implications of the Sonata, which he analysed at an Adorno class, and to illustrate the analysis, the two of them gave a performance of the second movement. At that time, Goeyvaerts, Stockhausen's senior by five years, had already spent three years (1947-50) at Messiaen's analysis class in Paris, crucial years, no doubt, as they included the time (1949-50), when Messiaen wrote the *Quatre Etudes Rythmiques*, the first attempt at total serialisation. From there Goeyvaerts went further, elaborating the X form, 'the only possible solution, whenever total serialisation was carried out as a single structure'. His Sonata for two pianos, written 1950-51 and built on these principles, triggered off the composition of Stockhausen's *Kreuzspiel* and Boulez's *Polyphonie X*, both from 1951, one year before Stockhausen himself joined the Messiaen class at the Conservatoire.

Looking back over all these years, one feels dismayed at the lack of impact caused by Goeyvaerts's music, in spite of its seminal influence, when one compares it with the uproar caused in 1952 by Stockhausen's *Kreuzspiel* and the scandal that surrounded the first performance of Boulez's *Polyphonie X* the following year. But even now, almost 30 years later, Goeyvaerts's Sonata, which was given a magnificent account by Gustave Fenyö and Jan Latham Koenig as well as *Opus 3 aux sons frappés et frottés* (1952), sounded rather dry and uninspired, whilst Stockhausen's *Kreuzspiel* and his *Schlagtrio*, a later rescoring of the *Schlagquartett* of 1952, played by the Koenig Ensemble with great skill, held the audience riveted to their seats and drew spontaneous reactions from the listeners.

In pointillism, the style evolved by total serialisation, the connecting links between the notes were as hidden to the ear as they were to the eye in surrealism, but to most composers it became a phase to be gone through and abandoned, once every aspect had been investigated and explored. Not so to Goeyvaerts. For him, total serialisation was a creed and in 1957, when he realised that it had been motivated by nothing else but fear of chaos after the War, he denounced 'this rationalistic system as an expression of existential anguish (angoisse existentialiste) and withdrew from all professional musical activities'. Henceforward he was to write music only for pleasure and to give pleasure to those who would play it. The *Pièce pour trois* for flute, violin and piano, which was included in the programme, was the immediate outcome of this new attitude, which has been the major motive of his compositions ever since. Little did one expect another specimen of his usual bloodless and rather unlovable musical discourse and however much pleasure it may have given him to write it, one had strong doubts concerning the pleasure derived from playing it.

In spite of these reservations the concert was intensely stimulating and one should not forget that it is only thanks to Adrian Jack's initiative that the early Stockhausen works were brought together for the first time in a single concert with Goeyvaerts compositions from the same period. From Cage to Goeyvaerts and Stockhausen, new light was shed on that crucial period of the early fifties, a wide spectrum was covered in the course of the ten concerts, including chance music, microtonal music and films, music theatre, improvisation, coloured video and avantgarde. It is to be hoped that the MusICA events will get all the financial assistance needed for realising their presumably very promising projects for the future.

Wednesday April 9

At the Queen Elizabeth Hall Rose Andresier, an enterprising young guitarist, gave for the first time a recital devoted entirely to music of living British composers. Two years before, in March 1978, her performance of Nigel Osborne's *After Night* created such a powerful impression that the sameness of the other pieces at that concert, or rather of the other performances, was hardly noticed. In this recital, however, the monotony made itself felt much more strongly, and Andresier's limitations - lack of expressive, rhythmic, and dynamic variety - were all the more conspicuous as the technical and stylistic demands of the new works resulted in obvious stress and struggle. Only one piece, Haydn Reeder's *Object Action 1.1 and 1.2*, had anything fresh to offer, and the total control of sound balance, indispensable if the preparation of the instrument prescribed by the composer was to achieve the desired transformation of the guitar sounds into gamelan-like sonorities, was sadly missing. The performance remained rather tentative and it is to be hoped that the work will soon be heard again.

Sunday April 13

The Nash Ensemble, well known for the exquisite refinement of their playing and the sophistication of their approach, missed a point or two when they applied this manner to a predominantly American programme. Eager to present 20th-century music in the most acceptable way, they

went just one step too far and deprived most of the pieces of their specific character and their well-defined identity. Samuel Barber's *Dover Beach* sounded much too rarefied; Charles Ives's *The Unanswered Question* lost all its engaging ruggedness; the account of Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, in its original chamber version for 13 instruments, was immaculate rather than full-blooded; and the first London performance of Elliott Carter's Orpheus cantata, *Syringa*, for mezzo-soprano (Sarah Walker) singing in English, bass (David Wilson-Johnson) singing in Greek, and chamber ensemble, was so well weeded and smoothed out that little was left of the boldness, the passion and the flamboyance of the music, which were captured in the world premiere in New York in December 1978.

Placed in the context of music by the four American veterans, Paul Patterson's *At the Still Point of the Turning World* (1980) for instrumental octet, a British premiere, was made to sound more traditional and less adventurous than any of them. Even had it been played more bluntly, this pastoral idyll would probably not have given offence to the most tender ears.

Thursday April 17

The recital given by the Dutch bass clarinettist Harry Sparnaay at the Goethe Institute confirmed the famous dictum of Schoenberg that there is no such thing as bad music, only music badly performed. Sparnaay gave a breathtaking account of Brian Ferneyhough's *Time and Motion Study I* (1971–77), and what in the past had always sounded like eight minutes of complexity for its own sake suddenly fell into place, made sense and came over as an exciting piece of highly virtuoso music making. In this demanding programme Frank Denyer's *Book of Songs* for bass clarinet and drone provided the one and only episode of unmitigated lyricism. Lucien Goethals's *Difonium* involved tape signals, Hans Otte teased the audience with a one-minute piece (*Text* for bass clarinettist), and Rolf Gehlhaar's *Polymorph* for bass clarinet and tape-delay system had a strongly alienating effect. Then at the very moment when the audience showed the first signs of fatigue, Sparnaay ended the evening – and the Goethe Institute concert series – with a riveting performance of Mauricio Kagel's *Atem* (1970) for a solo wind player.

Sunday April 20

Three more works by Ferneyhough were presented at the Purcell Room only a few days later by Suoraan: *Invention* for solo piano, *Cassandra's Dream Song* for solo flute, and *Coloratura* for oboe and piano. The extravagant demands made by his music on the performers were met bravely and expertly by Nancy Ruffer (flute), Christopher Redgate (oboe) and Michael Finnissy (piano); this remarkable team of soloists, while overcoming all the technical obstacles, carefully avoided any kind of 'polished' presentation and exposed the grittiness of Ferneyhough's music as well as the struggle involved in its performance.

The idea of devoting the second part of the evening to music by John Cage was a surprising, even an amusing one. The best performance was that of mezzo-soprano Josephine Nendick, who mustered just the right mixture of blandness and delicacy to give an enchanting account of *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs*. It would have been helpful to be able to follow the elaborate and meticulous programme notes but the auditorium was plunged into total darkness.

Wednesday April 23

In 1978 the BBC commissioned Alfred Shnitke (b. 1934), one of the best-known and most Westernised post-war Soviet composers, to write a work for a Festival Hall concert to be conducted by Gennadi Rozhdestvensky in April 1980; it was suggested that the piece be dedicated to Bruckner, since his Mass no. 2 was to be performed on the same occasion. The BBC perhaps got more than they bargained for: Shnitke came up with a Mass of his own, calling it Symphony no. 2 *St Florian*, which, since it lasts 55 minutes, was longer than Bruckner's work by almost 20 minutes. Though heavily disguised by its title and hidden behind the orchestra, Shnitke's Mass follows the six liturgical divisions most faithfully. The vocal writing is based on plainchant, though the four solo voices were often inaudible, being entirely masked by the orchestra for most of the time, especially in the Credo; the instrumental writing, on the other hand, is couched in the accepted 20th-century tradition of symphonic music, with reminiscences from every imaginable source, and a strong element of blurring which, unlike that of Ligeti or Lutosławski, is achieved by thickness and density. There is certainly some justification for seeing in Shnitke the rightful successor of Shostakovich; they are alike in their boundless eclecticism, moderated modernity, daring in disguise (the false-note dissonances), their typically Russian freshness of invention and the vastness of their designs. Everything is larger than life, nothing is entirely new, but most of Shnitke's music has a strong appeal for audiences.

Friday April 25 and Saturday April 26

'Towards a Theatre of Sound', a two-day programme of public rehearsals, lectures, demonstrations and discussions on the preparation and performance of electro-acoustic music, was presented by the SPNM and EMAS at St John's, Smith Square. Beyond arousing the curiosity and stimulating the interest of the uninitiated listener, and giving the composer an opportunity to familiarise himself with the latest tools and techniques of electro-acoustic music, the sessions raised a question, fundamental to all composition but of particular importance for electro-acoustic music: namely 'what to do', as Schoenberg put it, 'when more happens than one can imagine'. According to Denis Smalley, the arrival of computer-generated sound has provided man with the means to create any sound of his imagination. This is a daunting prospect, and the indispensable 'harnessing of resources', which Smalley calls 'the composer's worry', must indeed bring about ever more rigorous methods of choice and control if confusion is to be avoided. On the other hand the composer has, at any time, made use of only a small portion of all available sounds and it is not the increase in the number of available sounds but their integration into the musical process that leads to difficulties.

Edgard Varèse played an important part in the intoduction of noise into musical composition. He was one of the first composers to attempt in musical terms to imagine the unimaginable, and to ask persistently for the tools that would allow him to realise his imaginings. In 1950, when he heard for the first time electronic sounds – those produced by Meyer-Eppler at Darmstadt – he knew that this was the way in which he could achieve his aim. Although from an early date he introduced all sorts of unconventional devices into his orchestra, Varèse never attempted the extension of existing performance techniques by creating new sounds from old instruments; his sound vision was clear and it transcended both memory and past experience. Other composers, gifted with that kind of creative imagination, such as Boulez, Nono, Stockhausen and Xenakis, have each found the means to bring their sound images to life; 'in a world so entirely transformed and dominated by man that we come up against manmade structures the whole time', the artist is simply compelled 'to say what has never been said before', as the German physicist Werner Heisenberg puts it. What is expected from the artist of today is an act of 'creatio ex nihilo'.

When looking for new criteria it is important to make sure that the ends always justify the means, and that new techniques are not used merely for their own sake or for decorative purpose but to bring to life a preconceived idea. In the field of electro-acoustic composition it is important, for example, to establish to what extent the end result corresponds to the initial sound image, and whether the electro-acoustic means were a necessity or a gratuitous choice.

The concert on the evening of April 26 started with Stockhausen's *Solo* (1965-66) for melody instrument with feedback, in a double bass version brilliantly played by Barry Guy. Jonty Harrison's *A vent*, a passionate little piece for tape and oboe, was given an exhilarating virtuoso performance by Melinda Maxwell, who entirely monopolised attention to the extent of making the electro-acoustic score sound like a mere accompaniment – something the composer can hardly have anticipated. John Chowning, from Stanford University, succeeded in an almost uncanny way in projecting his sound through space to keep the audience baffled and excited. There was more excitement with *Anticredos* for six amplified voices and sound-routing system by Trevor Wishart; whether the audience liked the strange sounds produced by Wishart's extended vocal techniques is difficult to say, but the idea of using the six voices as so many classical synthesizers, with their oscillators, noise-generators and filters, was highly original, and it was magnificently carried through.

There were no masterpieces among the works: most of the compositions, including Alejandro Vinao's *Una orquesta*

imaginaria, exploited one specific aspect of music, whether it was space, timbre, or the voice, and they sounded like preliminary studies for larger works. But the performances themselves, provided by Barry Anderson's West Square Electronic Music Ensemble and Gregory Rose's Singcircle, were on the highest level, and thanks to the presence of the live element and the theatrical props many barriers between audience and composer were broken down. Further events, hopefully as well planned as this one, will keep us informed of new developments in the field of electro-acoustic music and its repercussions on the composing of new vocal and instrumental music.

Wednesday April 30

On the last day of the month Michael Finnissy and the American dancer Kris Donovan gave a recital in the Logan Hall. Finnissy's Piano Concerto no. 4, given its first performance on this occasion, is hellishly difficult and requires as formidable a pianist as the composer himself to do it justice; it 'explores the more purely formal ideas inherent in combining one dancer and one musician'. I found the two artists to be totally incompatible, and to be operating on such different wavelengths and levels of expression and technique that I feel unable to write about something that must simply have escaped me. The same applies to *English Country Tunes*; Finnissy states that its choreography is monolithic, a description I do not understand.

Friday May 2

The programme presented by the Redcliffe Concerts of British Music at the Queen Elizabeth Hall was exceptionally well balanced and well conceived. The first part began with Dallapiccola's *Piccola musica notturna*, a work inspired by a poem of Antonio Machado, which conveyed very vividly the atmosphere of nocturnal suspense and ghostly fantasy that the poem evokes. The Redcliffe Ensemble, under the direction of Lionel Friend, played the second version, for eight instruments, of 1961, which gives a yet more sharply defined expression of the poets thoughts than the 1954 original for orchestra. Dallapiccola's *Tre laudi* for soprano and 13 instruments (1936-37) opened the second part of the concert; these are settings of three sacred texts of the 13th century, and they mark Dallapiccola's first step on the road of twelve-note composition. Highly expressive, sometimes even ecstatic, occasionally reminiscent of Messiaen, but also at times monumental and hieratic, the *Tre laudi* present great difficulties which Jane Gregson, the soprano soloist on this occasion tried hard to overcome. Anthony Payne's *The World's Winter* (1978), a setting for soprano and chamber orchestra of two poems by Tennyson, was more in her line, and she succeeded very well in conveying the lyrical atmosphere of the piece, without, however, being able entirely to dispel the boredom that set in after a while. John Lambert's *Waves*, 'the largest part of a five-movement work to be called *Sea-changes*', is obviously a study in transformation, but after 25 minutes one came to the conclusion that there is very little change indeed, whether in the movement of the waves or of the music. The programme ended with some folk-tune settings by Percy Grainger.

Thursday May 8 and Friday May 9

The following week was Stockhausen week. On May 8 Stockhausen gave one of his highly rewarding lectures at the Goethe Institute; he analysed his *In Freundschaft* for clarinet, step by step, with illustrations by Susan Stephens, the dedicatee of the piece, which she plays very well indeed.

On the next afternoon Lysis gave a rather less rewarding performance of some pretty tricky samples of Stockhausen's music from all periods of his output: 'Set Sail for the Sun' from *Aus den sieben Tagen* (1968), *In Freundschaft* (1977), *Zyklus* (1959), Sonatina for violin and piano (1951), melodies from *Tierkreis* (1975), and 'Japan' (1970) from *Für kommende Zeiten* (1968-70). In the evening, at the Festival Hall, the Philharmonia Orchestra gave the first performance of *Jubilee* (1977), commissioned by the Hanover Opera House for the celebration of its 125th anniversary; Andrew Davis conducted the work with great assurance. Stockhausen says that the whole work is derived from a single musical formula in the style of a hymn and that the formula fluctuates in harmonic density. Although we must believe what he tells us about the intricate structure of the 15-minute piece, it seems to be one of his minor works, intended to be 'festive, spectacular, a showpiece', and this is exactly what it was.

Friday May 16

This was one of those difficult days when one is trying to be in two places at once. I solved the problem by attending an afternoon rehearsal of Douglas Young's *Third Night Journey Under the Sea*, a work of 15 minutes' duration, written for and performed by the young players of the Leicester Schools Symphony Orchestra under their permanent conductor Peter Fletcher. In this work Young attempts to combine the techniques of his two earlier pieces written for the same ensemble: the exploration of the movement of sound in space (*Virages*); and the exploration of the effects of moving the sound sources (instrumental and choral groups of contrasting combinations) around in the performance space (*Journey Between Two Worlds*). Both aurally and visually the new work is most intriguing. Far from being regimented, the young players participate in decision-taking and receive an initiation in new performing techniques, which is all the more valuable because Young has an uncanny way of never overstretching their resources, while Fletcher has a most inspiring way of leading them along. The brilliant trumpet player, Daryl Bonser, made a substantial contribution to the performance of the piece, which was exhilarating and full of unusual effects, and displayed an astonishing level of technical skill.

For the London Philharmonic Orchestra the first performance of Michael Finnissy's percussion-dominated *Sea and Sky* for large orchestra, commissioned by them, was a considerable challenge, which they were able to meet only thanks to the intelligence and the authority of their conductor, Elgar Howarth. Like most of Finnissy's recent works, this one looks vastly overscored, and one cannot help wondering whether the effect obtained from the orchestra would not have been nearer to what he imagined had he used some kind of graphic notation instead of filling the paper with an infinity of notes, many of which can neither be played nor heard. Instead of reading his programme notes one would probably have done better to trust one's ears and to keep an open mind so as to become absorbed in the rhythmic and metric lay-out of the work and to let oneself be carried away by its sheer energy and sustaining power. The time-scales on which the transformations of the sky and sea operate are very different, and it seems to me that the secret of this rather hermetic but powerfully evocative work resides in this dichotomy of phasing and transformation.

Wednesday May 28

During the 1979-80 season, Michael Finnissy and Nigel Osborne, both published by Universal Edition, seem to have monopolised the field of first performances to a large extent. On May 28 it was Osborne's turn. The City of London Sinfonia gave the premiere of his Concerto for flute and chamber orchestra; they commissioned this work with Aurèle Nicolet in mind as the soloist, so that Osborne had the privilege of knowing in advance for whom he was going to write. He also knew that his piece would be placed within a strictly classical programme – Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagète*, a Mozart flute concerto and a Haydn symphony – and though he introduced into his work scales of metres, pitch and time, both the form he chose and the scoring are strictly classical (the latter being indentical with that of the Mozart concerto).

The three movements of the work are strongly contrasted. The first is dominated by a rigid motoric line; the superimposition of seven metric scales and the use of seven pitch sets results in a texture of great density, and as the movement gathers momentum there are the first signs of a steadily rising passion. There is a sharp change of density and temperature in the very slow second movement, a litany of great lyricism, reminiscent of Nono; the intervals are partly very wide and typically expressionistic and partly microtonal (though no less expressive), and they lead the music through all the seven 'sharp' keys of the scale in a loose counterpoint. The third movement is marked by the incorporation of material from *I am Goya* (1977), an instrumental setting of a poem by Andrey Voznesensky for flute, oboe, violin and cello; this ensemble functions here as a sort of concertino group in the manner of a concerto grosso, either set against the tutti or merging with it. Violent and explosive, the movement is articulated by trills, and as it makes for a return of the initial motoric line passion reaches its climax; torn between the two opposite poles of Apollonian form and Dionysian content, the music is suddenly projected into a void, and, as the flute executes a leisurely flourish, is brutally cut off. Aurèle Nicolet gave a committed and assured performance, which was not unfortunately the case with Mr Hicocks's band.

Monday June 2

Elliott Carter's *Night Fantasies* for piano solo (1979-80) was commissioned by four pianists from New York: Paul Jacobs, Gilbert Kalish, Ursula Oppens and Charles Rosen; its world premiere, given by Ursula Oppens before a sparse but fervent audience on June 2 in the Assembly Hall, Bath, was the major event of the 1980 Bath Festival, cementing, as it were, a life-long friendship between Sir William Glock, director of the Bath Festival, and the composer. When Carter received the commission from the four pianists, all of them his friends, it must have been quite a challenge for him to find a suitable form for this fourfold request. To the initial idea for *Night Fantasies*, described by the composer as 'a piece in one continuous movement, but with many changes of character, suggesting the fleeting thoughts and feelings that pass through the mind during a period of wakefulness', he added the idea of reflecting in music the quite contrasting personalities of the four pianists. Only he who can identify the four characters and trace their individual signatures holds the key to this 'parade sauvage', a piece of bewildering complexity, breathtaking impetus and hair-raising difficulty, which Miss Oppens performed with admirable assurance. It is a piece I am planning to take to my own desert island, where I shall have all the time in the world to unravel its numerous strands and uncode its secrets.

Wednesday June 18

Daniel Barenboim was the conductor when the Orchestre de Paris gave the first performance of *Notations* by Pierre Boulez at the Palais des Congrès, Paris. As are so many of Boulez's compositions, *Notations* is a work in progress; it is the result of a commission by the Orchestre de Paris which was made at a time when the composer-pianist Serge Nigg had just discovered among his papers the manuscript of *Notations* for piano – twelve very short pieces which Boulez wrote in 1945 and dedicated to his friend Serge while they were both studying with Messiaen at the Conservatoire. The pieces were discarded with everything else of that period, but in 1978, over 30 years later, they became a sort of module or matrix for the new work. 'Not so much an orchestration', says Boulez, 'more a way or transcribing', and he adds 'as Berio would call it'. Hardly any information at all is volunteered by Boulez, beyond the declaration that 'the character of each piece is precisely defined, isolated', that there is 'a fixation on one single expression' and that 'the connection between the pieces is first and foremost one of contrast'. When the work is complete this statement may help conductors to choose which pieces to play and in what order. Barenboim's choice – the volatile and playful Pièce I, 'Modéré – Fantasque', the percussive, ostinato-bound, obsessive and perturbing Pièce IV, 'Rythmique', the expressive and expressionistic Pièce III, 'Très modéré', and the exuberant, Stravinskian Pièce II, 'Très vif – Strident' – produced a 20-minute cyclic work strong in contrasts. The element of freedom is the greatest difference between the piano pieces and the 'transcription' for orchestra. The twelve piano miniatures, serially organised and each twelve bars long, seem to follow one another in some kind of permutational order, whereas the order of the orchestral pieces is indeterminate. Nevertheless the original pieces hold the key to an understanding of the new work, which not only preserves the structure and design of the models but elaborates each bar and motif.

There can hardly be any doubt that Boulez's orchestration benefits from his experience as a conductor. The string section alone is occasionally split up into as many as 70 individual parts and the same process is applied to the woodwind and brass; but there are windows and perforations in the densely crowded score which remains transparent through all the gigantic juxtapositions and superimpositions, all the powerful onrushes and explosive climaxes, as layer upon layer converges towards some unspecified goal and breaks off to gather new energy and set off at the assault of new heights. There are silences heavy with foreboding, and there are moments of frantic activity; the sound itself is beguiling, irridescent, perpetually changing and flowing, sometimes reminiscent of Debussy.

Even for an audience unfamiliar with the inner workings of such a piece there is no obstacle to overcome, no barrier to spontaneous, sensual enjoyment of the piece. The audience at the Palais des Congrès was entirely overwhelmed by the impact of *Notations*. Barenboim had prepared a strongly profiled and, as far as one could tell, authentic performance, and the orchestra mastered the difficulties without strain or stress, enjoying a score that takes into account the specific character and scope of each instrument. It is rare to see the new work of a major contemporary composer so warmly applauded. For all concerned, composer, conductor, musicians and audience, it was a great evening.

Friday June 20

The London Sinfonietta programme for their concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall was a model of planning and imagination. Works by Milhaud, *La création du monde* and *L'homme et son désir*, opened the first and second parts of the concert, and each was followed by a work by the Austrian H. K. Gruber (b. 1943), his Violion Concerto (1977–78) and *Frankenstein!!* (1976–77). In England Gruber first stepped into the limelight in September 1978, when a whole issue of *Tempo* was devoted to him and his former group, the now disbanded MOB art & ton ART. It was for this group that he in 1970 wrote his *Frankenstein* suite, based on a collection of naughty little nursery rhymes by the Austrian poet H. C. Artmann; a version for solo voice and ensemble, for the MOB and Die Reihe groups, was followed in due course by the definitive version, *Frankenstein!!*, 'A Pandemonium for Baritone Voice and Orchestra', which was premiered at Liverpool by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Simon Rattle conducting, on November 25, 1978.

Frankenstein!! certainly owes something to Kurt Weill and Hanns Eisler, but also to Franz Lehár, to Kagel and even to the Second Viennese School; it is this influence that suggested the seven-chord series on which the work is based. The music is strictly diatonic, but it runs through many keys, stringing them together by a process of shifting rather than modulation. Declamation and song adhere to the rhythm of the verses, whereas the orchestra moves freely, including jazz, pop, and salon music in its stylistic kaleidoscope. Singing, acting and reciting himself, Gruber possesses a formidable stage presence, through which he easily overcomes any problems of communication with the audience and inhibitions among the performers. Simon Rattle, who was again the conductor, entered into the game with relish. Popular music made respectable, entertainment accepted and enjoyed without reluctance or embarrassment – that was the outcome of this first London performance.

Both Gruber and Milhaud share a kind of popular appeal and both have a way of teasing the ear with a 'tonality' that is slightly off target; but whereas that of Milhaud is rather spicy and typically Mediterranean, Gruber's is of a sweeter kind and unmistakably Viennese; but it is very sophisticated – neither a return to the past nor nostalgia for it, but the result of a long continuing attempt to overcome serialism. The Viennese influence is clear in his Violin Concerto, which has links both with Alban Berg and Schubert. In one movement, lasting 25 minutes, the work is based on a song; its subtitle '...am Schatten Duft gewebt' ('Perfume woven from shadow') is taken from one of Artmann's *Persian Quatrains*, and the music is highly lyrical and intensely melodious. It was beautifully played by Ernst Kovačić, its dedicatee; Simon Rattle conducted with his usual flair and the London Sinfonietta was at its very best.

Tuesday June 24

There can be little doubt that the Nash Ensemble is, at present, one of the best chamber ensembles of that size (16 performers) in London, and to hear them give the first performance of a work commissioned by them, Nigel Osborne's *Mythologies* for six instruments, under the dependable Lionel Friend, was to know that one was hearing an authentic and reliable performance of the work. In its original form *Mythologies* was a study in structuralism based on a myth from the nort-west Pacific coast of America, which describes the journeys of young Asdiwal; it reflects various aspects of Tsimshian society and establishes a set of oppositions (east–west, high–low, hunger–repletion). Over the years, rather than reworking or altering material, Osborne 'simply composed "on top of" what was there before', superimposing layer upon layer; this description led one to expect a great density, but instead an extreme sparseness informs the work from beginning to end. 'The music', Osborne further explains, 'is an attempt to test creatively Lévi-Strauss's assertion that music and myth are similar "machines" to overcome time'. In fact Lévi-Strauss goes far beyond this assertion when he declares that the structural analysis of myth and music will lead us ultimately to an understanding of the unconscious structure of the mind, and that the interdependence of logical structure and emotional response is much the same everywhere. For him,

what the individual listener understands when he hears a myth or a piece of music is in many ways personal to himself; more likely than not, Osborne's *Mythologies* was subjected to that kind of selective hearing by the listeners in the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Though based on a colourful story, the music is obviously not descriptive. Only the pattern of oppositions, not their specific meaning, is reproduced in musical terms, but this pattern alone is manifold enough. On the one hand there is the opposition between a fundamental structural layer of micropolyphony, characteristic of Osborne's earlier work, and, on the surface, the more vivid figuration of his later style. On the other hand there are the specific oppositions within each parameter (pitch, dynamics, speed), and the drastic opposition between the very slow and very secretive two outer movements and the central part, where passion flies high and violent emotions are suddenly unleashed. The first movement, a Scherzo, gradually unfolds, with flute and clarinet on the surface confined to very small steps, and violin and cello providing a background of open fifths; the harp suddenly rushes towards a climax, which is broken off immediately as the initial pattern returns. The presence of the trumpet passes almost unnoticed until it expands into a solo cadenza of very wide intervals. This introduces the strongly contrasting second movement, entitled 'Paradigma', whose raison d'être is evidently purely structural. This haunting movement vanishes into a mysterious 'niente' and leads without a break into the third movement, a kind of organum in which the narrow steps of the Scherzo emerge again. There follows a spellbinding coda for harp and cello – perhaps intended as a ceremony of remembrance for Roland Barthes, the French structuralist, from whom Osborne borrowed the title *Mythologies*, and to whose memory he intended the work as 'a small tribute'.

Proms 1980

The programme of the 1980 Proms was disappointing enough as it was, and it happened that contemporary music was particularly badly hit by the musicians' strike, because of which 20 of the planned 57 concerts had to be cancelled. Among the cancellations were the performances of three of the 'Proms Firsts' – works by Paul Patterson, Robin Holloway and Harrison Birtwistle. The remaining works new to the Proms – by 87-year-old Hendrick Andriessen, 79-year-old Edmund Rubbra, (this year's only commission), and 75-year-old Sir Michael Tippett – had little of the shock of the new, more of nostalgia and respect, even if Sir Michael's new Concerto for violin, viola and cello is in every way the work of a master. No doubt the programme had, as Robert Ponsonby pointed out, 'all the usual ingredients: accepted masterpieces of the central repertoire, some of the most interesting of new music and some unfamiliar early music', but the proportion of these ingredients was highly alarming and one would wish that even in a 'period of serious difficulty' the BBC would maintain their readiness to take the risks involved in a forward-looking and responsible programming policy.

Friday September 5

At first it seemed quite a good idea to include Peter Maxwell Davies's *Five Klee Pictures* in the programme of the ILEA London Schools Symphony Orchestra concert. But one very soon became aware of the discrepancy between the technical accomplishments of this remarkable ensemble of young musicians (who played under the inspiring direction of John Carewe) and the very limited demands of these pieces, which were originally written, 20 years ago, for the members of the orchestra of Cirencester Grammar School. The five pieces have, since then, been revised – they may have had more bite and more stringency in their first version. In their present form they are charming enough but rather simplistic, and on this occasion they matched neither the technical nor the intellectual standard of the performers; nor, incidentally, do they match the poetry and sophistication of Klee's delightful pictures.

Tuesday September 9 to Saturday September 13

Trevor Wishart, the new guru of English music theatre, has at last had his say in London, where Adrian Jack, always receptive to new ideas, opened to him for five consecutive evenings the doors of the ICA. The continuous show, which lasted for 90 minutes, consisted of three pieces connected by tapes and slides explaining Wishart's ideas; no detail was left unaccounted for and the audience was led firmly from one stage to the next, lest they stray from the prescribed path. All three works performed at the ICA – *Fidelio* for flautist, six suitcases and six cassette recorders, *Tuba mirum* for tuba player, stage effects, costumed actors, special mutes and lighting unit, and *Pastorale/Walden 2* for flautist, tuba player, magician's cabinet, stuffed birds, tape, slides and visual effects – are dominated by Wishart's current box fixation and contain messages so well hidden behind a mass of allegories, verbal instructions, and props that it is often difficult to relate the message to the action, the music and the story.

Fidelio, so we are told, 'takes an ironical look at the blessings of technological liberation'. A flautist (Kathryn Lukas) 'improvises within five designated regions' and is finally defeated by the taped music, recorded on six cassettes which are hidden inside six suitcases. To make sure that we don't miss the point, an extract from the last scene of Beethoven's opera is played at the beginning. *Tuba mirum* is a solo tuba piece for Melvyn Poore cast as a psychiatric patient. He too is eventually overcome and put under sedation. Berlioz's Requiem provides the frame of reference here. The piece is based on the text of the 'Tuba mirum' from the Requiem Mass, and supplies the soloist with a valid pretext for some extravagant and rather virtuoso tuba playing combined with a good deal of clowning and subsidiary action. *Pastorale/Walden 2* is, Wishart says, 'an indictment of Skinnerism'. It is also a most amusing music theatre piece for two instrumentalists (Adam and Eve). While they are being controlled by clocks and metronomes, the Kyrie of Bach's B Minor Mass is gradually transformed to the point of total mutation. The theatrical devices are hilarious, the music is clever, the setting of Adam and Eve in a mechanically animated box is imaginative and one would have liked to forget all the ideological ballast and enjoy the piece for its sheer fun.

Friday September 26

In his recital at the Purcell Room the Greek pianist Christodoulos Giorgiades played a mixed programme of Frescobaldi, Haydn, Skalkottas, and Pawlu Grech, a young Maltese composer. Listening to the *15 Little Variations* (1927) of Nikos Skalkottas I was again struck by the totally unchromatic, unviennese and unromantic character of this music. Skalkottas may well have been – as the Greek scholar Yannis Papaioannou has been claiming for years – one of Schoenberg's favourite pupils, but one can find no trace of any Schoenberg influence in these pieces, which seem rather rooted in Mediterranean soil. The *Passacaglia*, also entirely unromantic, is a much tougher piece and was played by Giorgiades with great understanding and assurance. As for Pawlu Grech, he is possessed of a genuine sense of musical humour, which he should carefully cultivate, it being such a rare commodity these days. His *Divertissement for Pianist* with the subtitle 'A Pianist's Amusement' was played by Giorgiades inside and outside the piano, on strings and keys, using all kinds of implements and interpreting the text score according to his own views. The piece was great fun and it left the whole audience in a very cheerful mood.

Thursday October 30

In 1963 Lina Lalandi organised her first English Bach Festival. As was to be expected, the bulk of the programme consisted of works by J. S. Bach, his sons and his contemporaries. Although the events included the first performance of a Sonata for unaccompanied violin by Nikos Skalkottas as well as the Mass and three motets by Stravinsky, it could not have been foreseen at that time that Miss Lalandi was soon to become the most ardent champion in Great Britain of contemporary music in general and of Greek composers in particular. 1966 was the year devoted to Xenakis, 1967 to Messiaen, 1969 to Skalkottas, 1970-71 to Stockhausen, and so it went on for well over a decade. All these years are remembered most vividly, but none more than 1964, which was marked by the first performance, at Oxford, on June 27, of Jani Christou's *Tongues of Fire*, a Pentecost oratorio, which had been commissioned by the English Bach Festival and was conducted by Piero Guarino.

Christou (1926–70) was in 1964 almost completely unknown in this country. He grew up in Alexandria in a society steeped in Mediterranean culture and Eastern mysticism. When he left Egypt in 1945 he went to Cambridge to read philosophy and linguistics with Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein at King's College, pursuing his music

studies with Hans Redlich as a sideline. The following years were spent between the Jung Institute in Zürich (1948–50), where his elder brother also studied, and Italy (1949–50), where he studied music with Lavagnino. When he returned to Alexandria he was equipped with a solid philosophical basis on which to build his compositions.

His first work of importance, *Phoenix Music* for orchestra (1948–49), which was performed at Covent Garden under Alex Sherman in 1950, is a sort of matrix for all the works to come. It deals with transformation – that of the legendary bird that, after having lived for five or six centuries in the Arabic desert, burnt itself on a funeral pyre and rose from the ashes with renewed youth to live through another cycle. Everything is there: the transformation motif which, in later years, Christou was to connect with alchemy, the fertility theme, which was to be found in most of his later works, and the cyclic form, by which the beginning returns at the end, allowing the next cycle to start without interruption. The structure describes a single great arc, which Christou called 'moon form' or 'Phoenix form'; his works in this form usually start *pianissimo* and work up to a colossal climax in which action ('metapraxis') is generally involved. This is then followed by a rapid decline, leading to total annihilation. Growth, decline and rebirth is a concept current in most religions and rituals from prehistoric times and primitive societies to the high civilisations of East and West; besides adopting this fundamental cycle Christou became deeply involved with the subconscious, with dreams and visions, and strove to bring to the fore what had for too long been buried under many layers of inhibition and rules, reviving and resuscitating it in his musical and theatrical 're-enactments' of old myths and rituals.

With *Tongues of Fire*, written in Greece on the island of Chios, he went one step further in that direction, inventing new means and new techniques to convey the initial bewilderment, confusion and panic of the apostles and their ultimate rapture; the post-serial idiom is entirely his own, and he multiplies the devices of voice production until every part of the body is mobilised in the endeavour to intensify expression.

The oratorio *Mysterion*, for three choirs, soloist, and orchestra including piano, harpsichord, celesta and five percussionists, was given its first performance by the choir and the symphony orchestra of the Norddeutsche Rundfunk at the Jacobikirche, Hamburg, on October 30, 1980. It was written in 1965–66 and Christou integrated all the experience he had acquired in the writing of *Tongues of Fire* into a new compositional system for it. He abandoned conventional notation, inventing instead graphic symbols – strokes, dots, circles and arrows – neatly arranged in boxes applying to the various choral and instrumental groups; the 'metapraxis' or action passages are 'scored' in drawings.

The subject of *Mysterion* is taken from the old Egyptian Book of the Dead. It relates the story of the King of the Sun who, in his chariot, descends every evening to the depth of the underworld in order to visit the lost souls, and emerges the next morning into the glory of light. To gain access to the chariot, the souls have to submit to a number of trials: they must know by heart the secret names of the ten gates, the ten gatekeepers and of all the deities, they must recite these in the precise order in which they are inscribed on the walls of the tomb of the pharaoh Seth I, and they must defeat those who compete in the struggle for salvation. (This fight is carried out in the choir with wooden shields and swords; arms flail and fists are shaken, as theatrical action, 'metapraxis', comes into its own.)

After an introduction by a speaker, who tells the story with great gravity, all that is heard are the magic 'words of power', meaningless in themselves but suggestive and potent; they are at first shrouded in mystery, but gradually emerge from a collective whisper to break into frenetic outcries of anguish and despair which increase and multiply as the lost souls recite the names of the gates one after another, reaching climaxes of violence and hysteria before returning to the initial whisper so that the cycle is complete and can eventually start again. Nine is the sacred number of deities, as decreed in the year 2270 BC by the Egyptian priesthood, and *Mysterion* is therefore divided into nine sections. The sound one hears is totally unidentifiable and could be attributed to electronic devices if the orchestra were not there to testify to Christou's most unusual skill in drawing from the instruments the exact sound image of his inner aural vision.

The frenzy, the ecstasy and the mystery were so terrifying that the audience, who had remained silent after the other two works (by Denisov and Webern–Bach), as is the custom in churches, broke into vociferous applause in order to relieve itself of an unbearable tension. This applause, I may add, was thoroughly deserved by all the participants in this remarkable performance. Francis Traves conducted with authority and intelligence, the choir and orchestra surpassed themselves and one felt that Christou would have approved.

Wednesday November 12

The first of the Fresh Ear concerts at the October Gallery clashed most unfortunately with another concert, and I was able to attend only a rehearsal. John Potter, formerly leading tenor of Electric Phoenix, is said to have left that group for lack of opportunity to explore new fields of performance. His present policy is an entirely experimental one, and he seems ready to take all the risks involved in pursuing it. There can be no doubt that the actor–musician, a very rare species indeed, has to undergo an extended and highly specialised training if he is to acquire an equal skill in both disciplines; there is, in that kind of performance, no room for improvisation or last-minute solutions, and an elaborate and lengthy preparation is called for. What I saw and heard on that afternoon (not forgetting that it was a rehearsal) had obviously been prepared by highly qualified artists and technicians, but the result was a string of the most amateurish sketches. Fresh Ear will have to rethink their present policy radically before launching themselves on another new venture of this kind.

Thursday November 20

Alexander Goehr's Sinfonia was commissioned by the English Chamber Orchestra for their 20th anniversary season. The work marks Goehr's homecoming, a return to Schoenberg, his original father-figure; the enfant terrible of the fifties has come back full circle to the classicism of the Second Viennese School, and so Schoenbergian is the sound of this music that one is tempted to suggest, behind the lengthy quasi-quotations from Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony, a kind of homage. Perhaps this was inspired by the location (the Sinfonia was written in Israel) as was certainly the last movement, 'Dankgesang', in which each of the two sections ends with part of a prayer set to a very simple melody: 'Pray that Jerusalem may have/Peace and felicity'. The most striking feature of the work is the double occurrence of variations – in the first and last movements. It ends with an F major chord of which Schoenberg would probably have approved. Daniel Barenboim conducted the work with great conviction and the audience was entirely pleased.

Wednesday November 26

At the Purcell Room Capricorn, conducted by Anthony Pay, presented two new works, by Robert Saxton and Theo Loevendie, and five short pieces by Italian composers (Berio, Donatoni and Petrassi), and composers who studied in Italy (Peter Maxwell Davies – with Petrassi – and Bernard Rands – with Berio).

Franco Donatoni wrote *Lumen*, for two strings, two woodwind and two percussion, in memory of Luigi Dallapiccola. For this short and luminous homage Donatoni makes use of a restricted selection of notes and gestures; the sound picture, entirely dominated by vibraphone and celesta, culminates in a final explosion of light.

Maxwell Davies's *Runes from a Holy Island* (1977), a collection of seascapes, is also, to a certain extent, percussion dominated, but the sound is as sparse and austere as that of some of his early pieces. The structure is closely involved with all kinds of riddles and rules, acrostics, transformations of plainsong and a magic square. Inspired by Davies's 'own island', the pieces are very evocative, and if the listener is so inclined he can 'fill out his own miniature sea and island soundscapes'.

Goffredo Petrassi's piece, written way back in the sixties, is set for three instrumentalists (flautist, oboist and clarinettist) playing seven instruments – hence the title *Tre per sette*. The seven sections of this one-movement piece are strongly contrasted, dramatically tense and full of instrumental challenges, which were met by the three performers on this occasion (Philippa Davies, Christopher O'Neal and Anthony Lamb) with great virtuosity.

Robert Saxton's *Eloge*, on poems by St-John Perse and Jules Supervielle, a work commissioned by Capricorn, is highly atmospheric, with long interludes full of arpeggios and flute arabesques à la Debussy, chords à la Messiaen, and decorations à la Saxton. The undulating vocal line was well sung by Lynn Griebling, soloist of the evening. Saxton is very

fastidious in his choice of French and German poetry. He will no doubt have listened eagerly to Berio's *O King* for voice and five instruments (the next piece on the programme), to this very day a model for vocalising words, feelings and ideas.

From Berio's former pupil, Bernard Rands, we heard *Nemo I* (1971), a double bass 'sequenza' brilliantly played by Barry Guy, its dedicatee. The concert ended with the Nonet by the Dutch composer Theo Loevendie (born 1930), a 17-minute piece with a rhythmically pungent first movement and an episodic second, of many moods and modes of expression; it started well but outstayed its welcome considerably.

Friday November 28

The programme of the Suoraan concert at the October Gallery was divided between British, Japanese and Italian composers (Richard Emsley, James Clarke, Toru Takemitsu and Luigi Nono). It was hard to discover a common denominator between the works presented, but easy to get involved in the one outstanding performance of the evening, that of Nono's by now almost legendary tape work *La fabbrica illuminata* for mezzo-soprano and tape (1964). In this piece natural voice and tape are so totally integrated that the sung words seem to spring right out of the taped clamour of anonymous sounds. It would be hard to think of a greater contrast than that between Josephine Nendick's anguished and powerful rendering of Nono's work and Nancy Ruffer's quiet and genuinely contemplative performance of Takemitsu's *Koe* ('Voice'; 1971) for solo amplified flute at the start of the concert.

Tuesday January 13 to Sunday January 18, 1981

Ekkehard Schall, deputy director of the Berliner Ensemble and son-in-law of Bertolt Brecht, is not a singer but an actor. He is the last survivor of a generation of performers who inherited the Eisler-Brecht tradition, and at a time when so many singers are giving us travesties of those songs, Schall's show at the Riverside Studios, called 'Of the Dying, Of the Dead, Of the Living', was nothing less than a must for everyone interested in that very special song style of the late twenties and early thirties. (I was glad to see a large attendance of musicians and composers, and I hope many producers went along for they would have found Schall's performance both inspiring and instructive.) In the original productions all the principal parts of *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny* were taken by actors, and the way in which Schall half sang and half recited Brecht's poems – 58 items at one go – brought back all the memories of the Berlin of 50 years ago.

Wednesday January 14

The first performance of Anthony Gilbert's 80-minute radio opera *The Chakravaka Bird* was given on Radio 3 in a striking production by Veronica Slater. Drawn from an Indian legend, it is the story of two pilgrimages and one transformation: the wanderings of Mahadevi, the Indian poetess and saint of the twelfth century in search of her 'lord, white as jasmine'; Gilbert's own journey into Indian thought and philosophy; and the gradual transformation of Mahadevi from an innocent and healthy girl into an emaciated and transfigured bride of the god Shiva. The libretto is based on Sanskrit texts and poems by Mahadevi.

The opera consists of three 'Meditations', each of them introduced by a narrator and divided into an 'aria' and several 'refrains' (sung by Mahadevi, mezzo-soprano, and her inner voice, the same, electronically distorted), and an 'encounter': the first of these is with Kausika (*Heldentenor*), Mahadevi's blustering and lustful suitor, whose brashness leads her to discard all her clothes in a gesture of social protest, and pursue her search naked; the second is with Allama (countertenor), the relentlessly probing examiner and sage, who in the end declares her a saint; and the third is with Shiva, her lord (high tenor, electronically modified), whose apparition brings about her spontaneous combustion. It is a typical case history of a martyr, stubborn, ambitious and conceited, unbalanced in mind and extreme in her physical demands.

With so highly erotic and exalted a subject Gilbert could easily have indulged in lusciousness and exoticism, but the music adheres narrowly to the rigorous structure of the drama. The orchestra consists of alto flute, accordion, cimbalom and a percussion section of seven players, including three pianists, and is strongly reminiscent of Stravinsky's ensemble for *Les noces*; Gilbert seems to have been further influenced by that work in the static, repetitious and obsessive treatment of his musical ideas. The instrumental score draws its rhythmic material from seven 'cycles', progressing from a mere tinkle of high gong, triangles, small gong and lujan in cycle 1 to the clatter of bongos, handbells, tubular bells and boobans in cycle 7. Four 'mantras' provide the material of the voice parts; the vocal signature tunes and leitmotifs, particularly that of the 'lord, white as jasmine', progress from smaller leaps (in the first meditation a tritone) to wider (in the final section a ninth). At moments of emotional turmoil the voices resort to extended and extravagant melisma, withdrawing into an intimate and mysterious Sprechgesang at moments of introspection.

Ritual and frenzy, derived from Indian drama, and the sounds of Indonesian gamelan have been absorbed into Gilbert's language; there is no trace of Western sensuality, that of Wagner or Messiaen, and the music remains clear and uncluttered from beginning to end. Among the team of excellent performers the American flautist Kathryn Lukas will be especially remembered for her handling of the highly ornate and virtuoso part.

Sunday January 18 to Saturday January 24

The first performances of two works, one by Rolf Gehlhaar, the other by John Cage, took place at the Espace de Projection in IRCAM on January 18 and they were repeated daily for a week. Gehlhaar's *Pas à pas*, 'music for moving ears', is the result of a research project that is still in progress, and the work therefore has the character of a prototype rather than a finished composition. Scored for tridimensional sounds and traditional instruments, it is described by the composer as 'ambulatory music', the ambulating element being, however, not the music but the audience; each listener is intended to walk around in a leisurely fashion gradually changing his position with respect to the loudspeakers and the instrumentalists, and creating his own sound environment – the thesis being that what he hears depends on where he stands. He is left entirely to his own devices; some do experience the sudden shock of recognition, when the changing of the sound appears, others don't. The exact

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nature of the transformation seems as yet to be rather unpredictable, but no doubt in time it will become more precisely defined.

Similar phenomena must surely have been perceived quite frequently by anyone finding himself in a loudspeaker-connected situation, but the IRCAM event was presented as a special occasion and the public expected – well, what exactly did they expect? To be speechless with surprise and excitement, to partake in a sensational discovery? If so then they must have been sadly disappointed because Gehlhaar's findings are nothing of the sort. His contribution has been to add a new dimension to the definition of space; this parameter, which has previously been determined mainly by the position of the sound source, the location of the loudspeakers, and by stereophony, may in future also be defined, and with the same precision, by the position of the human receiver. Seen in this perspective the wider implications of Gehlhaar's research begin to become apparent. And I wonder whether the presentation of his investigation to a predominantly uninitiated audience was not slightly premature and whether the concert form was at all suitable for the public performance of a 'composition' that can hardly yet be called a 'work of art'.

On the other hand, John Cage's *Roratorio*, 'An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake', cries out for performance, whether live or taped. In its 'audio' form, completed on August 15, 1979, it was awarded the C. Sczuka prize for the best radiophonic work of the year. For the IRCAM performance, announced as a 'première mondiale', a live element was added – the Irish ballad singer Joseph Heaney, and two Irish drummers, Peadar and Mel Mercier; Cage is already thinking of a version involving the participation of the Cunningham dance company. Just like James Joyce, Cage is engaged on a 'Work in Progress', of which *Roratorio* is only the first manifestation.

In his programme notes Cage states that he never does anything without being invited to. In this case the invitation came from Klaus Schöning of WDR, who asked him if he would like to write music to accompany his reading of *Writing for the Second Time through Finnegans Wake* (this is the radically pruned, 41-page version of the 120-page *Writing through Finnegans Wake*, which consisted of 862 mesostiches, exactly the number of pages in the book). With the new commission in mind, Cage undertook the listing of all the sounds mentioned in *Finnegans Wake*, which at a later stage he divided into categories; to these he added Louis Mink's listing of all the places, spread over the whole world but half of them in Ireland and most of those in Dublin, where Joyce is remembered as a keen ballad singer himself. In search of Joyce, Cage went to Ireland, accompanied by his sound engineer, John Fullemann; together they visited the places on Mink's list and made recordings of Irish sounds, concrete and musical, assisted by Joe Heany, 'king of the Irish singers', Seamus Ennis, a bagpipe player, and four more musicians, a violinist, a flautist and two drummers.

With his Irish recordings and a collection of sounds selected by Schöning from the archives of the WDR, Cage went on to Paris. The mixing and final realisation of the work was carried out at IRCAM in response to the invitation of Max Matthews and Pierre Boulez to Cage to realise a project in the IRCAM studios; there Cage was able to coordinate his work with the contributions of the WDR from Cologne, the SDR from Stuttgart, and the KRO from Hilversum. The recording of Cage's 'lecture' was done in a day. During the following four weeks three more 16-track tapes were added to and connected with this original recording, and the final result was a huge superimposition of a total of no fewer than 64 tracks, with, obviously, a built-in element of unpredictability. Would it be possible to distinguish anything, would Cage's voice be totally drowned, would there be chaos? Nobody knew, everyone speculated. In the end it all added up to a colossal fête champêtre, brimming over with the most genuine Irish joie de vivre; to the most poetic, outrageous, bedevelling, lovable 'circus'; to one more Finnegan-sonorisation and one more attempt at Finnegan-decrypting. As Cage delivered his 'lecture', in a soft Sprechgesang entirely his own invention, as Heany sang his ballads and the two percussionists let themselves be carried away by their own drumming, magic started to spread and no one escaped the hypnotic fascination of the event.

Saturday January 31

Two new works, commissioned for the occasion from Ross Edwards and Philip Grange, were premiered by the Fires of London in their concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. For a work intended to express liveliness and vitality, Edwards's *Laikan* – the title is an Old Gothic word – is strangely quiet and subdued; the liveliness is restricted to the central movement, where a Madagascan folk-tune lends the piece an exotic touch, which on this occasion was enhanced by Gregory Knowles's skilful percussion playing. Philip Grange derived the title of his work, *Cimmerian Nocturne*, from the Greek 'Kimmerios' which refers to the people of Cimmerii, condemned to live in perpetual night. The composer originally planned a nocturne 'rather different from the salon variety', but the piece is highly evocative of the usual nocturnal mood (though the oppressive darkness is occasionally pierced by the lightning flashes of a screaming piccolo). I was reminded from time to time of Pierné's famous *Petits faunes*.

All the other pieces in the programme were effectively eclipsed by Maxwell Davies's *Anakreontika* (1976), a setting of ancient Greek texts for soprano with alto flute, cello, harpsichord and percussion. The very delicate and transparent instrumental commentary was repeatedly submerged by the shrill outbursts of Mary Thomas, who has a tendency to equate passion with hysterics, but who at times found deeply moving accents of great purity and restraint. (It is regrettable that it was impossible to distinguish a single word of the beautiful text and one could not follow the programme because the hall was in complete darkness.) John Carewe conducted the work with a keen understanding of its refinement and delicacy.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Ian Bartlett Acting Head of the Music Department at Goldsmiths' College, University of London. Previously taught in secondary schools in Nottingham and Banbury and at Bretton Hall College of Education, Yorkshire.

Hilary Bracefield Senior Lecturer in Music at the Ulster Polytechnic and director of the experimental music ensemble The Mushroom Group.

William Brooks American composer, performer and musicologist. At present on a fellowship at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC, doing research into 19th-century American operetta. The author of a doctoral thesis on William Billings, Charles Ives and John Cage, he is currently making a new edition of Ives's Fourth Symphony and writing a book on Cage.

Simon Emmerson Composer, performer and writer on contemporary music. Lecturer with responsibility for the Electronic Music Studio at The City University, London. Secretary of the Electro-Acoustic Music Association of Great Britain.

Roger Heaton Clarinettist. At present doing research into the music of Elliott Carter at Goldsmiths' College, University of London.

Douglas Jarman Lecturer in Contemporary Music at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester. The author of *The Music of Alban Berg*, he is the leading authority on the composer's music in this country.

Karen Jensen Canadian soprano. Formerly a member of the British group Electric Phoenix, she has now returned to Canada. Currently completing a doctoral thesis on extended vocal techniques for Royal Holloway College, University of London.

Mark Lockett Pianist and composer. At present completing a thesis on contemporary jazz piano improvisation at The City University, London. Member of the London Composers' Collective.

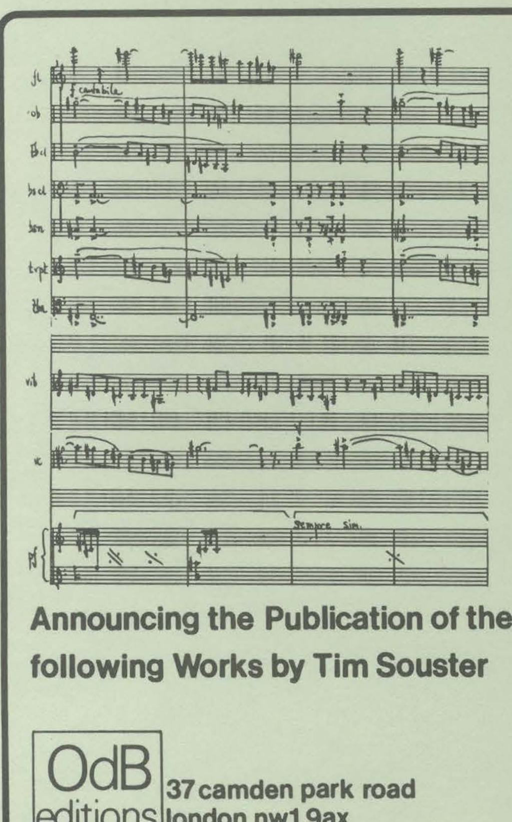
Keith Potter Composer, performer and writer on contemporary music. Lecturer in Music at Goldsmiths' College, University of London. At present completing a thesis on aspects of 20th-century musical notation. Member of the Executive Committee of The New Macnaghten Concerts.

Howard Riley Improvising pianist and composer. Has had 13 solo, trio and quartet LPs released on various labels. During the past year has performed in East and West Germany, Hungary, Iceland and Italy.

Brigitte Schiffer Music critic and writer specialising in contemporary music who has lived in Britain since 1964. Contributor to many journals in both English and German.

John Tilbury Pianist. Formerly a close associate of Gavin Bryars and Cornelius Cardew, he is currently a member of the improvisation group AMM3 and a leading member of the Eisler Ensemble.

Christopher Wintle Senior Lecturer in Music at Goldsmiths' College, University of London.



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