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Gavin Bryars

Satie and the British

This article was written in 1979 for a monograph on Erik Satie, edited by Ornella Volta, in the series Les Cahiers de l'Herne; the book was intended for publication in 1980 but has been delayed and is now expected to appear in late 1982 or early 1983. The article as it is published here is a revised version of the original English text.

The impetus to write about Satie's connections with the British Isles arises from several unconnected sources. In the first place Satie is, of course, as much a British composer as he is a French one. In addition there were certain points in his life when his relationship with these islands became particularly close. It is, further, the case that a number of musicians active in Britain during the later part of Satie's life can be seen to have points of contact, whether direct or oblique, with Satie's life and work. It could be argued, too, that substantial and committed writing on Satie, frequently the most original writing, has come from those employing the language of Francis Bacon as their mother tongue. And finally, in the recent past Satie has been of crucial importance to several interesting younger composers in England, composers whose work demonstrates an acute understanding of Satie's music and spirit. But to the beginning . . .

Biographical connections

In an introductory talk to three concerts of Satie's music that he organised in 1949 Constant Lambert said: 'Amongst his many rare distinctions was the fact that he appears to be the only well-known artist with Scots blood in his veins who has not been hailed as a genius by the Scots.'[1] Lambert went on to say, effectively, that since Satie was acclaimed in France only at the end of his life, and then only by a very few people, his neglect by the Scots is hardly surprising. The Scottish connection runs very deep, and it is not entirely true to say that Satie was neglected in Scotland during his lifetime, nor for that matter before it.

It is always mentioned in biographies of Satie that his mother, Jane Leslie Anton, met his father, Alfred, while she was staying in Honfleur. But what is almost invariably omitted is the crucial item of information that it was not in Honfleur but in London that they were married. An announcement in *The Times* of 20 July 1865 reads: 'On the 19th July at St. Mary's Church, Barnes, Surrey, by the Rev. John Jessop MA Chaplain to H. Majesty the King of the Belgians, Monsieur Jules Alfred Satie of Honfleur, France, to Jane Leslie only daughter of Mr. George Anton, of Mark Lane.' Quite what the Belgians were doing in the matter is beyond the scope of this article, but it was the first of Satie's many productive relationships with that country. (Indeed England and Belgium were the only two countries that Satie visited—except those that he may have visited in his mental wanderings, such as the États Boréens, one of whose principal towns, it might be noted, is Buckingham.) Satie's parents were married by licence and the marriage was witnessed by F. Luard (probably Alfred's best man), Augusta Jane Pierce, Jane Elizabeth Pierce, Henriette Crombie and L. Crombie. A further point that tends to contradict other biographical accounts is that Jane's father is described on the wedding certificate as 'Gentleman' and not as 'Deceased'—which would have been the case if her mother had been a widow, as all biographers have maintained.[2] Both Alfred and his father are given the same epithet, 'Gentleman'.

Following the wedding Alfred and Jane travelled to Scotland, as most biographers mention, and it is fairly sure that they spent their honeymoon there. Moreover, given the date of Erik's birth in May the following year, it is equally sure that he was conceived in Scotland: 'formed', as Cocteau put it, 'under the influence of joy and audacity, of sea-mists and of penetrating bag-pipe melodies'.[3] Harding[4] refers to a story that Erik's godfather, who was a relative on his mother's side, was a knight, but all genealogical searches have failed to reveal any Anton baronet. Indeed the only Anton mentioned at all in reference works on the peerage and baronetage, whether in England, Ireland, or Scotland, is Christiana Anton, who married the 9th Viscount Falkland in 1802 and who died 20 years later. But none of her children would have had the name or title 'Baronet Anton'. Nevertheless, the British influence was strong enough to cause the three surviving Satie children, Erik, Olga, and Conrad, to be brought up as Protestants, even though their father was a Catholic (I exclude Diane, the fourth child, who did not live long enough to encounter the rigours of religious instruction).

In the summer of the year following his birth, that is in 1867 (or possibly 1868) Erik seems to have made his only visit to England. There is a photograph of him taken against a background of shrubbery (almost certainly a painted backcloth) by the portrait photographer Lombardi. The picture was taken in Brighton, where Lombardi had a studio at 113 King's Road near the West Pier from 1864.[5] (He also maintained a studio in London.) The commonest form in which Lombardi sold such holiday photos was made up as *cartes-de-visite,* usually in batches of twelve. These took about a week to be printed, and it is more likely that the Satie family spent a short holiday in Brighton and collected their cards before departing for France than that they went over for a day-trip and had them sent by post. What is interesting is the picture itself. Erik (strictly 'Eric'—the 'k' came later) looks confidently at the camera with a grin similar to that in the much later portraits by Man Ray and Picabia. The right ear is recognisably the same as that of the man photographed during the summer of 1909 by Hamelle of Arcueil-Cachan. The clothes, with their clusters of crosses, are recognisably the garb of a young ecclesiast and would have been entirely appropriate to a novitiate of L'Église Métropolitaine d'Art de Jésus Conducteur.

It was surely a desire to affirm his Scottish parentage that caused Satie to change slightly the orthography of his Christian name.[6] But from here on

the position of the British Isles in Satie's life is less prominent, though a diligent indexer might note with profit all the English words used (always for particular effect) in the various texts that are integral to much of his music—pieces such as 'Le golf' in *Sports et divertissements* (1914). Another example, though less obvious, occurs in the dedication of *Heures séculaires et instantanées* (1914) to Sir William Grant-Plumot and Louis XI, both of whom have Franco-Scottish connections of a sort. I have found no trace of Sir William Grant-Plumot, and the surname is not known in Britain, but its first part is Scottish and its second part has Norman connotations.[7] As for Louis XI, it was he who secured the foundation of the absolute monarchy in France, which he achieved by arbitrary and perfidious measures—a pleasantly ironic dedication in view of Satie's own political faith. But the most notable fact, as far as we are concerned, is that his wife (whom he treated very badly) was Margaret, daughter of James I of Scotland. It might be far-fetched to draw too close a connection here, but Margaret was artistic and composed many rondeaus and laments.

The next direct biographical impact of Britain on Satie came in 1916. A fulsome advertisement in *The Scotsman* of 2 December 1916 announced that on the 12th, at the Oak Hall, Prince's Street, Edinburgh, Satie would play his own compositions during a lecture on his work by Georges Jean-Aubry. However, one week later the same newspaper reported that the organisers, Methven Simpson Ltd., 'regret that owing to the indisposition of M. Satie the Lecture-Recital HAS BEEN POSTPONED'. In the event the performances never took place. Scottish audiences were denied the opportunity of hearing for themselves the 'much-discussed *compositeur ironique'*, in whose earlier works 'students will find suggestions and anticipations of the innovations associated with Claude Debussy', and who, in his later works, 'has marked out a new course for himself, and written music that has been variously described as "Futurist", "Cubist", "Ironique" '.

That the event never took place is hardly surprising for two reasons. By the end of 1916 the score of *Parade* was more or less complete and, on 12 December, the day of the projected recital in Edinburgh, Satie told Valentine Hugo that he had written the 'Petit prélude du rideau rouge'.[8] It is unlikely that he would have contemplated suspending work on *Parade* for such an event, even in his native Scotland. Indeed, a letter to Jean-Aubry written on 6 November 1916 indicates as much:

> My dear fellow, Certainly not: I have work to do for Dyagilev. I cannot leave my work, even for a few days.
>
> I have received an advance from Dyagilev, & he is counting on me for the end of December . . . How sorry I am not to be able to come. I could not have guessed.
>
> Make my apologies to my English friends . . . My poor fellow! Don't hold this against me. Let's try to put all that aside; but, at the moment, I am forbidden to go anywhere.[9]

It is evident from this letter that, though Jean-Aubry may have communicated with Satie before leaving for England, he cannot have visited him in Paris, for had they met Jean-Aubry would have seen the situation for himself.

This brief correspondence shows the double edge of Satie's friendship, for on 14 November he was to write to Roland Manuel: 'If you only knew what a twat Aubry is. Close up he even looks like an arse.'[10] Given such a feeling for Jean-Aubry, it is hardly surprising that Satie would not involve himself in the venture. But, in part at least, the project failed because of his collaborator and not because Satie felt any hostility towards his maternal country. The two did not remain estranged, for on 19 November 1919 Satie agreed, evidently in response to an invitation from Jean-Aubry, to write an article on Ravel. But he warned him that the article

> will not, perhaps, be very much to your taste. The fault lies, simply, with the deplorable and out-of-date aesthetic that our friend holds to. It would be difficult for me to tone down what my understanding tells me. I am very fond of Ravel, but his art leaves me unmoved, alas![11]

It would seem that the article never materialised, unfortunately.

In 1921 Satie was approached again from Britain, this time by Leigh Henry, a composer and critic who wrote widely on issues surrounding contemporary music. He had been director of music at the Gordon Craig School in Florence from 1913, and had written a number of theatre pieces between 1916 and 1921, some of them during his wartime internment in Germany. His music, especially a spirited *Tango* of 1910 and other early pieces, has a slightly satirical edge, on the strength of which he was encouraged by Granville Bantock; his later works, written in the 1920s, show a deep involvement in Welsh affairs—he wrote test pieces for the Eisteddfod and so on. He was appointed 'press adviser on musical matters and director of the musical information bureau' for the Russian Ballet in 1926.[12]

Henry had occasion to contact Satie over the founding of his magazine, *Fanfare,* which appeared twice monthly from 1 October 1921 until its demise with volume 1 number 7 in January 1922. His avowed aim was 'to enfranchise the British musician among the other European artists', and he termed his campaign the 'Fanfare Movement'. This attempt to urge British musicians away from an insular outlook reflected what had already been happening for some years among younger composers—certainly from the end of World War I, and slightly earlier in the case of Lord Berners. Henry gave the magazine a slogan every bit as feeble as those adopted by popular newspapers, though here the puniness was conscious: 'We like its sound and we know it's sound.' (Readers of Jarry will note with delight that the pun depends on the use of the apostrophe.)

Among the messages printed in the first issue was one from Satie: 'Tous mes voeux pour *Fanfare*' (All good wishes for *Fanfare*). More important, he sent a piece of music, the *Sonnerie pour réveiller le bon gros Roi des Singes (lequel ne dort toujours que d'un oeil),* written on 30 August 1921. It is worth pointing out that of all the dated fanfares sent to the magazine Satie's is the earliest, showing perhaps the willingness with which he responded. The title, too, is not without significance. It could show a knowledge of Kipling, in whose *Jungle Book* the monkeys are an anarchic community (the same monkeys appear in Koechlin's *Les bandar-log* (1939)). Kipling's monkeys, of course, have no leader, but a clue to the identity of 'le bon gros Roi des Singes' may be contained in Satie's claim 'Je ne dors que d'un oeil' (I sleep with one eye open).[13] *Fanfare* published four fanfares in each of its issues in 1921, but there were none in the last issue which appeared on 1 January 1922. Satie's connection with the magazine continued, for no.2 included a drawing of him by Cocteau and the text of the lecture that Cocteau had been unable to give earlier in the year (see n.3). In the final issue Henry published a short text by Satie called 'Il n'y a pas de vérité en art',[14] and

there were many other references to him in the magazine—an article by Cocteau on Les Six appeared in no.6, and Poulenc contributed a review column 'Paris Note' to nos.4 and 6. It is clear that Satie took *Fanfare* seriously during its brief but vigorous existence.

In his last years Satie had few obvious links with Britain but one or two small details confirm its continuing influence. Reference is frequently made to the apparently uneasy relationships that Satie had with women (apart from Suzanne Valadon). He did admire the wife of Pierre de Massot, who was one of the few women, I imagine, who could keep pace with him in drinking calvados; it is not surprising to find that, like so many athletic drinkers, she was a Scot. Then there is the story of Satie's meeting with Man Ray on the occasion of the latter's first Paris exhibition in 1921, when the American was particularly struck by Satie's fluent and idiomatic English. Sybil Harris, also an American, was a close friend in his final years; she visited him frequently during his last weeks and attended his funeral.

Finally, from the biographical point of view, we come full circle and find the British-Belgian axis entering into play once more. On Satie's first visit to Brussels in April 1921, where did he stay? Why, in the Hôtel Britannique of course. And when he talked with E.L.T. Mesens, a Belgian friend, whom did they discuss? None other than Leigh Henry and Lord Berners. Satie had clearly heard of Berners and probably knew something of his work, as Mesens's report of the conversation proves:

> An Anglophile from his youth, he loved to show off about some of his English friends: 'Do you know this chap Leigh Henry?' he asked. 'He's a great fellow, interested in everything.' But when I mentioned to him the fact that the composer Lord Berners was giving his works 'Satiean' titles he seemed irritated and said abruptly, 'He's an amateur professional. He hasn't understood anything.'[15]

Lord Berners

Although Leigh Henry may have enjoyed a better personal friendship with Satie, the musician with the strongest claim to Satiety, Satie's disapprobation notwithstanding, was Lord Berners. In Cecil Gray's *A Survey of Contemporary Music* Berners was dubbed 'the English Satie'. The full passage is worth quoting; it appears in a late chapter on 'minor composers' in which English composers are compared, usually unfavourably, with Europeans—a favourite ploy of English critics:

> In the same way that Stanford and Parry provided us with second-hand Brahms, Cyril Scott provides us with imitation Debussy; Holbrooke and Bantock have followed Strauss, and in the music of Goossens, Bliss and Berners we find our English Ravel, Stravinsky and Satie . . . these three latter share a Franco-Russian technique in common. The outcome of their combined efforts, like that of their forerunners, is precisely nil.[16]

Berners's own copy of this book is revealing, being heavily annotated. On the title-page he wrote 'One of the silliest books about music ever written', and in a section where Gray rambles on about Stravinsky's being a synthesis of all the 'various conflicting tendencies which constitute . . . the spirit of the age', Berners added a single word: 'BALLS'. Curiously, however, there is no annotation on the page where his own name is juxtaposed with Satie's although he almost certainly read it; this does not necessarily mean that he agreed with the linking of their names, but that at least he did not find it worthy of derision. On close analysis the number of parallels with Satie is very striking, but to call Berners 'the English Satie' is to do both composers a disservice. Berners is simply one of the great originals in English music—just as Satie is in French music—and he is well able to stand on his own feet without Continental support. However, like certain other English composers active in the early years of the century, his outlook was cosmopolitan rather than insular, and in fact his earliest music was written while he was working in Italy. A side effect of this is that, as with other composers who are not easily located in a particular national mould—Sorabji, Tcherepnin, Grainger, Busoni, Goossens, and Van Dieren, for instance—his work is less performed than that of his stay-at-home compatriots.[17]

It is obvious from Mesens's conversation with Satie, quoted above, that Satie knew about Berners; and it was at a crucial time in Berners's musical development that he became aware of Satie. While he was still plain Gerald Tyrwhitt and a diplomatic attaché to the British Embassy in Rome (before he succeeded to the baronetcy), he acquired a copy of the *de luxe* Vogel edition of *Sports et divertissements*. The work was published in a limited, numbered edition of 900, of which nos.1-10 were not for sale but were reserved for the Librairie Meynial. Given that the first one for sale was no.11, it is striking that Berners's own copy is no.12. It is probable that this copy reached him through the offices of Alfredo Casella or Stravinsky, who both moved to and fro between Paris and Rome at that time. Interestingly, Berners's music of this period has certain Satiean qualities. His first published pieces were the *Trois petites marches funèbres* (1916), which appeared under the name of Gerald Tyrwhitt first in Italy and then in England.[18] The music itself does not resemble Satie's in any way, but the quality of irony is close. The three marches, 'Pour un homme d'état', 'Pour un canari', and 'Pour une tante à héritage', are respectively pompous, genuinely sad, and joyously ebullient. Their performance in Paris drew a comment from Julien Tiersot in *Le courrier musical,* which Berners regarded as one of the best critical notices he ever received:

> I will not stop to inquire whether the period through which we are passing is one that permits of the railing at death, and making it the subject of jokes which are, moreover, out of fashion. I only draw attention to the first title as a contrast to the other two. It is evident that to the composer's idea it is as gratifying to celebrate the funeral of a statesman as that of canaries or wealthy aunts—and all that at a time when these men devote and exhaust themselves to serve their country and to secure its victory. But no such considerations seem to have touched the young composer (a neutral, no doubt).[19]

A work that predates these pieces, but which remained unpublished until recently, is the short *Dispute entre le papillon et le crapaud* (c1914-15) for piano.[20] Like a number of Berners's manuscripts, this one has a watercolour cover,[21] and there are anecdotal remarks in the music. In bar 10, where the upper part imitates the previous bar's bass phrase, there is the note 'le papillon répète avec indignation les dernières paroles du crapaud' (the butterfly indignantly repeats the toad's last words). The piece ends with a light arpeggio at the top of the piano, followed by a series of muddy chords at the bottom, and Berners adds, 'Le papillon, indigne, s'envole. Le crapaud ne s'est pas laissé convaincu.' (The butterfly, indignant, flies away. The toad remains

unconvinced.) The point here is not to suggest that Berners modelled his narrative music on Satie's but to ask why, given that the purely musical element is just as strong as in his other works of this period (such as *Le poisson d'or*), the *Dispute* was not published. Could it not be that, having obtained a copy of the fine edition of *Sports et divertissements*—arguably the most perfect synthesis of music, text, and design—the young Tyrwhitt felt that there was little point in bringing out his own essay in the genre at that time?

Apart from an occasional insertion of texts later, Berners never developed this anecdotal approach. One verbal note occurs in 'Strauss, Strauss et Straus', the third of the *Valses bourgeoises* for piano duet (1919), where, over a limpid waltz phrase, Berners wrote 'mais je connais ça' (but I know that). In a number of pieces, such as *Le poisson d'or* (1919) and 'Du bist wie eine Blume' (the first of three songs in the *Lieder Album* (1920), the music itself frequently has a precise narrative sense, but this is an aspect of Berners's generally humorous attitude. In 'Du bist wie eine Blume' he fastens on the eccentric scholarly discovery that Heine was addressing a pig in his poem, and he illustrates this with onomatopoeic grunts in the piano accompaniment (each of the three songs in this group deals with the presence of animals in human emotions). It is noteworthy that the *Valses bourgeoises* were first performed in London by Darius Milhaud and Eugene Goossens in May 1920, and that Berners was on friendly terms with younger French composers: in his appointment book of 1920 there is the entry for 18 December 1920, 'dine Les Six'.

Like Satie, Berners invested his music with a strong satirical edge and had a fondness for musical forms that lend themselves to parody. This shows itself in a continuing affection for the waltz, parodied mercilessly in the three *Valses bourgeoises* and insidiously in the 'Valse sentimentale'[22] (second of the *Trois morceaux* (1918) which exist in piano duet and orchestral forms). The *Valses bourgeoises* veer from time to time into a kind of delirium inspired by mounting exaggeration and the incessant heavy waltz rhythm, and Stravinsky went so far as to say that they contained 'the most impertinent four bars in music'.[23] (Incidentally, in these and others of his piano duets Berners employs a texture that is markedly French—a similar lay-out of parts may be found in duets by Satie, Poulenc, and others.) Also like Satie, Berners parodied national styles in music—the 'Chinoiserie' and 'Kasatschok' from *Trois morceaux,* the *Fantaisie espagnole* (1920), the 'Schottische' and 'Polka' from *The Triumph of Neptune* (1926), the 'Tango' from *A Wedding Bouquet* (1936), and the 'Habanera' and 'Farrucca' from *Les sirènes* (1943-6)—though often with affection rather than malice. In the first of these pieces it is interesting to find that, faced with a choice of approaches to *chinoiserie,* Berners opted for that of the Chinese *prestidigitateur* in *Parade* rather than Ravel's more urbane version in *Ma mère l'oye* (1908-10). 'Chinoiserie' has an even closer link with *Parade,* for it features an extended repeated figure strikingly like that in Satie's ballet;[24] Berners may have heard something of *Parade* when Dyagilev's company was rehearsing in Rome early in 1917 (though the *Trois morceaux* are dated 1918 'Chinoiserie' may have been written in 1917).

Berners had other tastes in common with Satie. Just as Satie enjoyed the heraldry of 'sonneries', so Berners relished fanfares—he used them extensively in *The Triumph of Neptune*. Both men wrote idiosyncratic fugues (Satie's 'Fugue litanique' and 'Fugue de papier' from *En habit de cheval* (1911), among others; Berners's orchestral Fugue (1923)). Further, both were equally at home in the musical 'low life' of their time: in Satie the café-concert inspired songs in popular style such as *Tendrement* (*c*1900), and the music hall left its mark on *La belle excentrique* (1920); and Berners wrote the music-hall song 'Come on Algernon' (for the 1944 Ealing film *Champagne Charlie*) and the salon pastiche *Red Roses and Red Noses* (1941). And most important, they both became known to a wider public through music written for ballet and the theatre.[25] Of particular importance to them both was their connection with Dyagilev, for whom Satie wrote *Parade* in 1916-17 and Berners *The Triumph of Neptune* in 1926; Berners was one of only two English composers commissioned by Dyagilev (the other was Constant Lambert, a champion of Berners and Satie). Berners's second ballet, *Luna Park,* though written after Dyagilev's death (for C.B. Cochrane's 1930 revue), was choreographed by Balanchine (who had prepared *The Triumph of Neptune*) and used dancers from the company; its story, of fake freaks performing in a fairground, has overtones of *Parade,* and the music is deliberately 'light' (to suit the revue public), parodying in the gentlest way possible the conventions of 19th-century ballet and the music of Delibes and Minkus.

Both Berners and Satie, as I have written elsewhere,[26] were self-taught amateurs who utilised many outlets for their creative talents: music, writing, painting, drawing, as well as personal eccentricity—though the forms of this eccentricity were quite different. At a time when each had achieved a significant measure of success (and in Berners's case his fame with the general public was considerable) he decided to undertake a study of compositional technique—more precisely 16th-century counterpoint—and their surviving notebooks demonstrate the diligence with which both men approached this discipline.

The greatest disparity was in their financial means, though the poverty of one and the wealth of the other had the curiously unifying effect of preventing such matters from being an abiding concern. This is not to say that either was indifferent to money, merely that, unlike successful businessmen – composers, neither found it of overriding importance. One result of this is what Raymond Roussel designated the gap between 'conception' and 'reality'. During the course of his life Satie made many beautiful drawings of imaginary edifices, especially towers: 'quiconque habite une tour est un touriste', as he put it.[28] Berners, on the other hand, had the means to have a tower erected for him: Faringdon Folly, built in 1935, one of the last follies to be raised in England, was designed by Lord Gerald Wellesley (later the 8th Duke of Wellington).[29] While Lord Berners did not 'inhabit' his tower, he could, from its summit, view with equanimity his own lands and four neighbouring counties.

Bliss, Lambert, Grainger

There are no other composers of Berners's generation who invite such detailed comparison with Satie, but in some cases particular pieces or periods of activity resonate sympathetically with Satie's work. As we have seen, Cecil Gray grouped together Berners, Bliss, and Goossens as a trio of modern Europeans. Other critics linked the names of Berners, Bax, and Bliss, and another bracketed Berners and Bliss.[30] In

fact these two are the composers most commonly featured in such assemblages of 'advanced' artists. From 1918 to 1926 Bliss's work consisted of piano pieces, songs, and chamber works, one of which, a set of five pieces for strings and wind called *Conversations* (1920), demonstrates the ironic nature of his wit. Each movement (except for one, 'Soliloquy') is a 'conversation' of some sort; in the first, 'The Committee Meeting', a monotonously droning viola represents the insistent chairman who is constantly interrupted, and who, by the end of the movement has gained no ground at all. The other movements are 'In the Wood', 'In the Ballroom', 'Soliloquy' (for solo cor anglais), and the hilarious 'In the Tube at Oxford Circus'. In addition to the many highly original works of this period, Bliss wrote two fine, 'light' piano pieces *The Rout Trot* (1927), a wonderful ragtime number, and *Bliss, One-step* (1923), which show that he, like Satie and Berners, was thoroughly at home in popular idioms. He too was included in the *Fanfare* project, contributing a piece to the second issue.

Constant Lambert, though much younger than Berners and Bliss, shared their interest in jazz and popular music, as may be seen from his *Elegiac Blues* for piano (1927), Piano Concerto (1930-31), and *The Rio Grande* (1927). At the age of 20 (in 1925) he was commissioned to write *Romeo and Juliet* for Dyagilev, and in 1927 Bronislava Nijinska gave the first performance of his ballet *Pomona* in South America. And his piano duets—*Trois pieces nègres pour les touches blanches* (1949), the piano-duet version of *Pomona,* and the *Overture* (1925; used in *Romeo and Juliet*), as well as his arrangement of movements from Walton's *Façade*—can be considered to come within the orbit of post-Satie composers. However, it is as a conductor and writer that he demonstrated most clearly his sympathies for Satie. In *Music Ho!* he writes at length about *musique d'ameublement,* and about *Socrate* (1918), which he greatly admired, and *Relâche*, whose first performance on 6 December 1924 he had attended.[31] In 1949 he gave a talk on Satie for the BBC and conducted three concerts of the composer's music (14 and 17 June, 23 September), including, according to the BBC, the first performances (probably, in fact, the first broadcast performances) in England of *La belle excentrique* (14 June) and *Socrate* (17 June). Lambert was also an enthusiastic apologist for Berners and conducted first performances of a number of his works, as well as being a frequent guest at his home. In 1939 he made an arrangement of interludes from Berners's opera *Le carrosse du Saint Sacrement* (1920-23; rev. 1926) to form the orchestral piece *Caprice péruvien.*

Although Percy Grainger was born in Australia, he was a British citizen and had firm links with the British Isles. The *English Waltz* (sketched 1899-1901, completed 1943) may be mentioned in this connection: it exists as the last movement of the *Youthful Suite* for orchestra, it can be played as a separate piece for orchestra, and there is a two-piano version made in 1947; the last illustrates best the astonishingly satirical vigour of the piece, which begins as a gentle café-concert waltz and is gradually transformed by the crude interruptions of *glissandi,* off-beat rhythms, 'false' harmonies, and so on.

There is one strong connection between Grainger and Satie, whose characters, both musical and personal, were otherwise very different: they shared an interest in the relationship between the composer and his performer through the medium of the performance direction. As Contamine de Latour said: For musical instructions in Italian—*piano, pianissimo, dolce,* and *mezzoforte*—Satie wanted to substitute different instructions of his own invention, and of an infinitely less classical character, such as: '[to be played] while looking at oneself coming'; 'with the fear of obscurity'; 'fabulous and decorous'.[32]

Grainger, starting from a similar though differently motivated premise, produced such directions as: 'Sturdily, not too fast; with "pioneer" keeping-on-ness' (for *allegro non troppo, ma molto energico*), 'louden lots' (for *molto crescendo*), 'slacken slightly' and 'linger' (for *rallentando*), and the memorable 'woggle' (for *tremolando*). This was in reality only one aspect of a much wider concern to rid his language of all 'French-begotten, Latin-begotten and Greek-begotten words', and to develop his own form of 'Nordic' or 'Blue-eyed' English.[33] Suffice it to say that the net effect of Grainger's musical directions is the same as that of Satie's, and is intended to be so: namely to galvanise the performer into a quite particular response which the composer wants, and to shake the performer out of all complacency and long-established mental habits in his approach to the music. The true aim is to make absolutely sure of the best possible performance.

Critics

Apart from composers in England sympathetic to Satie's spirit, and performers who have devoted their energies to authentic performances, there have always been critics on this side of the Channel who have written perceptively about Satie's work. During Satie's lifetime M.D. Calvocoressi (dedicatee of the second 'Danse cuirassée' of the *Vieux sequins et vieilles cuirasses* (1913)), Leigh Henry, Edwin Evans, Rollo Myers, and Georges Jean-Aubry published articles on him. After his death some of the best writing on him appeared in English: in Lambert's *Music Ho!* (1934), Wilfrid Mellers's *Studies in Contemporary Music* (1947), Rollo Myers's very important *Erik Satie* (1948) and above all in Roger Shattuck's *The Banquet Years* (1955).

Perhaps the most thorough piece of Satie scholarship to be found anywhere is Patrick Gowers's doctoral dissertation, *Erik Satie, his Studies, Notebooks and Critics,* submitted to the University of Cambridge in 1965; this contains the most balanced account available of Satie's period at the Paris Conservatoire (a period that is portrayed almost entirely erroneously elsewhere), as well as a painstaking examination of Satie's manuscripts. In the third section of the dissertation, in discussing the different approaches that Satie critics have taken, Gowers touches on an important point. He notes that of all writings on Satie (one should remember that this was 1965) John Cage's argument for Satie's importance is unique in that it is the only one that bears on the quality of Satie's compositions. Some writers, such as Cocteau, describe Satie as exemplifying a 'cult of restraint',[34] some refer to his influence on Debussy, Ravel, and other French composers; but only Cage maintains that Satie influenced younger composers through the perfection of the music itself, achieved by his new and original techniques, rather than that his 'maladroit experiments' led others to write more important works.[35] Cage's argument, as summarised by Gowers, is that modern music will turn out to have been shaped to a greater extent by Webern and Satie than by Schoenberg and Stravinsky. Gowers 'shelves' this

topic 'until any possible new influences can be seen in perspective'.[36] As for Cage himself, Michael Nyman has shown the extent of his debt to Satie.[37] But in general terms I would maintain that a profound, and characteristically more restrained, response to Satie can be found among certain younger composers in England in the last 15 years.[38]

Howard Skempton

Skempton's best work is found in a number of small-scale piano pieces written from 1969 onwards. Of these the most notable is the *Waltz* (April 1970) for piano solo; it consists of four 16-bar phrases, played in different permutations, creating an eight-minute piece which is both wholly predictable and very surprising at the same time—partly because of the extreme banality of the materials, and partly because of the feeling of disbelief induced by such forms of repetition. The *Waltz* gives the lie to the idea that extended repetition is possible only over extended periods of time. Both Satie and Skempton show that even a piece lasting only a few minutes can be hypnotically repetitive without becoming tedious. A number of other short pieces by Skempton involve a considerable degree of repetition—the witty *Rumba* (*c*1978), which has a dislocating bar of 7/8 within each of its short phrases, the *Two Highland Dances* (1970) and the three pieces called *Quavers* (1972, 1974, 1975). Like much of Satie's work, these pieces hide their systematic compositional method behind a simple surface, which lulls the unwary listener into thinking that all is well. The *Slow Waltz* (1973) for piano three hands is another, very neat case of this. The accompaniment consists of the root and third of two chords—A major and D major—while the melody is a simple falling phrase, which, by its totally predictable movement, involves the listener in a kind of constant interior dialogue: 'Surely he won't' and then 'Yes he has'. This pull between the expectation and the result comes about because of the gap between the melody and the accompaniment, which at times fits quite 'normally' and at others lands in the uncomfortable limbo where the harmonisation is neither naively 'wrong' nor skilfully 'disagreeable'. The effect, especially since the whole piece is played through twice, is not unlike that of one of Satie's *Gymnopédies*. At its best, this technique is entirely successful. At its worst, especially in those pieces written for specific occasions or people (for birthdays and so on), there can develop a cloying, even sickly, preciousness, so narrow is the margin between success and failure (in these terms).[39]

John White

With the music of John White there is no such equivocation. He has consistently stressed that the composition of much of his music relies on the existence of a model, that each piece begins with a programme, whether self-imposed or otherwise. When he is writing music for the commercial theatre he is required to produce particular goods (Schubert rewritten as though by Mahler, in the case of his music for a National Theatre production of Arthur Schnitzler's *Undiscovered Country* in 1979). He resembles Constant Lambert in being a highly original composer on the one hand and on the other one who can write music to order without deeming it in any way a lower form of activity. But the way in which he formulates his own briefs for non-commissioned music places him in a much rarer category.[40] He has a range of composers from whom he draws sometimes stylistic elements, sometimes particular features of instrumental writing, sometimes particular compositional techniques, and these composers are like personal friends to him;[41] they include Satie, Busoni, Metner, Reger, Alkan, Poulenc, Schumann, and many others. As Dave Smith has written, his piano sonatas (to date there are 107)

> are never concerned with intentional nostalgia, pastiche, satire or quotation. There are fleeting references of style, colour or gesture which, particularly in . . . the earlier sonatas, effectively conjure up an imaginary musical seance at which 'friends' of the composer make brief appearances.[42]

White's musical output is vast and tremendously wide-ranging. His piano sonatas, begun in 1956, form a 'diary' (Smith's term) that fills in the gaps between his other music—written for the different composer–performer groups that he has worked with, for the theatre, and so on. In the world of experimental music, the groups that White has organised have all had elements that reflect his interest in Satie. He has said that what he finds in Satie is 'the arcane charm of apparently simple musical statement', and 'apparent' simplicity is a dominant element in White's own work.[43] As with Satie, this simplicity can mask quite complex theorising: it is worth, for example, examining the ways in which White uses earlier pieces as the basis for later ones, where the material can emerge in new combinations and distillations to surprising effect. *The Oppo Contained* (December 1977), for two pianos, tuba, and (in its original version) reed organs, takes several short, separate pieces played in a concert the previous month, and reconciles them within a rondo format to a constant quaver pulse; then, just before the very short coda, White inserts a revised version of almost all of a much earlier piece, *Gothic Chord Machine* (1969).

According to Brian Dennis,[44] White organised a group called the Composers Ensemble while he was teaching composition at the Royal College of Music. It consisted of White and three of his pupils (Dennis, Roger Smalley, and William York) and lasted only a short time, but it formulated ideas that were to reach fruition in his later ensembles. It was essentially a vehicle for works by the four members, but they also played music by Cardew, Ives, Stockhausen, and Satie to supplement their own material and to place it in a clearer perspective (which is something I have done with both White and Smith in more recent collaborative concerts).

Later, in 1969, a new group evolved, comprising White, Christopher Hobbs, Alec Hill, and Hugh Shrapnel, which White named the PTO (Promenade Theatre Orchestra). These four provided the bulk of the music and there was little need for other works since their collective output was so prolific. The group met every Sunday for three years and new pieces appeared almost weekly. It was in its outlook, as much as the music itself, that the ensemble was Satie-like. The PTO's advertisement gives an idea of this:

> Restful reed-organs, tinkling toy pianos, soothing psalteries, suave swanee whistles, jolly jaws harps—NO noisy electronics. (Just the job for that lazy Sunday afternoon). All musical material guaranteed thru-composed—NO hit-or-miss improvisation.

The music tended to be written for homogeneous groups of instruments: four toy pianos, four reed

organs, and so on. Much of it fed off existing material, whether by using musical readymades—as in Hobbs's realisation of Skryabin's *Poème de l'extase* (1905-8) for reed organs and toy pianos, and White's *Early Tudor Head-ons*—or through applying what White calls 'machine' processes to musical material—the working through of more or less predictable, systemic, and always inevitable, processes; this sounds rather formidable, but the finished result can be as polished and deliriously pleasant as, say, the writings of P.G. Wodehouse. The PTO were happiest working outside the concert format, preferring to play in the canteen of an art college, for example, during luncheon, creating a form of muzak akin to Satie's *musique d'ameublement*.

Following the dissolution of the PTO in 1972, White worked for four years in a collaborative duo with Christopher Hobbs, writing a great deal of systemic music for small percussion instruments (which is strictly outside the scope of this article), as well as music for piano duet, tuba and piano, bassoon and piano, and bassoon and tuba. In November 1977, after the break-up of the Hobbs–White duo, White organised a concert at the AIR Gallery, London, given by White, Smith, myself, Amanda Hurton (a pupil of White's at the Yehudi Menuhin School), and Arthur Suthill (a percussionist who has frequently worked with White in theatre bands). The music, by White, Smith, Hurton, and myself, was all required to fit the concept of 'garden furniture music', a kind of 'furniture music' that is, by definition, more rough-hewn, less comfortable, more likely to survive severe changes in the surrounding climate. Each piece included a reference to garden furniture in its title: my own *Poggioli in Zaleski's Gazebo* (strictly garden *architecture*), White's *Visigoth Porch-Swing*, and so on. A most important result of this concert was the formation of another group, the Garden Furniture Music Ensemble, whose title makes a very clear and, in the light of the thinking behind the first concert, precise reference to Satie's *musique d'ameublement*.

After a period of shifting membership the group eventually settled down as a quartet consisting of White, Smith, Ben Mason, and Pat Garrett, with occasional guest appearances by myself and, in the early days, the pianist John Lewis. The instrumentation was tuba, tenor and baritone horn, viola, and percussion—the members' respective instruments—with many additions (piccolo violin, piccolo, glockenspiels, pianos, toy pianos, mouth organs, voices). White described the music as 'containing elements of preternatural brevity, studied repetitiousness and discreetly deliberate grotesquerie expressed in the nature of the themes, their treatment, instrumentation and entitlement.'[45] The titles do indeed give an idea of the group's flavour: (to take arbitrary examples, all from 1978) Smith's *Albanian Surprise* and *Siberian Sunset Serenade*; White's *Soirée musicale, Patriotic Song, Mimosa Snowball Rock*. But curiously enough the music itself is much more arresting, less suitable for background listening, in short less like *furniture* music than the music produced by the PTO. This is partly accounted for by the distinction between furniture music and garden furniture music given above. But it is also a question of the different durations of individual pieces (PTO pieces were seldom shorter than ten minutes, and occasionally lasted a couple of hours, those of the Garden Furniture Music Ensemble were rarely as long as five minutes), and more particularly of the nature of the music itself, which was always insidiously pleasant, though with clear ironic pointers and unexpected humorous quirks. This group has now disbanded and White works more frequently with myself as a duo, with myself and Smith as a trio, and with other players in ensembles of flexible size.

A number of White's piano sonatas depend quite specifically on Satie and take works by him as their models. Sonata no.53 (14 April 1972)[46] is based on the *Airs à faire fuire* (the first set of *Pièces froides* (1897)), to which is added in the coda, in left-hand octaves, the ending of the *Prélude de la porte héroïque du ciel* (1894) (from the point marked 'rideau' in Satie's score). White says that 'the range of associations is "semi-limited" in that the thematic units undergo limited transformation in gesture extension and accompanimental material'.[47] Sonata no.60 (22 February 1973) adopts the spirit of 'La mystérieuse baisée dans l'oeil' (the third movement of *La belle excentrique*), though the piano lay-out and the ambiguous rhythms of the opening bars suggest the *Cinq nocturnes* (1919). At bar 30, after a delicate rising E-Aeolian scale, the music settles into a gentle E major phrase, the kind of effect that peppers the slow movement of Ravel's G major Concerto. To avert connections of this sentimental kind White adds on the score 'limpid Guinness wouldn't melt in the mouth'. Sonata no.63 (dated on the manuscript 11 April 1972, but surely intended to be 1973) is a perfect example of White's ability to make a lot out of very little material without resorting to development; it takes as its model the dances from *Le piège de Méduse* (1913).

Sonata no.67 (1 May 1973—yes, there were three sonatas between 11 April and 1 May) follows the *Trois véritables préludes flasques* (1912). In the choice of material to accompany an arbitrarily transformed ostinato the range of associations is 'part limited, part unlimited'. Throughout this piece White adds comments which serve both as performing instructions and as personal remarks on the quality of his own composing, as though he were teacher and pupil at the same time. It opens with a phrase marked 'irritatingly ingenuous'. Where his compositional 'logic' leads him to unpalatable conclusions, rather than alter the music to fit his taste he appends remarks 'Oh dear', 'Oh no', 'ugh'. One isolated bar is marked 'impersonation of a French composer', and when the 'irritatingly ingenuous' C major phrase comes back at the end, following a period of staccato chromatic chords, he marks the moment 'as if nothing had happened'. Sonata no.75 (8 September 1973) is based on the *Nocturnes*, the range of associations being

> unlimited, in that thematically anything might (and does) happen. The reference is to a kind of unargumentative, non-progressional harmony, and the use of moments of 'warmth' as punctuation rather than musical-emotional environment.

Sonata no.78 (12 September 1973) has two models, the introduction to the first movement of *Jack-in-the-box* (1899), which colours the general mood of the entire sonata, and *Sonatine bureaucratique* (1917) which influenced the passages of

> curiously bleak and unrelated material, like the interruption of the music by a telephone bell in the 1st movement and unrelated bars of rocking 4ths and deep octaves in the 3rd movement.

Over the final cadence White adds the words 'quietly prosaic'. The only other sonata to make specific reference to Satie's music is Sonata no.96 (1977), which relates to *Danses gothiques* (1893), for which White has a special affection. He says that

> the range of associations is 'limited' in that the thematic units

are shown in varying juxtapositions but without gestural transformation on repetition. Some of the units are transposable some are not.

And he adds that the lack of traditional development in the piece serves to maintain an emotional climate of 'beefy exuberance', which was inspired by an article in *The Observer* on Scottish (where else, for Satie?) football supporters.[48]

Just as Satie exercised a Socratic magnetism on younger composers (Ravel, Les Six, L'École d'Arcueil), but without placing a stranglehold on their work, so White has often played a similar role for composers who have worked with him: pupils like Dennis and Smalley, younger collaborators such as Hobbs and Smith. One might almost see a kind of parallel between the flow and ebb of the working relationship of Satie and Debussy and that of White and Cardew. Indeed, the extent to which the public, musical and otherwise, erroneously identifies the latter partner of each pair as being the more important and influential partially confirms the analogy. White fulfils quite perfectly the requirement that Jean-Aubry maintained was essential for an improvement in the well-being of English music. Jean-Aubry wrote: 'When shall we see a campaign opened in England against Brahms?'[49] The musical sound that White finds the least palatable is the kind of earnest rumbling, 'the development noise' that proliferates in Brahms, both in and out of development sections.

Christopher Hobbs

A close colleague of White from 1969 to 1976, Christopher Hobbs has had a long involvement with the music of Satie. In order to obtain copies of his music for detailed study he copied by hand works that were ridiculously expensive and hard to find. Together he and I performed *Vexations,*[50] an occasion I have written about elsewhere,[51] and which Michael Nyman points to as showing the spiritual importance of Satie for younger English composers, and also the rightness of their approach to performing.[52] In 1972 Hobbs and I played a programme of Satie's piano duets (it included all of them except the *Trois petites pièces montées* (*c*1920)) and for this he produced a completed duet version of *Parade,* reinstating those sections that Satie omitted from his arrangement.

It was Hobbs who introduced into the PTO the idea of the musical readymade, which he extended in works not written for the group: for example, the two-piano *Pretty Tough Cookie* (1970), based on the love theme from Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*; and the recomposition of Myra Hess's arrangement of Bach's *Sheep may Safely Graze* into his own *The Remorseless Lamb* (1970). (I should like to put on record, too, the fact that his may have been the first British performance of the fourth (1891), fifth (1889), and sixth (1887) of Satie's *Gnossiennes,* which he played at Portsmouth College of Art during the afternoon of 22 January 1970.)

John White feels that some of the music Hobbs wrote during the later stages of their collaboration, especially the pieces for bassoon and piano, show evidence of his commitment to Satie at its best. Since the dissolution of their partnership, however, Hobbs has chosen to concentrate on writing in what Michael Nyman calls 'the expressive modes of Romantic music',[53] and in so doing he has effectively moved away from the Satiescape to the area that Jean-Aubry saw as the territory of the arch-enemy, Brahms. In the recent past he has written a Wind Sextet (completed 27 September 1980)—the instrumentation is that of the standard wind quintet plus tenor saxophone—based on a fragment from the first of Satie's *Trois sarabandes* (1887). As White puts it, there are many parental aspects to this piece, of which Satie is only one, and in fact the work reflects Satie neither in idiom nor spirit. I do not mean to imply, of course, that Hobbs's later music is 'wrong', merely that it moves away from the scope of this article. Hobbs retains his affection for Satie and his great love and knowledge of the music, but it is no longer a strong musical influence.

Gavin Bryars

In my own case the love for Satie's music goes back to the earliest periods of my musical studies with Cyril Ramsey in the late 1950s. It was Ramsey who first told me about Cage's work in a serious way (he talked about the prepared piano, and about *4'33"*—this in a small provincial backwater in Yorkshire), as well as Grainger and Satie.

It was much later that direct musical references to Satie began to occur in my compositions—the first was in *Ponukelian Melody* (1975). This was only my second piece after a gap of two years during which I composed no music but, with Fred Orton, taught a course on Marcel Duchamp.[54] Aspects of that period of study led me to the work of Raymond Roussel and to the Collège de 'Pataphysique.[55] I spent some time, too, studying Satie in detail: looking at the notebooks, and at harmonic experiments, especially of the Rose+Croix music (which also seems to have impressed Igor Markevich),[56] and reading dissertations on Satie. *Ponukelian Melody* was written for a concert given by White, Hobbs, and myself, and its original instrumentation was tuba, cello, and reed organ and bells (one player). There are precise links with Satie: the tempo, with its implacable slow beat and uniform crotchet rhythm, imitates that of *Les pantins dansent* (1913), a work I admire immensely; and the harmonic and melodic material was taken from the experiments in the Rose+Croix notebooks. This specifically technical indebtedness to Satie extended to the way in which I put the piece together. The various phrases were composed independently and were fitted into the score (which consisted of 160 blank bars—not counting repeats) as they were written, each remaining in its original place without revision; the process was like putting together the fragments of a mosaic (not as elegant as that which occupies the opening of Chapter 2 of *Locus solus* (1914)) until the score was full. The only gaps in the steady one-sound-per-crotchet occur at the points where pages have to be turned and a measured rest is given to all the players. The work also pays homage to Roussel, whose novel *Impressions d'Afrique* is set in an imaginary Africa and takes place principally in Ponukélé. Impressed by the range of musical imagery in the book (only one of innumerable striking elements), I resolved to make a piece which, while not realising any one of Roussel's images, reflected something of the aesthetic that those images seem to imply. Later, in 1977, I made a realisation of Tom Phillips's opera *Irma* for Obscure Records.[57] This involved interpreting cryptically allusive verbal fragments in order to recreate some kind of music. Rather than read the letters 'mp' as the obvious 'mezzopiano', I took them to be the initials of 'mélodie ponukélienne', with the result that the third movement of this piece opens with a reworked section of

Ponukelian Melody, with changed metre, tempo, and registration.

In other of my works the Satie connections are less clear. The Oulipopien title of *Out of Zaleski's Gazebo* (1977),[58] for two pianos, six or eight hands, points to the literary origins of the subject matter,[59] but the feeling and motoric energy are a combination of Satie and several other composers, who find their way into the piece for different reasons and in different ways (Karg-Elert, Lord Berners, Percy Grainger). The second half of the piece, a fast, repetitive, onward-moving romp, consisting of an ascending sequence of chords in eight-bar phrases, is in the spirit of Satie's music for the 'Entr'acte cinématographique' of *Relâche*. Indeed, John White has said that this section is the nearest thing he has heard to the insistent forward momentum of Satie's masterpiece.[60] Another two-piano six-hand piece, *Ramsey's Lamp* (1979), written in homage to Cyril Ramsey, identifies a number of musical elements that he demonstrated to me, including some from Satie—in particular aspects of lay-out in the piano duets. It also has strong links with Percy Grainger, but a general tone of *pince-sans-rire,* which natives of Goole share with those of Honfleur, binds this, and other works, closer to Satie. I am, though, when all is said and done, only one-eighth Scottish.

Satie and other arts

One final aspect of Satie's connection with the British has to do with the link between visual and literary arts. In 1965 Ronald Johnson published a collection of short poems 'made from Satie's notes, in French to the piano pieces Sports et Divertissements', illustrated by John Furnival.[61] Each of Satie's texts is used except the opening one which precedes the 'Chorale inappétisant'. Some are translated literally, others are more oblique, but Furnival's illustrations are beautifully apt, consisting of seven drawings—one for each page—and the elaborate frames that contain the writings; that for 'Le golf', for example, shows not only a golfer in the loudest and most tasteless of check outfits, but also an obviously Scottish caddie.

The 50th anniversary of Satie's death produced a flurry of activity. Ian Tyson made a small print, *A Gift for Eric Satie* (London: Tetrad Press, 1975), which is a small folded sheet with the legend 'One Dozen Handkerchiefs'. The spelling of Satie's Christian name is odd given the period implied by the image. A concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall included a performance of Nigel Wilkins's translated *Le piège de Méduse,* and Wilkins also published a collection of writings, consisting of miscellaneous fragments from different notebooks.[62] This was imprudently done without the permission of M. Lafosse-Satie and, as a result, there has developed an unfortunate situation in which Wilkins continues to publish material in the face of a certain hostility.[63] But on a happier note 1975 also saw the début of a group of artists called Satie's Faction, the prime movers of which were John Furnival and Nick Cudworth. Furnival had worked in musical contexts before, not only as the illustrator of Johnson's poems, but, for example, with Hugh Davies (*The Jack and Jill Box,* 1969-70, a 'feelie box' which has applications not dissimilar to those of *musique d'ameublement*).[64] Satie's Faction was formed for the express purpose of celebrating the 50th anniversary of the composer's death, its intention being to focus on the whole man rather than only on his music; and, as Furnival says, 'it has been going along ever since in an on/off fashion, mostly off.'[65] In May 1976 the group published a folder, *Erik Satie,* in an edition of 300, which contained Satie-related pieces by 15 different contributors, ranging from short poems by Tom Meyer to witty graphics by Tom Clark. It included eight of Johnson's original set of 20 poems, this time with the small designs that appear in the published versions of *Sports et divertissements,* rather than Furnival's illustrations of ten years before. Perhaps the most extraordinary works in the folder are the realisations by Nick Cudworth of some of Satie's imaginary musical instruments[65]—here the 'alto overcoat in C' and '2 side clarinets in G minor'. Later in 1976 Satie's Faction published a collection of drawings by Cudworth called *Satie's Cephalophones,* which contained more versions of these instruments. John Furnival also made a set of prints in 1976, which further explored elements from 'Le golf' ('Le Colonel est là'; 'Le Colonel est vêtu du scotch-tweed violent'). In 1977 Satie's Faction brought out a kind of visual score by a Frenchman, Christian Rosset; this consists of four pages of drawings which are nothing like the other work of the group and do not, really, represent a facet of the British connection.

Conclusion

After Satie's death in 1925 there came to light his lost 'English Suite' *Jack-in-the-box,* which was choreographed by Balanchine. Given that this was Balanchine's first essay in choreography and *The Triumph of Neptune* by Lord Berners was his second, there seems little doubt that there was a certain mingling of French and English elements in Balanchine's balletic realisation of both works. But perhaps the most apposite illustration of Satie's posthumous connection with the British Isles is contained in Henri Sauguet's recurring dream[67] in which he finds himself with Satie in Paradise, a Paradise that is effectively (and where else could it be?) the suburb of an English town.

[1] BBC Third Programme, 8 June 1949.

[2] Ornella Volta (*Erik Satie* (Paris: Seghers, 1979), p.35) reports the case of another missing Anton, Erik's maternal uncle, that is, Jane's brother. He disappeared without warning and, some months later, sent a portion of his Christmas pudding to his mother (Erik's Scottish grandmother).

[3] Jean Cocteau, 'Erik Satie', *Fanfare*, vol.1, no.2 (15 October 1921), pp.21-5. The material had been prepared as a lecture that was to have been given at the Satie festival in Brussels on 12 April 1921, but owing to illness Cocteau was unable to deliver his address.

[4] James Harding, *Erik Satie* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975), p.6.

[5] Lombardi was successful enough to open a second studio in Brighton in 1884 and he ran the two until 1901.

[6] I am not sure when 'Eric' became 'Erik', but Satie's heightened consciousness of his Scottish ancestry could well have followed his mother's death or his father's marriage to Eugénie Barnetche. One of the most vigorous proponents of new music in Scotland in the 1920s and 1930s, Erik Chisholm, spelled his forename in the same way.

[7] I am indebted to Jacques Caumont, a Norman, for drawing my attention to the expression 'envoyer chez Plumeau', which his father used frequently. François Caradec's *Dictionnaire du français argotique et*

populaire (Paris: Larousse, 1977) defines 'plumeau' as follows: 'Boisson (mandarin et champagne).—*Avoir son plumeau* ou *son plumet,* être ivre. *Envoyer chez Plumeau* ou *chez Plumepatte,* éconduire.' I am grateful to Ornella Volta for pointing out that 'plumitif' is a pejorative term for a writer. This tends to support the hypothesis that the 'Plumot' part of Sir William's name could have literary connotations, and this possibility is strengthened by the fact that Shakespeare was known at the Chat Noir as 'Sir Will'. In *Erik Satie, Quaderni d'un mammifero,* ed. Ornella Volta (Milan: Adelphi, 1980), p.197, there occurs the thesis that Plumot's 'continuelle immobilité' reflects his consistent success. It should be said that, of course, Shakespeare was no knight, though Francis Bacon was...

[8] Nigel Wilkins, 'Erik Satie's Letters to Milhaud and Others', *Musical Quarterly,* vol.66 (1980), pp.404-28.

[9] 'Cher Ami, Mais non: j'ai à travailler pour Diaghilew. Je ne puis laisser mon travail, même pour quelques jours. J'ai reçu de Diaghilew une avance, & il compte sur moi pour fin decembre . . . Combien je suis désolé de ne pouvoir venir. Je ne pouvais deviner. Excusez-moi de mes amis anglais . . . Pauvre ami! Ne m'en veuillez pas. Tâchons de remettre tout cela; mais, en ce moment, tout voyage m'est interdit.' Both this letter and that from Satie to Jean-Aubry of 19 November 1919 are in the collections of the Humanities Center, University of Texas at Austin.

[10] 'Si vous saviez combien Aubry est "con". Il a même l'air d'un cul—vu de très près.' This letter is in the Collection Fondation Erik Satie, Paris.

[11] 'ne sera peut-être pas très à votre goût. La faute n'en est qu'à la déplorable & démodé esthétique que professe notre ami. Il me serait difficile d'attenuer ce que ma pensée me dicte. J'aime beaucoup Ravel, mais son art m'indiffère, hélas!'

[12] W.S. Meadmore, 'Leigh Henry', *Musical Standard* (20 November 1926), p.162.

[13] 'La journée du musicien', *Revue musicale de la Société Internationale de Musique,* vol.9 (15 February 1913); reprinted in *Erik Satie, Écrits,* ed. Ornella Volta (Paris: Éditions Champ Libre, 1977), no.11, pp.22-3. (Since this article was written a new, revised edition of Satie's *Écrits* has been published—in 1981; all references here are to the original edition.)

[14] Reprinted in *Erik Satie, Écrits,* ed. Volta, no.34, p.46.

[15] 'Anglomane de jeunesse, il aimait afficher certaines de ses amitiés anglaises: "Connaissez-vous ce bon Leigh Henry?" questionnait-il. "C'est un curieux bon gros." Mais comme je lui parlais des titres "satistes" que le compositeur Lord Berners appliquait à des oeuvres, il parut irrité et trancha: "C'est un amateur-professionnel. Il n'a pas compris." ' (E.L.T. Mesens 'Le souvenir d'Erik Satie', *Revue musicale,* no.214 (June 1952), p.150)

[16] Cecil Gray, *A Survey of Contemporary Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), p.251. There was by no means unanimity of opinion about which foreign composer a given Englishman was supposed to imitate: Hannen Swaffer referred to Joseph Holbrooke as 'the Cockney Wagner'.

[17] Berners had an aversion from the folksong-inspired compositions of such as Holst and Vaughan Williams and composed a wonderful parody of this idiom in his song *Dialogue between Tom Filuter and his Man by Ned the Dog Stealer.* Benjamin Britten, it will be remembered, was so tied to home as to have been prevented by his parents from going abroad to study with Berg.

[18] Florence: Gaetano e Paolo Luigi Mignani, n.d. [probably 1917]; London: J. & W. Chester, 1917.

[19] Quoted in translation in *The Chesterian,* no.17 (February 1919), pp.259-60.

[20] The piece was eventually published in *Lord Berners, The Collected Music for Piano Solo* (London: J. & W. Chester, 1982).

[21] Others are the second of the *Trois petites marches funèbres,* the orchestral version of 'Chinoiserie' (from *Trois morceaux* (1918)), and the late song *Red Roses and Red Noses* (1941).

[22] Interestingly, an orchestral performance of this piece during the interval of a performance by the Russian Ballet at the Alhambra Theatre, London, in June 1919 caused Ronald Firbank to alter Chapter 8 of his novel *Valmouth*: when this chapter was published in *Art and Letters,* vol.11 (Spring 1919), as 'Fantasia for Orchestra in F sharp minor', only two composers, Skryabin and Tchaikovsky, were mentioned; but when the book was published later in 1919 Firbank had changed the passage to read 'But with quick insight the maître d'orchestre had struck up a capricious concert waltz, an enigmatic au dela laden air: Lord Berners? Scriabin? Tschaikowski? On the wings of whose troubled breast were borne some recent arrivals.'

[23] Edwin Evans, 'Lord Berners', *Musical Times,* vol.61 (1920), p.12.

[24] Besides the effect of the continuously repeated figure, Berners's piece has other motifs in common with *Parade,* especially with the Second Manager's section.

[25] Berners's only opera, *Le carrosse du Saint Sacrement,* was performed in Paris in 1924 at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées as part of a programme devised by Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia which also included Henri Sauguet's *Le plumet du colonel* and the first staged performance in France of Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat.* In a conversation with the author on 1 September 1979 Gabrielle recalled that because parts of Sauguet's work needed to be rewritten Ansermet threatened to withdraw the piece. Berners consoled the tearful Sauguet: 'Si on ne joue pas Le Plumet, on ne joue pas Le Carrosse.'

[26] Gavin Bryars, 'Berners, Rousseau, Satie', *Studio International,* vol.192, no.984 (November-December 1976), pp.314-18.

[27] In a letter of 16 December 1922 to Michel Leiris Roussel wrote: 'Je vois que, comme moi, vous préférez le domaine de la Conception à celui de la Réalité.' see Leiris, 'Conception et Réalité chez Raymond Roussel', *Critique* (October 1954), pp.821-35.

[28] Quoted in Volta, *Erik Satie,* p.29.

[29] As John Betjeman said (conversation with the author, August 1977), one of the only 20th-century architects to have a movement named after him—the 'jerry-built school'! Berners wanted a gothic tower, Wellesley's taste was classical. As a result since most of the building work was done while Berners was away he returned to find a classical tower over 100 feet high, to which he insisted on adding a gothic top.

[30] Georges Jean-Aubry wrote an amusing article in *Fanfare,* vol.1, no.3 (1 November 1921), called 'Lettres dansantes', in which he makes great play with the trend of putting together composers with the same initials.

[31] Constant Lambert, *Music Ho!* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), pp.123-37.

[32] 'Satie voulait substituer aux annotations musicales en langue italienne: *piano, pianissimo, dolce, mezzo-forte,* d'autres annotations de son cru et d'un caractère infiniment moins classique, telles que: *En se regardant soi-même venir; avec la crainte de l'abscons; Mirifique et convenable.*' (J.P. Contamine de Latour, 'Erik Satie intime', *Comoedia* (5 August 1925))

[33] For Grainger the compilation of his dictionary of 'Blue-eyed English' represented an achievement for which he had 'a proud affection' (John Bird, *Percy Grainger* (London: Elek Books, 1976), p.53).

[34] Gowers, *Erik Satie, his Studies, Notebooks and Critics,* p.159.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Gowers, *Erik Satie,* p.151.

[37] Michael Nyman, 'Cage and Satie', *Musical Times,* vol.114 (1973), pp.1227-9.

[38] Michael Nyman compares the English and American approaches in *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (London: Studio Vista, 1974), pp.29-31.

[39] Michael Parsons ('The Music of Howard Skempton', *Contact 21* (Autumn 1980), pp.12-16) talks about Skempton's work almost entirely in the context of the techniques of composition, and systemic ones at that; Skempton himself has also been strongly influenced by the 'beautiful sound' egocentricity of Morton Feldman, a far cry from Satie.

[40] In a long interview with White and myself conducted by Ted Szantó in January 1980 Szantó pointed out that all White's music is tonal, and he wondered what White would produce if he were commissioned to write a piece of non-tonal music; White replied that it would depend on whether he wanted it in the style of Stockhausen, Berio, Ferneyhough . . .

[41] A concert I gave with White in Amsterdam in January 1980 was called 'Gavin Bryars, John White and Absent Friends'.

[42] Dave Smith, 'The Piano Sonatas of John White', *Contact 21* (Autumn 1980), pp.4-11.

[43] By contrast, what White finds in the music of Reger is the 'sympathetic ability to be simultaneously serious and lost'; see Smith, 'The Piano Sonatas of John White'.

[44] Brian Dennis, 'The Music of John White', *Musical Times,* vol.112 (1971), pp.435ff.

[45] Programme note for a concert given by the group at Leicester Polytechnic on 14 March 1979.

[46] The complete sonata is printed in Smith, 'The Piano Sonatas of John White', pp.8-9.

[47] All quotations on these sonatas are from private letters from White to the author.

[48] The article involved an intrepid reporter travelling from Glasgow to London with a group of Scottish supporters, to the accompaniment of the popping of corks from pomagne bottles. Among the excesses of such supporters perhaps the attempted chartering of a submarine to go to the World Cup football finals in Argentina must rank the most touching.

[49] Georges Jean-Aubry, 'British Music through French Eyes', *Musical Quarterly,* vol.5 (1919), p.196. Note his Oulipopien use of the word 'satiety' in this article.

[50] This performance followed a period when long pieces were very much part of the prevailing trend. With John Tilbury and Tom Phillips, Hobbs and I had played a seven-and-a-half hour version of the percussion parts from Cage's *Atlas eclipticalis* in 1969.

[51] Gavin Bryars, 'Vexations and its Performers', *Erik Satie,* ed. Ornella Volta, Les Cahiers de l'Herne (Paris, in preparation).

[52] Nyman, *Experimental Music,* pp.29-31.

[53] Michael Nyman, review of the last concert given by the Hobbs–White duo at the ICA, London, 24 November 1976, in *Studio International,* vol.193, no.985 (January-February 1977), pp.6-8.

[54] This course involved meeting every Wednesday for four hours over two (academic) years. John Cage says: 'One way to write music: study Duchamp.' ('26 Statements re Duchamp', *A Year from Monday* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968), pp.70-72).

[55] Further discussion of these influences will be found in Keith Potter, 'Just the Tip of the Iceberg: Some Aspects of Gavin Bryars' Music', *Contact 22* (Summer 1981), pp.4-15, esp. pp.10-14.

[56] David Drew ('Markevitch: the Early Works and Beyond', *Tempo,* nos.133-4 (September 1980), pp.24-35) refers to the influence of Satie's Rose+Croix pieces on the youthful *Noces* for piano solo (1925).

[57] Obscure 9, reissued as EGED 29.

[58] The attentive reader will notice the resemblance between this title and that of the piece written for the first concert of 'garden furniture music'. This one is 'out of' the other.

[59] See Potter, 'Just the Tip of the Iceberg', p.12

[60] Conversation with the author, on the Calais-Dover ferry, 9 December 1977.

[61] Ronald Johnson/Erik Satie, *Sports and Divertissments* [sic] (n.p., Wild Hawthorn Press, 1965).

[62] Nigel Wilkins, ed. 'The Writings of Erik Satie: Miscellaneous Fragments', *Music and Letters,* vol.56 (1975), pp.288-307.

[63] Wilkins, 'Erik Satie's Letters to Milhaud and Others'; Nigel Wilkins, *The Writings of Erik Satie* (London: Eulenburg Books, 1980).

[64] The feelie box involves the participants, here two, in inserting hands into a box where an assortment of objects, amplified with contact microphones, can be manipulated: 'ideally they would be installed in places where people have to wait with nothing else to do, such as at railway and underground stations, bus stops, airports, dentists' and doctors' waiting rooms, hospitals, government offices etc.' (David Toop, ed., *New/Rediscovered Musical Instruments* (London: Quartz/Mirliton, 1974), p.6; see also David Roberts, 'Hugh Davies: Instrument Maker', *Contact 17* (Summer 1977), pp.9-13)

[65] Letter from John Furnival to the author, 3 January 1981.

[66] Satie's notes on these instruments were first published in Pierre-Daniel Templier, *Erik Satie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1932), pp.59-60 (Eng. trans. by Elena L. and David S. French (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), pp.64-5) and were reprinted in *Erik Satie, Écrits,* ed. Volta, no.358, p.187.

[67] Quoted in Volta, *Erik Satie,* p.22.

Fondation Erik Satie

The Fondation Erik Satie was formed in July 1981 and its headquarters is at 56 rue des Tournelles, 75003 Paris, France. Its aim is to contribute to the greater knowledge and dissemination of Satie's work through publications and other manifestations, and to form an archive for the use of researchers. The president of the Fondation is André Morel, its head is Ornella Volta, and the honorary committee includes the Academicians Georges Auric and Henri Sauguet, Madeleine Milhaud, Louise Leiris, Jean Hugo, Pierre-Daniel Templier, and Rollo Myers; among the foreign correspondents are John Cage (USA) and Gavin Bryars (UK). Exchanges are under way with the Cunningham Dance Foundation, the Fondation Ernest Ansermet, the Fondazione Russolo-Pratella, the Fondazione Ricciotto Canudo, the Académie de Muséologie Évocatoire, the Fondation Salabert, and Satie's Faction.

Alan Gillmor

Satie, Cage, and the New Asceticism

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The responsibility of the artist consists in perfecting his work so that it may become attractively disinteresting.

John Cage[1]

In the summer of 1948, shortly after he had come under the influence of Zen Buddhism, John Cage organised a Satie Festival at North Carolina's experimental and now defunct Black Mountain College. In a lecture delivered during the festival,[2] Cage pronounced the heretical view that Beethoven's influence has been not only pervasive but lamentable in the extreme and ultimately deadening to the art of music. At about this time Cage had discovered in Erik Satie and Anton Webern a path away from the traditional tonal structures of music to a form, static rather than progressive, based on duration. Cage pointed out to his Black Mountain audience that duration must be considered the most fundamental characteristic of sound, since silence (sound's opposite and partner—'ambient noise' Cage would call it after his experience in the anechoic chamber) can be heard not in terms of pitch, loudness, timbre, or harmony, but only in terms of duration.

Building on this idea, Cage went on to explain that Satie's mosaic technique, based on the juxtaposition rather than the dramatic development of discrete musical fragments, allowed the French composer to break with the tonal harmonic structures that had governed Western music for the past three centuries. At the same time, this technique provided Satie with a viable (and non-Schoenbergian) solution to the problems posed by atonality. In Satie's music, especially the music of the Rose + Croix period,[3] each sound-event, liberated from its dramatic role in the traditional tonal structures, is free to be itself; each sound accomplishes nothing and needs no other sound for its elucidation. Here we are confronted with a conception of music more Oriental than Western. A static (and fundamentally Oriental) quality of 'being' has replaced a dynamic (and fundamentally Western)[4] quality of 'becoming'. With Satie's early compositions we have arrived at a point where, to appropriate the words of the Chinese–American composer Chou Wen-Chung, 'each single tone or aggregate of tones is a musical entity in itself and a living spark of expression as long as it lasts.'[5] In his Rose + Croix music Satie seems to have been intent on creating an invocatory effect through the reiteration, juxtaposition, and accumulation of sonorities, rather than through any kind of logical progression. The incidental music that he provided for Joséphin Péladan's *Le fils des étoiles* (1891) will serve to illustrate and clarify the point.

A complete piano score of the incidental music, together with Péladan's autograph scenario, exists in two manuscripts in the Département de la Musique of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Mus. Ms. 10052(1) and 10052(2)). Only the Preludes to the three acts of the play have been published, and although these three Preludes are generally classified with Satie's piano works, the programme for the first performance suggests that the original instrumentation called for an unspecified number of harps and flutes:

Erik Satie has composed three preludes for harps and flutes, admirably Oriental in character, which before each scene prepare the spectator tensely for what he is about to see. The same young composer is the author of several fanfares which, owing to the originality and austerity of their style, have been adopted for the Order's ceremonies and which may not, unless the High Priest [Péladan] allows it, be played anywhere but at the Order's meetings.[6]

Although the published version of the Preludes is subtitled 'Wagnérie kaldéenne', this would appear to have been an afterthought; it should be noted that the manuscript omits any reference to Wagner, using only the subtitle 'Pastorale kaldéenne'. Certainly there is nothing Wagnerian about the three Preludes. On the flyleaf of the score, Satie wrote the following dedication in the peculiarly stilted dialect which he favoured throughout his Rose + Croix period:

Dedication

Without prejudice to the observances of my cousins, the powerful sorcerers, I offer this work to my peers. In doing so, I claim no glory for myself.

I invoke upon My fellows the mercy of the Father, creator of things visible and invisible; the protection of the Majestic Mother of the Redeemer, Queen of Angels; along with the prayers of the heavenly hosts.

May the righteous indignation of God crush out the proud and the unholy.

Erik Satie[7]

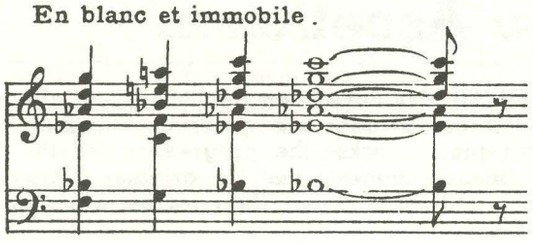
The story is set in Chaldea in 3500 BC, and the three Preludes carry the following descriptive titles: Act 1: *La vocation* ('La nuit de Kaldée'); Act 2: *L'initiation* ('La salle basse du Grand Temple'); Act 3: *L'incantation* ('La terrasse du palais du patêsi Goudéa').[8]

The general mood of the Act 1 Prelude and, indeed, of the Rose + Croix music as a whole, is suggested by the inscriptions 'En blanc et immobile' (line 1) and 'Pâle et hiératique' (lines 5 and 11). The opening motif, a three-note figure consisting of slowly moving fourth chords in parallel motion, provides the material for the entire Prelude. Through transposition, variation, and development, the initial motif undergoes a series of thematic transformations (Example 1). The form of the Prelude is defined by the juxtaposition of the motifs in the order *a b c d b c*. The arpeggiated nature of motifs *b* and *d* relieves the static chordal texture of motifs *a* and *c* and suggests the harp sonorities of the original performance. The triadic harmonies (largely five-three, six-four, and seventh chords) of motifs *b*, *c*, and *d* provide further contrast to the stark quartal harmonies of the opening.

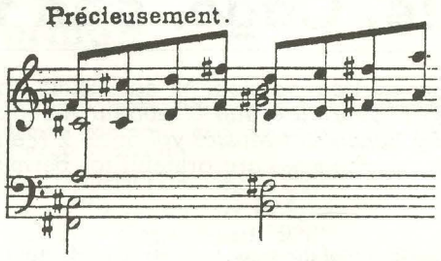
The three-note motif of the first Prelude (Example 1a) undergoes further transformation to provide the material for the Prelude to Act 2. The harmonic vocabulary of the second Prelude is much richer than that of the first. In addition to further use of fourth chords, Satie utilises chains of seventh and ninth

Example 1 Satie, *Le fils des étoiles,* Act 1 Prelude: motivic transformation

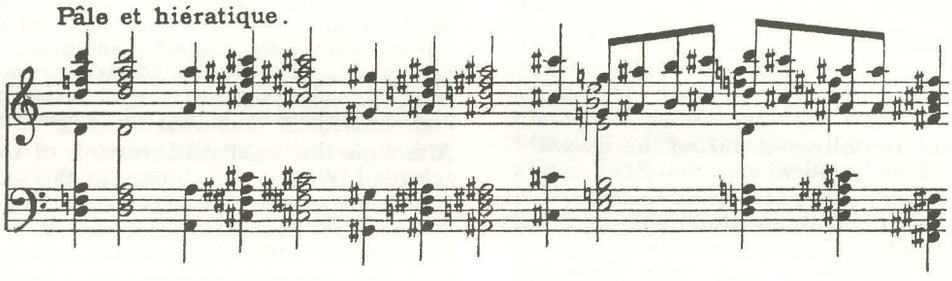
(a) initial motif



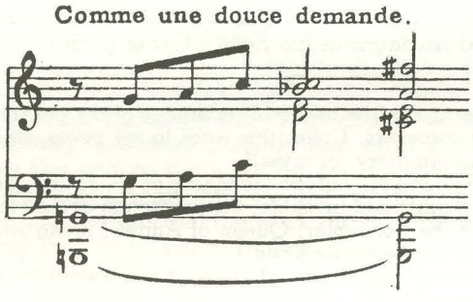
(b) variation



(c) development (retrograde)



(d) variation



chords (Example 2) reminiscent of the *Trois sarabandes* of 1887. The strictly parallel chordal movement of the first Prelude gives way to a mixture of parallel and contrary motion. The juxtaposition of motifs—*a b c b c*—all of which are derived from the motifs of the Act 1 Prelude, provides a formal scheme almost identical with that of the first Prelude. Again Satie breaks the regularity of the chordal texture with a contrasting arpeggiated motif and favours motivic transposition at the fourth or fifth.

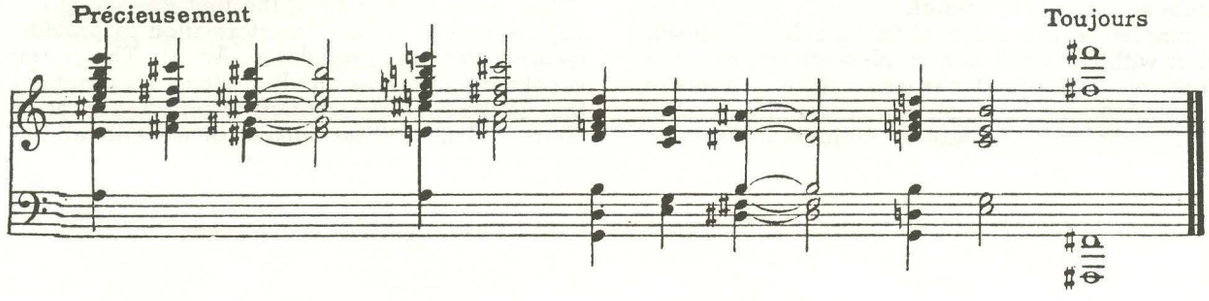
The Prelude to Act 3, the longest of the three, contains the greatest degree of motivic, textural, and rhythmic variety. Chains of major, minor, and augmented five-three chords and major and minor six-three chords are juxtaposed with stark passages of parallel fourth chords and fanfare-like passages in octaves (Example 3).

It was inevitable that many writers would see in *Le fils des étoiles* the influence of plainsong. Certainly there is a vaguely antiquarian quality to the three Preludes which defies accurate definition; the strangely immobile chord sequences have something of the flavour of organum. Typically pertinent is Wilfrid Mellers's remark that 'Satie saw in the impersonality, the aloofness, the remoteness from all subjective dramatic stress of this music [that is, plainsong] qualities which might, with appropriate modifications, approximate to his own uniquely lonely mode of utterance.'[9] The crucial limitations of Satie's technique resulted in a negation of the temporality characteristic of Western music—a feeling that the music exists not in time, but only in space. Tonality and rhythm as such did not concern him. His aim was to create a kind of vague, floating, Puvis de Chavannes atmosphere,[10] an ideal he held up to Debussy when the older composer was working on his Maeterlinck opera. In his Rose+Croix works Satie invented the kind of music that Leonard Meyer, three-quarters of a century later, was to call 'anti-teleological'—a music which is non-goal orientated, a music which is simply *there*, a kind of quasi-religious *musique d'ameublement* before the fact.[11] As Rudhyar Chennevière has suggested:

> There seems to be no reason why these chords might not continue for hours. One senses that their originator has dallied voluptuously with these sonorities, very lovely, unknown at the time and relegated to the index of forbidden dissonances. One feels that for hours at a stretch he has caressed the ivory keys, sounding them softly, then, little by little, with greater force; gloriously, then again more gently, allowing them to die away in ecstasy or satiety . . . One feels that the composer's sense of hearing, his nerves, vibrate sensuously, lulled by these infinite undulations of sound.[12]

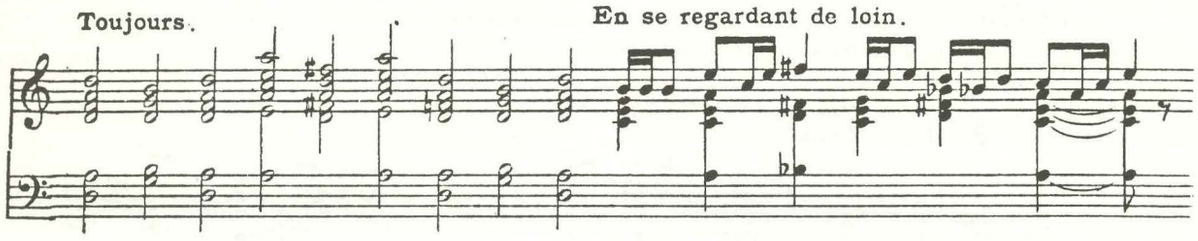
For John Cage, Satie was a genuinely new voice, a new spirit in music which 'teaches us', Cage wrote, 'to

Example 2 Satie, *Le fils des étoiles,* Act 2 Prelude: chain of seventh and ninth chords

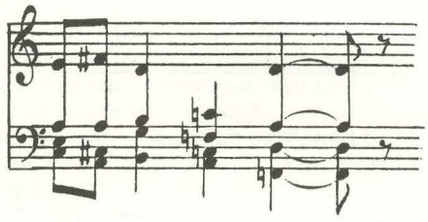


Example 3 Satie, *Le fils des étoiles,* Act 3 Prelude: harmonic devices

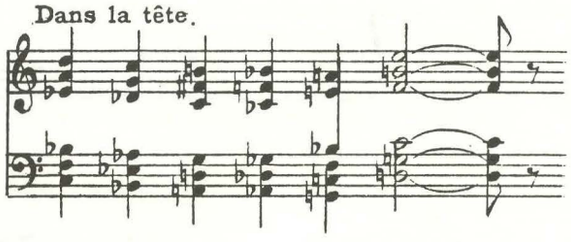
(a) major, minor, and augmented five-three chords



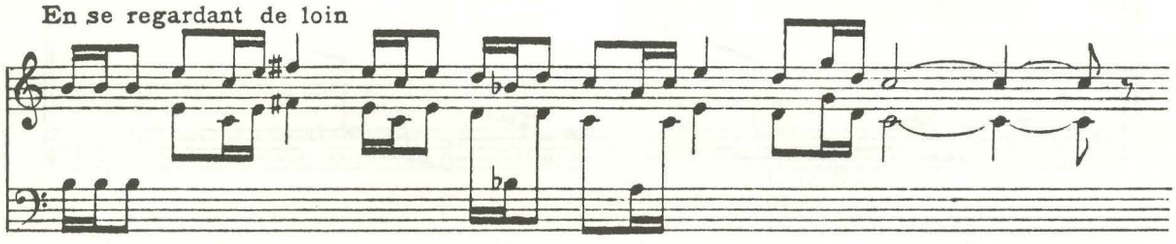
(b) major and minor six-three chords



(c) parallel fourth chords



(d) fanfare-like motifs



tend towards an absence (*simplicité*) of emotion and an inactivity (*fermeté*) in the way of prescribing sonorities and rhythms which lets them affirm themselves clearly, in a straight line from their plan and pitch, conceived in a spirit of humility and renunciation'.[13]

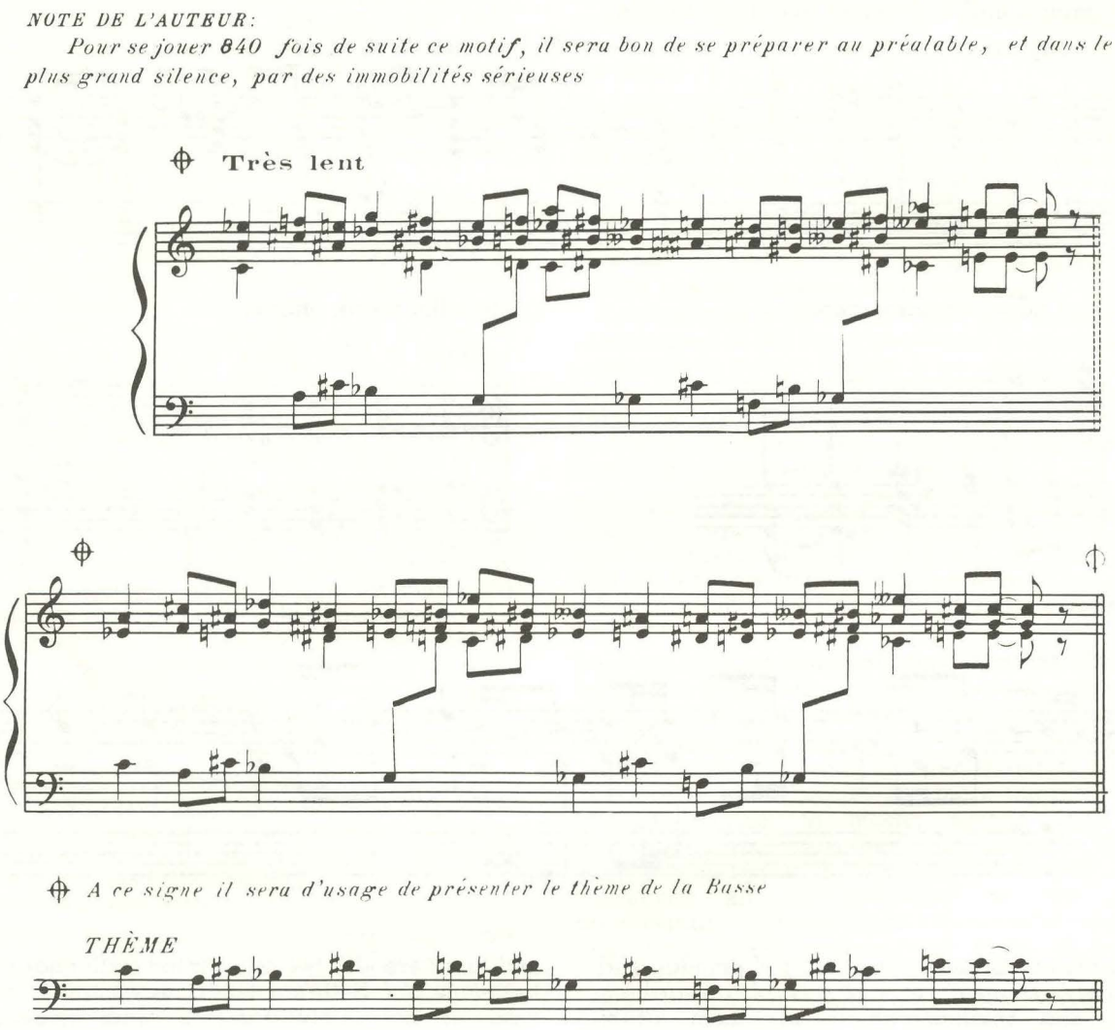
In 1949 Cage unveiled a hitherto unknown Satie manuscript, which had been lent to him by Henri Sauguet. A photograph of the manuscript of Satie's *Vexations* appeared in that year in the French journal *Contrepoints*.[14] Eight years later Cage stated in an article on Satie that a performance of *Vexations* respecting the composer's wishes for 840 repetitions would last an estimated 24 hours and would be absolutely unendurable.[15] Nevertheless, in 1963, from 6 p.m. on 9 September to 12.40 p.m. on 10 September Cage made avant-garde history with one of his most inspired capers. Utilising a team of ten pianists working in shifts, *Vexations* was performed in Manhattan's Pocket Theater as directed, 840 times in unbroken succession. It lasted 18 hours 40 minutes, 5 hours 20 minutes short of Cage's estimate. Eight critics, working in two-hour relays, covered the event for the *New York Times*.

The theme of *Vexations* (Example 4), a curious chromatic line of 13 beats, made up of all the notes of the chromatic scale save G sharp/A flat, is first given out in the bass. Two harmonisations of the theme in three-part texture follow, the second one simply reversing the order of the top two parts. The majority of the harmonies are diminished six-three chords, but the second one of each section is an augmented triad, and there are also two augmented sixth chords with a bass note of *f*. Satie's notation, as was often to be the case, is needlessly complex, with unusual and confusing enharmonic spellings.

Since that historic occasion on Manhattan's Lower East Side *Vexations* has received many 'complete' performances by various groups across the United States. In 1969 Cage himself participated in a performance of the piece at the University of California at Davis, as part of a Satie Exposition held on that campus.[16] After the first performance in New York Cage noted, with the utmost seriousness, that 'something had been set in motion that went far beyond what any of us had anticipated'.[17]

Cage's entire career can be seen as an attempt to break down the lines of demarcation between art and life. In order to achieve this he feels that the composer must extinguish his personality and ultimately remove, so far as it is possible, all vestiges of individual self-expression from the creative act, so that sounds, any and all sounds, are left free to be themselves. Building on the theories and experiments of the Italian futurists, his teachers Schoenberg and Cowell, and Edgard Varèse, whose *Ionisation* (1931) he once considered a 20th-century masterpiece, Cage devoted most of his energies in the 1930s and 1940s to the composition of percussion music. With hindsight this body of work, written both for percussion ensembles and prepared piano (Cage's 'one-man percussion orchestra'), can be seen as the first stage in a journey towards a music of sounds (intentional and non-intentional) which would be free

Example 4 Satie, *Vexations* from *Pages mystiques* (1893-5)



from the exigencies of pitch and the concept of an underlying fundamental tone. As Cage explained:

> In writing for these sounds . . . the composer is dealing with material that does not fit into the orthodox scales and harmonies. It is therefore necessary to find some other organizing means than those in use for symphonic instruments. The sounds cannot be organized through reference to an underlying fundamental tone since such a tone does not exist. Each sound must be considered as essentially different from and independent of every other sound. A method analogous to the twelve-tone system may prove useful, but in such a case, the 'sound-row' would contain any number of elements. However, because of the nature of the materials involved, and because their duration characteristics can be easily controlled and related, it is more than likely that the unifying means will be rhythmic.[18]

Towards the end of the 1940s Cage came under the influence of Oriental philosophy, in particular Zen Buddhism, which he saw as an attempt to open up the human mind to a more intense awareness of everyday existence. From this Cage concluded that music should be concerned neither with entertainment nor communication, but rather should serve to enhance one's cognisance of sound. As to the question of the purpose of writing music, which has been of great concern to the composer, Cage answered in what could be considered his artistic credo:

> One is, of course, not dealing with purposes but dealing with sounds. Or the answer must take the form of paradox: a purposeful purposelessness or a purposeless play. This play, however, is an affirmation of life—not an attempt to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply a way of waking up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of its way and lets it act of its own accord.[19]

In 1950, with the help of the ancient Chinese *Book of Changes* (I Ching), Cage reanimated dada randomness by moving into 'chance operations' in an attempt to reach his goal: the creation of a purely objective musical form in which sounds would appear as individual, discrete sensations, with no syntactical relationships whatsoever. Cage's activity from 1950 on can be seen as a series of attempts to refine his technique of randomisation, so that, with the removal of personal choice and volition, the boundaries between creator, performer, and listener will become less and less clear and ultimately disappear.

From this position it becomes apparent why Cage considers Satie to be indispensable. Although the French composer did not always make explicit his ideas, preferring instead to conceal them behind a

barrage of dadaistic journalism, it is not difficult to see why Cage considers him an important forerunner.

> To be interested in Satie one must be disinterested to begin with, accept that a sound is a sound and a man is a man, give up illusions about ideas of order, expressions of sentiment, and all the rest of our inherited esthetic clap-trap.[20]

Satie was probably the first composer completely to upset the traditional syntactical relationships of Western music, which, through Debussy, Varèse, Cage, and others, led to the discovery (or rediscovery) of the primitive enjoyment of sound *qua* sound. The marked absence of transition in Satie's music made it possible for him to create a body of work that could function ideally as 'furnishing music', a music which, beginning with Satie's own 'Entr'acte cinématographique' from *Relâche* (1924), eventually found its real significance in film and television music. In a work such as *Relâche* Satie had very nearly reached the Cageian ideal of a fusion of the arts in a dadaist 'happening', which functions not as a negation of life but, as Cage would later confirm, as an affirmation of life. It is important to recall Francis Picabia's words concerning Satie's last work: *'Relâche* is life, life like I like it; life without tomorrow, life today, everything for today, nothing for yesterday, nothing for tomorrow.'[21]

In a debate with the critic Abraham Skulsky in the pages of *Musical America* Cage clearly defined his position with respect to Satie, confirming in the process his own aesthetic beliefs, which more than faintly echo Picabia's jaunty slogan of 1924.

> When life is lived, there is nothing in it but the present, the 'now-moment' . . . Art when it is art as Satie lived it and made it is not separate from life . . . Satie . . . never lived in an ivory tower, nor does any artist of his quality ever need to: for there is nothing in life from which he separates himself.[22]

With the advent of aleatoric music some time after 1950, the break with tradition became very nearly complete. The artist has carefully cultivated the removal of his ego from the artistic product, and communicable content has ceased to be his aim. Cage's adoption of chance principles in the early 1950s might be seen as the ultimate answer to the challenge raised by Satie early in his career: that is to say, only in a chance situation can the artist's ego be sufficiently removed to allow him to approach Satie's state of 'absolute renunciation'. Satie mirrored his age in his intense desire to break with the traditions of the past, to disrupt the continuity of music, to tear down the pretentious machinery of Wagnerism, to bring to an end 'the great tradition'; and precisely because he was one of the first composers to achieve some of these things, he succeeded in capturing the imagination of the moderns.

In his essay 'The End of the Renaissance?', referred to above, Leonard Meyer speaks of an 'anti-teleological' music, a directionless, unkinetic music which establishes no goals towards which to move, a music that 'arouses no expectations, except presumably that it will stop'.[23] Christian Wolff has described this kind of music as static and quiescent:

> It goes in no particular direction. There is no necessary concern with time as a measure of distance from a point in the past to a point in the future . . . It is not a question of getting anywhere, of making progress, or having come from anywhere in particular . . .[24]

The cosmic timelessness of Satie's 'Rosicrucian' structures, systematically built on the constant, hypnotic repetition of themes, motifs, and configurations, works against the feeling of temporality inherent in Classical forms and tonality, and these works of the composer's youth can be seen as the modern prototype of Meyer's anti-teleological music. In a work such as *Vexations*, with its 840 repetitions, the composer comes very near to challenging Meyer's presumption that the music will eventually come to an end. And muzak—the cretinous progeny of Satie's *musique d'ameublement*—has virtually obliterated the concept of formal boundaries in music, as it pours out an incessant stream of musical *bric-à-brac* into the atmosphere.

Vexations, in its 'complete' version, suggests an important aspect of Satie's contemporaneity: the role of boredom. Satie's *Vexations* and Cage's notorious *4'33"* of 1952 achieve much the same effect, though with different means; they both serve to intensify and enlarge the experiential world of the spectator. David Tudor once described *4'33"* as 'one of the most intense listening experiences one can have . . . It is cathartic—four minutes and thirty-three seconds of meditation in effect.'[25] Dick Higgins, after a performance of Satie's marathon work, recorded a similar sensation:

> the mind slowly becomes incapable of taking . . . offense, and a very strange, euphoric acceptance and enjoyment begin to set in . . . After a while the euphoria . . . begins to intensify. By the time the piece is over, the silence is absolutely numbing, so much of an environment has the piece become.[26]

To put it in the form of a Cage aphorism

> In Zen they say: If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, try it for eight, sixteen, thirty-two, and so on. Eventually one discovers that it's not boring at all but very interesting.[27]

A pattern of thought now emerges which illuminates Cage's central position *vis-à-vis* the relationship between observer and observed. Here is a conception which leads ultimately to a point where the traditional Aristotelian dualism of subject – object, mind – matter, Romantic – Classic ceases to exist, so utterly complete is the listener's identification with the event.

Many of Satie's disciples—the Americans Virgil Thomson and Ned Rorem, for example—admired the composer for his Gallic playfulness, for the guileless simplicity of his musical language, and for the vigour with which he denied the virtues of Germanic art. He taught them that the best thing Western music could do was to stop taking itself seriously. John Cage, from the moment he discovered the Sage of Arcueil, admired his extraordinary abnegation of the will and sensed a profound humanism aimed at liberating man from the artificial barriers with which he has shut himself off from life. Satie pursued his singular vision uncompromisingly and with remarkable assiduity, and for Cage the French composer's career was an elaborate attempt to tear down not just the walls of tradition and convention but all the barriers that separate art from life.

Satie's seemingly irreverent attitudes towards art and life are the very qualities that define his importance. To the very end of his career he continued, in his quixotic fashion, to beat down the barriers of convention with an undiminished taste for adventure and a self-destructive impulse unique in the annals of modern music. It would seem that a nihilistic impulse is at the root of the Satie problem, that the very act of razing obstacles, the sheer joy of dynamism and the sportive taste for action, was the composer's life-blood. But—and this is the crucial

link between Satie and Cage—the passion for destruction is also a creative passion. Cage shares with Satie an element of exaltation in his character directed towards life and its experiences, as well as an uncompromising acceptance of no stage of experience as final. The creative act itself, elevated to the status of a first principle, becomes pervasive and omnipotent when life is approached in a celebratory manner. Art, in this light, becomes nothing more nor less than a ritualistic and symbolic expression of the fullness of life here and now, which Cage, in his every action, invites us to embrace, in a spirit of humility and submissiveness.

[1] John Cage, 'Forerunners of Modern Music', *Silence* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p.64.

[2] Printed as 'Defense of Satie', *John Cage,* ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), pp.77-84.

[3] In 1890, while performing as a cabaret pianist at Le Chat Noir, Satie came under the spell of the eccentric writer and mystic Joséphin Péladan (1859-1918), who invited the young musician to become official composer to his newly formed (1890) Rosicrucian brotherhood, L'Ordre de la Rose+Croix du Temple et du Graal. Although Satie's relationship with Péladan and Rosicrucianism was to endure for only about two years, the music he wrote between 1891 and 1895 reveals a stylistic unity and is therefore usually grouped under the generic heading 'Rose+Croix'. For a fuller discussion of Satie's relationship to Péladan and Rosicrucianism see my *Erik Satie and the Concept of the Avant-Garde* (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1972), pp.110-59.

[4] 'Western' is used here in a post-Renaissance framework in keeping with Cage's view that the shift from a ritualistic, non-expressive art to an individualistic, self-expressive art was essentially a late Renaissance phenomenon.

[5] Chou Wen-Chung, 'Towards a Re-Merger in Music', *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music,* ed. Elliott Schwartz and Barney Childs (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p.311.

[6] Quoted in Pierre-Daniel Templier, *Erik Satie,* trans. Elena L. and David S. French (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), p.14.

[7] 'Sans préjudice de pratiques des grands imprécateurs Mes cousins, J'offre cette oeuvre à mes pairs. Par ainsi, et pour la précédence des exemples, je ne demande point l'exaltation. J'appelle sur Mes conviés la miséricorde du Père, créateur des choses visibles et invisibles; la protection de la Mère Auguste de Rédempteur, Reine des Anges; comme les prières du choeur glorieux des Apôtres et des Saints Ordres des Esprits bienheureux. Que la juste inflammation de Dieu écrase les superbes et les indécents!'

[8] 'Patêsi', a royal priest or pundit-king.

[9] Wilfrid H. Mellers, 'Erik Satie and the "Problem" of Contemporary Music', *Music and Letters,* vol.23 (1942), p.212.

[10] In this connection, it is interesting to note that Satie's *Sonneries de la Rose+Croix* (1892), also written for Péladan, were originally printed in red and illustrated with a fragment of *La guerre* by Puvis de Chavannes (1824-98), a painter the composer greatly admired.

[11] See Leonard B. Meyer, 'The End of the Renaissance?', *Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Patterns and Predictions in Twentieth-Century Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p.72.

[12] Rudhyar D. Chennevière, 'Erik Satie and the Music of Irony', *Musical Quarterly,* vol.5 (1919), p.470.

[13] John Cage, 'On Erik Satie', *Art News Annual,* vol.27 (1958), p.80; the article was reprinted in John Cage, *Silence,* pp.76-82, and in French in *Les lettres nouvelles* (May-June 1970), pp.11-22.

[14] *Contrepoints,* no.6 (1949), facing p.8. The manuscript has since appeared in facsimile in *Art News Annual,* vol.27 (1958), p.77; *New York Times,* 11 September 1963, p.45; and in *Source,* vol.4, no.1 (January 1970), p.26. In 1967 Peter Dickinson printed *Vexations* in his article 'Erik Satie (1866-1925)', *Music Review* vol.28 (1967), p.145. The score was finally published in 1969 by Editions Max Eschig as the second of three *Pages mystiques* dating from the period 1893-5.

[15] Cage, 'On Erik Satie', *Silence,* p.76.

[16] For a full account of the Satie Exposition see John Dinwiddie, 'Mewantemooseicday: John Cage in Davis, 1969', *Source,* vol.4, no.1 (January 1970), pp.21-6. As far as can be determined, the Canadian première of the 'complete' *Vexations* occurred on 7 and 8 February 1975 at the University of Ottawa under the 'spiritual guidance' *(orientation spirituelle)* of the author. In November 1978 pianist Robert Racine gave several performances of *Vexations* in Montreal which ranged in duration from 14 hours 8 minutes to 19 hours, with an intermediate reading of 17 hours 53 minutes. Racine has given public readings of the complete works of Gustave Flaubert, taking his cue, perhaps, from T.S. Eliot who wrote: 'The point of intersection of the timeless/With time, is an occupation for the saint.'

[17] Quoted in Calvin Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors: the Heretical Courtship in Modern Art* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), p.104.

[18] John Cage, 'For More New Sounds', *John Cage,* ed. Kostelanetz, p.66.

[19] Cage, 'Experimental Music', *Silence,* p.12.

[20] Cage, 'On Erik Satie', *Silence,* p.82.

[21] *'Relâche* est la vie, la vie comme je l'aime; la vie sans lendemain, la vie d'aujourd'hui, tout pour aujourd'hui, rien pour hier, rien pour demain.' Francis Picabia, 'Programme of the Swedish Ballet, Paris 1924'; reprinted in Rolf de Maré, 'The Swedish Ballet and the Modern Aesthetic', *The Little Review,* no.11 (Winter 1926), p.25.

[22] John Cage, 'Letters to the Editor: More Satie', *Musical America,* no.71 (1 April 1951), p.26; reprinted in *John Cage,* ed. Kostelanetz, pp.92-4.

[23] Meyer, *Music, the Arts, and Ideas,* p.72.

[24] Quoted in Cage, 'Composition as Process', *Silence,* p.54.

[25] Quoted in Harold C. Schonberg, 'The Far-Out Pianist', *Harper's Magazine,* vol.130 (June 1960), p.49.

[26] Dick Higgins, 'Boredom and Danger', *Source,* vol.3 no.1 (January 1969), p.15.

[27] Cage, *Silence,* p.93.

John Cage, Roger Shattuck, and Alan Gillmor
Erik Satie: a Conversation

This conversation took place outdoors near Cage's summer home at Stony Point, New York, on 14 July 1973; it was sponsored by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, to whom we are grateful for the kind permission to publish.

Don't take out your feelings on your instrument. Often, instruments are subject to terrible treatment. People beat them. I know children who deliberately, with fiendish pleasure, step on their piano's feet. Others won't put their violin back in its case. Naturally the poor thing catches cold. It's not nice. No, it's not. A few even pour snuff into their trombone, which is terribly disagreeable—for the instrument. When they blow they project the irritating powder right in their neighbour's face. He coughs and sneezes for a good half hour . . . Pouah! . . . Exercises are to be done in the morning, after breakfast. You should be very clean, and blow your nose ahead of time. Don't go to work with jam on your fingers, or get up every few minutes to go get some candy, or caramels, or chocolate—that's the worst of all.

Erik Satie[1]

JOHN CAGE: So much in Satie's writing leads people to believe that he was simply a humorist who was saying funny things without their having an otherwise useful meaning. But that remark, for instance, advising the children to blow their noses before playing music in the morning, reminds me of advice I received from another composer, Lou Harrison, to always blow my nose before playing the piano. You see, music consists of sounds, and as a person is playing, because music is a rhythmical affair, the rhythm of the breathing of the body becomes very evident and is very disturbing to a listener or even to the musician himself.

ROGER SHATTUCK: But when you talk about Satie being just taken for a comic, you put your finger on something that is not only the source of a lot of the misinterpretations of his work, but a lot of other misunderstanding, because I don't think most people know how a musician can be both a musician and a comedian, or a clown, which he was. In fact you're one of the few people yourself, John, who I think might . . .

JC: . . . understand?

RS: Yes, might understand and might have something to say about it. I've just been spending the last two years trying to prove that more than anything the usually considered highly serious author Marcel Proust is above all a comedian. And I think I can make that case. I'm not going to make it here.[2] But Satie has that very rare sense of balance and of tonality and rhythm that allows almost everything he does to be an undercutting of what he has tried to do in the first place. But are there any other musicians who are comical in the same way?

JC: Well, there are other people. And we never know how much of a musician they may have been. James Joyce, was he not closely involved with music?

RS: Yes.[3]

JC: And he was certainly devoted to comedy, much more than to tragedy.

RS: Well, that's a literary type though.

JC: I believe he said once that what he loved about comedy was that it left the world, so to speak, free of the constraints arising from likes and dislikes.

RS: But is there any music at which it is permitted to laugh?

JC: Very rarely. We're not supposed to laugh at Satie's music either. You recall he wrote somewhere that we're not to laugh.

RS: All right. What do you do with that? He also wrote that he forbids anyone to read the instructions in his music while the music is being played.[4] Well, I'm absolutely convinced that the only true recording of Satie's music will be the one in which the commentary is in fact read during the performance.

ALAN GILLMOR: It is true that the most puzzling aspect of Satie for many listeners is this aura of buffoonery which seems to surround his name. It seems to me that most of Satie's critics have tended to view his humorous side with some embarrassment and have taken great pains to point out that the composer after all did write a considerable amount of music which can only be called serious, and it is this music, of course, which should concern us most. I would suggest that these critics have failed to observe the Satie case in its proper perspective, and that they have been utilising the canons of Anglo-German musical criticism and have seemed reluctant to concede that the composer—at least a good part of the composer—was at heart a *fumiste,* or practical joker. And this, contrary to making him a non-entity, is of primary significance to the development of the avant-garde ideal, and consequently to the evolution of 20th-century musical aesthetics. These critics have suggested that Satie's whimsical approach to art and life was nothing more than a suit of armour and a defence mechanism designed to shield him, to shield that fact that he really possessed no talent. It seems to me from what we've already said here that this approach to Satie's humour is no longer acceptable. I'd be interested to hear what views you have on this; we've already expressed some.

RS: I don't think he needed any self-defence. Satie was a self-taught musician, an *autodidacte,* who had the guts to go back to school when he was almost 40 and act as if he were going to take his education very seriously, although he already had a style. But the humour was so much a part of his genius, and so much a part of his essential eccentricity, an eccentricity which really was right on the beam, that I don't think we need to talk about defences against anything. He used this as a portion of his expression, not as a cover-up for his expression. And it's the rarity of the combination that I think throws people off. You just don't find musicians who write tongue in cheek. I can think of a few items—natural reproductions of sounds in Classical music—but this is always just a little touch which doesn't really affect the large composition, or the whole. But much of what Satie is doing is aesthetically—well, it's just like the things we're hearing in the background here. He is introducing

elements which take exception to the very fact that music has to be taken seriously, and here we sit with a tape recorder going and everything against us in the way of lawnmowers and children swimming in the brook next to us. Should the whole thing be cut off at this point because it's being interfered with? The answer would be, according to this aesthetic, no. It must contain this as a part of itself.

JC: I think being open to the environment is a point of view, as you say Roger, close to Satie's use of his music in the society.

RS: I have to admit that much as I am ready to accept in aesthetic terms what Satie calls 'furniture music',[5] that is, music which is to exist within our environment as furnitues does in our rooms . . .

JC: . . . and to which we need not pay special attention . . .

RS: —yes, to which we need not pay attention—I nevertheless do a slow burn whenever I walk into an airport and have to listen to the canned muzak. Now this is a contradiction in terms. When it comes from Satie it seems to be all right. But when it comes from the commercial establishment piped into airline terminals or any other kind of place where you are a victim of circumstances, it seems outrageous. I've never been able to reconcile this because I feel I should like this kind of music.

JC: It could be reconciled by muzak's being convinced that they should record the *musique d'ameublement* of Satie and use that.

RS: And things of that quality.

JC: And then there's the Japanese composer Toshi Ichiyanagi who now advertises the availability from him of sound environments, so that people could for their homes or their factories have sounds which he would provide.

AG: So it really depends on the kind of muzak. I notice, John, that it's taken you a while to come to grips with the muzak phenomenon, that this is something to which you have taken exception.[6]

JC: I still have muzak in mind as a project.

AG: And you will no doubt use it in a piece in order to conquer it.

JC: I hope so.

RS: Well, the answer is that commercial pop music cannot mix with the furniture music aesthetic. Those two don't go together.

JC: Don't you think that muzak, in a very weak way, attempts to distract us from what we are doing?

RS: Well yes. I think it surrounds us with a kind of soft felt cushion against reality.

JC: Whereas I think Satie's furniture music would like us to pay attention to whatever else it was that we were doing.

RS: I haven't seen that worked out, though, as any kind of a process that would be clear. In the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, court musicians played all the time. The aristocracy lived, I imagine, in an environment which was filled with music. Did that prevent them from hearing natural sounds and the grunts of their servants and the people being tortured in the courtyard, or did it heighten reality? I don't know. Satie wrote a good deal about this, but almost entirely again in a kind of spoofing way. I think he took it seriously, but the furniture music aesthetic has not been worked out fully in a way that really reconciles it to the way we live, or even the way they lived in the Renaissance.

AG: Is it then that we need a better quality muzak or a more Satiean brand of muzak? I mean, why should any and all music not be fair game for this phenomenon if we accept it in a completely free and open way as perhaps Satie would have us do?

RS: Well we do. I imagine 50 per cent of the automobiles on the highway have the radio going and are existing in a medium of music, although very third- or fourth-rate music. Now I do not believe that that kind of music does anything to enhance what's going on within those automobiles. They'd do better just to listen to the whistling of the wind. So, therefore, I'd say probably yes, the question is the quality of music or the simplicity, the kind of self-effacement of the sounds that this could produce. But still it shouldn't be at all times. But if we're talking about a musician here—and I'm the only non-musician of the three of us—I'd like to ask the two of you to speak of an aspect of Satie that has troubled me. I do feel that, compared in a very obvious way to Stravinsky, Satie has a very narrow rhythmic repertory. Is this a limitation or is this a part of his style?

AG: Isn't this really part of the whole question of 'stripping the music bare to the bone'?

JC: And then seeing what you have when you get to that simplicity. It's very much like *Walden.* In going to Walden what Thoreau wanted to do was strip things to the bone, so to speak, and then see whether life was worth living. I think we can actually make a case for the correspondence between Thoreau and Satie.

RS: You're assuming, then, that simplicity is the equivalent of repetitiousness, like the heart-beat or the movement of walking or something like this?

JC: No, I'd like to answer your question a little further. If we talk about the principle of simplicity of rhythm and of repetitiveness of rhythm in Satie's writing, I think that the extreme of it might be the *Vexations,* in which you have a 13-measure cantus firmus, followed by its repetition with two voices above it; then the cantus firmus is repeated and then the two voices are heard with the top one now in the middle rather than the other way.[7] This goes on for 18 hours and 40 minutes. Now what happens when something so simple is repeated for such a long time? What actually happens is the subtle falling away from the norm, a constant flux with regard to such things as speed and accent, all the things in fact which we could connect with rhythm. The most subtle things become evident that would not be evident in a more complex rhythmic situation. We have, I believe, many examples in contemporary visual art of things brought to an extra-ordinary simplicity. I recall, for instance, the white paintings of Robert Rauschenberg, which don't have any images. It's in that highly simplified situation that we are able to see such things as dust or shadows. Whereas, if we had the shadows carefully painted, as in Rembrandt, any other shadow entering the situation would be a disturbance and would not be noticeable, or if noticeable, a disturbance.

RS: That's an extremely eloquent answer, and I follow it and I even would support it, particularly in the case of the *Vexations,* which is, however, an extreme case. It's the kind of thing that I feel can't be done again.

JC: I think that a proper performance of Satie's music will bring about subtle oscillations simply because it would be intolerable to have that music, with its more or less regular beats, kept extremely regular. In other

words, the very fact of their simplicity and regularity calls for the kinds of subtle differences that go with, say, breathing. And I think, finally, the rhythm of Satie becomes not interesting at the point of the beat, but it becomes definitely interesting at the point of the phrase. And there you will find that the phrases are not repeated, but are in fact varied in the most interesting way.

RS: The way I was attracted to Satie's music is ridiculous and a little bit backwards. I was working at the time on the poet Apollinaire, who rejected all punctuation. When he published his first book of poetry he was so annoyed with the printer's errors that had been introduced into his text he said 'To hell with it, I'll get rid of all punctuation', and he had them eliminate every punctuation mark in the entire book. This corresponds somewhat to Satie's elimination of the bar-lines, and it is a very striking thing to anyone who knows a little bit about music and looks into a Satie score. There are just no bar-lines. How do you find your way?

JC: I think that Thoreau also omitted punctuation. And I know Ives did. They've only been added editorially since.

RS: Yes, Cummings did; Pound often in his poetry omitted punctuation. Gertrude Stein said a comma is something which you only use if you have to have a hook on which to hang your hat and that you should be able to do without it.

AG: This idea of finding your way in the music: isn't this going a little bit against the grain of the Satie aesthetic? Finding your way—that very expression suggests temporality, progress, movement. Isn't this exactly what the composer was consciously or unconsciously trying to avoid?

JC: You mean that Satie was perhaps not interested in moving along, that he was content with where he was?

AG: His pieces seem to revolve around an axis: the *Gymnopédies,* for example—those undulating lines that continually turn back on themselves.

JC: I have the feeling, too, especially in those pieces written between 1912 and 1915, that some phrases could be taken out of one piece and put into another without any serious damage, even aesthetically.

RS: This is true between *Socrate,* his most serious, apparently ambitious piece, and the 'Entr'acte cinématographique' from *Relâche,* which is a little bit of movie music he wrote for René Clair's film *Entr'acte,* the first use of film, I believe, in a ballet. There are sections there which are very close and are practically interchangeable. In fact the whole idea of repetition as a portion of furniture music and of movie music is something very central to all this.

AG: Why should Satie continue to puzzle and disturb some people when the likes of Alfred Jarry, Marcel Duchamp, and many others like them have been embraced by the critical fraternity with relative ease? Why is it that the comic spirit has never really been allowed to penetrate freely the musical arts, while even an outrageous brand of humour has long been acceptable in literature, painting, theatre, for example?

RS: This could be an economic thing, couldn't it? A musician—unless, as Satie has, he can survive as a literary type, a man whose works are read without having to be performed—is in a bit of a bind. He has to be able to put together some musicians and an audience in order to survive. Neither the writer nor the painter has to do that.

JC: And Satie's music in performance has never seemed—say, to a German-controlled concert-giving organisation—to be sufficiently heavy.

RS: And we don't have the performers who know how to do it. Rare is the performer who has the wit.

JC: And most soloists have wished to appear skilful in public, and for that they needed to play difficult pieces, and for the most part Satie's pieces seem too simple.

AG: It seems to me a good part of the explanation is simply the fact that the German hegemony had been so complete in the last two centuries that we have inherited a very Germanic view of music.

JC: But we're getting free of it.

RS: Satie has, of course, survived as a literary type. It's odd, but I think that, were it not for the fact that he had written as much as he had, he might very well have succumbed and practically disappeared. But since he does have an appeal through the amazing fact that not only was he active in the nineties but was also a kind of godfather and master of dada in the twenties, we think of him as a person who is at home as much with the written word as with musical sounds. He seems so much the perfect expression of the magical city of Paris in an era when it was at its best, between 1885 and the early 1920s. This is exactly the time during which he was active, during which he had two complete careers: one as a kind of anti-impressionist trying to be the conscience of Debussy and the discoverer of Ravel, and then he went underground and came out about 15 years later, and people thought they would discover the old man who had lived all these times ago, and on the contrary he was a completely new figure, had remade himself, and was more at home in the twenties than many of the youngsters who were all around him.

AG: John, there are many parallels, I think, between you and Satie, and perhaps we could explore a few of them. One of Virgil Thomson's statements strikes me as being particularly apt. He said: 'Of all the influential composers of our time, an influence even his detractors cannot deny him, Satie is the only one whose works can be enjoyed and appreciated without any knowledge of the history of music.'[8] Now perhaps Thomson would not appreciate my taking liberties with his statement, but it strikes me that this is particularly applicable to you.

JC: Well, I must say I'd be happy if it were. I'm not familiar with that statement of Virgil Thomson's, but I like it. And I think that spirit of breaking with the past . . .

RS: . . . but if you break with the past you have to know what the past is; he's saying that it isn't even a break with the past, isn't he? If you don't have to know the history of music, you're unaware of breaks.

JC: Satie himself had a feeling that in his early music he was not sufficiently educated, that he hadn't sufficiently made a connection with the past, isn't that true?

RS: Yes. I think that's why he went back to school—and found it really wasn't necessary. There's a period in there where I think he is testing himself or testing the history of music, perhaps, to see if he can bring himself into another relationship to it. But he dropped it quite fast even though, in good faith, I guess, he worked on his fugues and voice-leading, and all the other things.

AG: John, there's another area here that intrigues me

and I'd like to get your view of it. In 1963, from 6 p.m. September 9 to 12.40 p.m. September 10 . . .

JC: . . . this sounds like Watergate . . .

AG: . . . you made avant-garde history by presenting, with a team of ten pianists working in shifts, the world première of Satie's *Vexations,* which, as you've noted already, is a rather innocuous series of 36 diminished and augmented chords which the composer directs to be repeated 840 times. The performance lasted 18 hours and 40 minutes and was covered, I believe, by a team of eight critics from the *New York Times.*[9] Now Darius Milhaud, who was, as you know, intimately acquainted with Satie in the 1920s, has taken exception to this performance. He suggested that Satie would not have approved of such a caper, that his essential *pudeur,* or modesty, would not have allowed it. How would you react to Milhaud's criticism?

JC: I think that the piece was a perfectly serious piece which the French, including Milhaud, had not taken seriously. I first found it in a drawer at Henri Sauguet's; he brought it out as a joke on Satie's part which he claimed that Satie himself had not taken seriously. But if you just look at the manuscript of the *Vexations* you see how beautifully it was written. It was written no less beautifully than anything else he wrote. Curiously enough, the textual remarks in connection with the *Vexations* are not humorous; they are in the spirit of Zen Buddhism. It says at the beginning of the piece not to play it until you have put yourself in a state of interior immobility, and it very clearly says that it is to be done 840 times. Satie had a concern for inactivity and for repetition far beyond, say, even Andy Warhol, not only in terms of time but in terms of extent of activity.

RS: This is one of the things to which I would genuinely apply the term 'consciousness expansion'. It is an absolute act of concentration upon a single entity.

JC: There was not the true connection between Milhaud (and Les Six) and Satie that we have automatically taken for granted. I think they were all quite different from Satie, and I don't think they really understood much Satie.

AG: John, it seems to me that Satie's *Vexations* and your 'silent' piece, or so-called silent piece, *4'33"*, achieve much the same effect . . .

JC: . . . except that one is very short and one is very long.

AG: True. The effect is achieved, perhaps, by almost opposite means, but it is nevertheless much the same. After the first performance of *Vexations* in New York you noted, and I quote, that 'something had been set in motion that went far beyond what any of us had anticipated'.[10] What exactly did you mean by that statement?

JC: If you know a piece of music, as we did, and you're going to do it 840 times, and you know that you've planned to do that, and you're committed to do it, there's a tendency to think that you have had the experience before it has taken place. And I think that this idea is basic, is it not, to what is called conceptual art?

RS: Yes, except it doesn't even have to take place.

JC: Right. I have often been connected with conceptual art because of my interest in such things as playing Satie's *Vexations.* But I feel very different. I think that the experience over the 18 hours and 40 minutes of those repetitions was very different from the thought of them, or the realisation that they were going to happen. For them to actually happen, to actually live through it, was a different thing. What happened was that we were very tired, naturally, after that length of time and I drove back to the country—I lived here at Stony Point but in another place—and I slept I think for, not 18 hours and 40 minutes, but I slept for, say 10 hours and 15 minutes. I slept an unusually long period of time, and when I woke up, I felt different than I had ever felt before. And furthermore, the environment that I looked out upon looked unfamiliar even though I had been living there. In other words, I had changed and the world had changed, and that's what I meant by that statement. It wasn't an experience that I alone had, but other people who had been in it wrote to me or called me up and said that they had had the same experience.

AG: And this is very similar to the reactions you have gotten to *4'33"*, even though the time span is so much smaller.

JC: Yes.

RS: Well now John we may be way out over our heads. A few moments ago we were talking about 'furniture music', an aesthetic which permits us to think of music as something which can fade into the background, be there like the flowers sitting in the pot over there at which we cast an occasional eye on to, or the hammock, or the trees and the leaves around us. Now we're talking about a kind of music diametrically opposed to that, in the form of a spiritual exercise which requires total concentration . . .

JC: . . . and a change of mind . . .

RS: . . . a dedication of one's entire being to the performance which is in progress or about to take place. You're quite right in saying that this is the opposite of conceptual art; it is the performance as a spiritual crisis, like St Ignatius Loyola who talked about prayer or telling beads. The act of telling beads could either be a trivial act, a kind of 'furniture' act, or it could be a profound conversion of one's self. But the questions are: Are we talking about two quite different sides of Satie's music—the 'furniture' and the 'meditative'—or do they meet somewhere?

JC: They meet.

RS: I prefer to think of their meeting, but we can't always assume that just because we want them to meet they do. I think it has to do with something like telling one's beads or rubbing stones, which is both a totally ridiculous and trivial thing, but also the very mechanical, automatic process which gives you access to something great.

JC: And which involves devotion, yes.

AG: The *Vexations* in its complete, or 18 hour, version, suggests another important aspect of Satie's contemporaneity, that is, the role of boredom. I'd like to refer to a statement in your book, Roger, where you say that Satie challenges us not to be impressed but to be bored.[11] I wonder if you would comment on this?

RS: Well, we've been talking about it. Everything we've said in the last few minutes has to do precisely with this. When do you cross the threshold between boredom and a total overhaul of one's consciousness? You don't know when. Satie himself commented perpetually on boredom. He said experience is a form of paralysis; boredom is something we are obsessed with. He speaks of the bourgeois being obsessed with

boredom. But it is something which could be a friend and an ally if we're not afraid of it. And again I think all of these things—boredom, experience, silence—are very tentative means of approaching this critical point, almost in the physical sense that the physicist would use, the critical point where something changes state. Boredom is one way of doing it. When you play the *Vexations* over and over again your first reaction obviously is to be bored. But if you do it long enough it becomes a highly refined thing. It is in fact highly subtle variation, and our eternal fear of boredom is probably very closely related to our fear of age. And here is where Satie fulfils both of these: he was able to conquer the myth of age and be at an old age as youthful as anyone.

AG: Do you think that it would be reasonable to view Satie's concept of boredom—a piece like *Vexations*, for example—as an aspect of the avant garde in the sense that it was an antagonistic act? That is to say, the most outrageous thing you can do is bore your audience. This is the supreme insult.

RS: Yes. I'd accept that fairly quickly. It's not the only way. But it is a much more subtle way than straight scandal, than undressing in public, or dirty words, or any number of other quite obvious ways of *épater le bourgeois*. It is much more subtle and outrageous simply to bore them and still do it in the name of something called music.

JC: It apparently has to do with the sale of tickets. People think that if they've bought a ticket they must not be bored. I think, though, that we now have an audience that doesn't sit in rows, that sits on the floor or wherever, that is prepared to stay for a long time and to have quite a different experience from an exciting one. You know of Tantric Buddhism where the discipline is to quiet the mind in a situation where the mind would normally not be quiet, such as in the act of making love or sitting cross-legged on top of a corpse? What we might propose as a sequel to the Satie discipline is being bored while listening to Beethoven.

RS: There is another element here—and this is a pet theory of mine—that the source of this in Satie, as it may have been in quite different terms in Wordsworth or Rimbaud, is the act of walking. Satie walked endlessly across Paris. After he moved to the outskirts he lived six miles from his place of work and usually walked both ways each day. Someone calculated that Wordsworth in his lifetime walked 24,000 good English miles. He walked everywhere. He never took a horse. And Rimbaud walked everywhere; Vachel Lindsey, Mayakovsky, and there are many other instances. These are all poets or musicians who composed while putting one foot in front of the other in a fairly boring, if you want, physical act, which nevertheless has its relationship to the heart-beat and the universe.

JC: We come back to Thoreau again.

RS: Thoreau, too. I think that the source of Satie's sense of musical beat—the possibility of variation within repetition, the effect of boredom upon the organism—may be this endless amount of walking back and forth across the same landscape day after day, and finally taking it all in, which is basically what Thoreau did: the total observation of a very limited and narrow environment.

AG: Roger, there's one last question I would like to put to you. I think you will agree that 'the banquet years', that marvellous explosion of avant-garde activity at the turn of the century, could only have happened in France. What was it about the intellectual climate of France in the period leading up to the First War that made this possible?

RS: That's, I suppose, a question of cultural history and all kinds of things. My answer to that is not too far from some of the things that we've said. Somehow for those years, and it's still present but diminished, I think the populace of Paris, and particularly its artists, achieved a sense of what I call theatricality. They sensed themselves present at what seemed to be the centre of a most exciting cultural activity. They were willing to take this responsibility upon themselves. And they refused no outsiders: it was the most open-armed situation. Anyone who came from America, from Spain, Germany, and elsewhere was welcomed. There wasn't a sense of it all having to belong to a single culture. And for reasons I can't explain, things were popping in painting, from impressionism on down to cubism, in literature from symbolism to Rimbaud to what eventually became everything we know of as modernism. And in music there was the need to explode the Wagnerian domination of French music. It's a coincidence that these things should come from many directions and meet on the platform that was called Paris. The world was much smaller then, something we tend to forget. And in any particular discipline almost everybody knew everyone else, something which is not even true any longer in New York, where there are all kinds of competing groups.

JC: Nor in Paris now.

RS: And in Paris, too.

JC: Because of the one-way streets, perhaps.

RS: Or just the automobiles. But when you had to walk—again I'll bring this in—sit in the café, and you weren't able to go off for weekends or go away for the summer, as many people weren't able to do, then the arena was there and it was necessary to perform simply in being yourself day in and day out. Beyond that I have no explanation, except to say that the individuals came along who could fulfil it.

AG: One of Jean Cocteau's characteristic statements I find rather appropriate in this respect; he refers to France's inimitable secret weapon as her tradition of anarchy.[12]

JC: That I like.

RS: Yes. Anarchism was very close to it all. The bombs were going off all over throughout this.[13]

JC: And then we come back to Thoreau: 'The best form of government is no government at all.'

[1] 'Ne vous vengez pas sur votre instrument . . . Les instruments subissent souvent . . . de bien mauvais traitements . . . *On les bats* . . . J'ai connu des enfants qui prenaient plaisir . . . à marcher sur les pieds de leur piano . . . D'autres . . . ne replacent leur violon . . . dans sa boîte . . . Alors, . . . la pauvre bête . . . prend froid . . . & s'enrhume . . . *Ce n'est pas beau* . . . Non . . . Quelques-uns . . . versent du tabac à priser dans leur trombone—ce qui est très désagréable . . . *pour l'instrument* . . . En soufflant, . . . ils projettent cette irritante poussière . . . dans la figure . . . de leur voisin, . . . lequel éternue & crache . . . pendant plus d'une demi-heure . . . *Pouah!* . . . Les exercices se font le matin, . . . après le petit déjeuner . . . Il faut être très propre . . . S'être bien mouché . . . Ne pas se mettre au travail avec les doigts pleins de confiture . . . Non plus qu'il ne faut pas se déranger—toutes les cinq minutes—pour aller chercher des bonbons, . . . du nougat, . . . du sucre d'orge, . . . des biscuits, . . . du

chocolat, . . . ou autres choses du même genre'. From a lecture by Satie called 'Les enfants musiciens', read in Paris on 17 February 1921 at a 'Soirée pour les jeunes' organised by Mme Jeanne Alvin at the Salle de l'Étoile, 17 rue Chateaubriand; published in *Erik Satie, Écrits,* ed. Ornella Volta (Paris: Éditions Champ Libre, rev. 2/1981), pp.81-7. The translation given here was extemporised by Roger Shattuck on the occasion of the conversation.

[2] See Roger Shattuck, *Proust* (London: Fontana, 1974).

[3] Further on this point see Rollo H. Myers, 'A Music Critic in Paris in the Nineteen-Twenties: Some Personal Recollections', *Musical Quarterly,* vol.63 (1977), pp.537ff.

[4] Satie affixed the following note to the score of *Heures séculaires et instantanées* (1914): 'A quiconque: Je défends de lire, à haute voix, le texte, durant le temps de l'exécution musicale. Tout manquement à cette observation entraînerait ma juste indignation contre l'outrecuidant. Il ne sera accordé aucun passe-droit.' (To whomsoever: I forbid the reading of the text out loud during the performance of the music. Failure to conform with these instructions will cause the transgressor to incur my just indignation. Special dispensation will be granted to no one.)

[5] Satie himself originated the term 'musique d'ameublement' (furniture or furnishing music). The painter Fernand Léger, who often accompanied Satie on his long walks across Paris to his suburban lodgings in Arcueil, recalled a luncheon meeting with the composer and some of his friends during which the resident orchestra became so boisterously loud that the diners were forced to vacate the premises, whereupon Satie turned to Léger and said: 'There's a need to create furnishing music, that is to say, a music which would be a part of the surrounding noises and which would take them into account. I imagine it to be melodious, softening the clatter of knives and forks without dominating them, without imposing itself. It would fill up the awkward silences that occasionally descend on guests. It would spare them the usual banalities. Moreover, it would neutralise the street noises that tactlessly force themselves into the picture.' (Il y a tout de même à réaliser une musique d'ameublement, c'est-à-dire une musique qui ferait partie des bruits ambiants, qui en tiendrait compte. Je la suppose mélodieuse, elle adoucirait le bruit des couteaux, des fourchettes sans les dominer, sans s'imposer. Elle meublerait les silences pesants parfois entre les convives. Elle leur épargnerait les banalités courantes. Elle neutraliserait en même temps les bruits de la rue qui entrent dans le jeu sans discrétion. Fernand Léger, 'Satie inconnu', *La revue musicale,* no.214 (1952), p.137)

[6] Cage is inconsistent on the subject of muzak: 'If I liked muzak, which I also don't like, the world would become more open to me. I intend to work on it.' (Quotation from an article of 1966, reprinted in Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *John Cage* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p.51) But in a letter to Paul Henry Lang in 1956 he wrote: 'having written radio music has enabled me to accept . . . the television, radio, and Muzak [sounds], which nearly constantly and everywhere offer themselves. Formerly, for me, they were a source of irritation. Now, they are just as lively as ever, but I have changed. I am more and more realizing, that is to say, that I have ears and can hear.' (Kostelanetz, p.118)

[7] Like most of Satie's music, *Vexations* dispenses with barlines. Cage is referring to the fact that the 13-beat theme is heard altogether four times, with the interpolation of the cantus firmus between its two harmonised versions (see Example 4 in Alan Gillmor, 'Satie, Cage, and the New Asceticism', also in this issue).

[8] Virgil Thomson, 'French Music Here', *Music Reviewed: 1940-1954* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p.33.

[9] See 'Satie's "Vexations" Played 840 Times by Relay Team', *New York Times* (11 September 1963), pp.45, 48. The performers were: Viola Farber, Robert Wood, Mac Rae Cook, John Cale, John Cage, Christian Wolff, David Del Tredici, David Tudor, Philip Corner, and James Tenney, with brief appearances by Joshua Rifkin and *New York Times* critic Howard Klein who stepped in for a missing pianist between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Tuesday 10 September. The marathon performance was covered by the following critics: Harold C. Schonberg, Richard F. Shepard, Raymond Ericson, Brian O'Doherty, Sam Zolotow, Howard Klein, Marjorie Rubin, and one anonymous reviewer who entered the hall at 4 a.m. on Tuesday 10 September and promptly fell asleep. 'I couldn't help it', he said when his relief man woke him. 'The music was positively Zen.'

[10] Quoted in Calvin Tomkins, *The Bride and the Bachelors: the Heretical Courtship in Modern Art* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), p.104.

[11] Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: the Origins of the Avant-Garde in France 1885 to World War I* (New York: Vintage Books, rev. 2/1968), p.185.

[12] 'If other nations ask France what her armaments are she can reply: "I have none. I have a secret weapon." If asked what that is, she will say that one does not reveal a secret weapon. If they insist, she'll lose nothing by showing her secret because it is inimitable. It is her tradition of anarchy.' Jean Cocteau, *Beauty and the Beast: Diary of a Film,* trans. Ronald Duncan (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), p.126.

[13] Shattuck is speaking of the years 1885-1914, what he calls 'the banquet years', and he is referring to the fact that anarchist activity in Paris during that period was particularly rampant, with assassinations and bombings almost daily occurrences.

John Cage at 70

Ian Mitchell

Cage Celebrations, New York

Wall-to-Wall John Cage and Friends: a Seventieth Birthday Tribute, Symphony Space, New York City, 13 March 1982

I must say I find an anniversary concert a slightly bizarre idea. One day you are not worth a celebration, the next you are. Often these jamborees seem to be an excuse for someone to take advantage of someone else. There are certainly plenty of them about these days and the 'coming of age' seems to get younger all the time; on the other hand I am sometimes unsure whether I am at a memorial or an anniversary concert. There was no doubt, however, that John Cage was (and is) still very much with us at Symphony Space on Saturday 13 March. Symphony Space, a converted ice-rink–cinema at 95th and Broadway—now a lively community arts centre which occasionally spreads its wings to embrace celebrities and events that are far from local—leapt in to host the first of the many world-wide celebrations of Cage's 70th year (his actual birthday is 5 September).

The event was organised by Allan Miller, one of Symphony Space's two artistic directors, and Vivian Perlis, a writer and long-time champion of new American music. Mr Miller was evidently eager to avoid the connotations of a memorial for Cage. 'This is really a celebration not a tribute or a retrospective', he said. 'It's just a big party, that's all.' It started at 11 a.m. and was scheduled to finish at midnight, but by 6 p.m. it was about two hours behind. The guest list for the party included composers, both dead and alive, connected in some way with Cage—as teacher, colleague, disciple, or, in some cases, very vague associate. Included on it were Brown, Cardew, Cowell, Curran, Drummond, Feldman, Harrison, Johnson, Kosugi, Lucier, Partch, Satie, Schoenberg, Tudor, and Wolff; the poets Clark Coolidge and Jackson Mac Low were also invited, and the performers ranged from Cunningham to present-day students. All participants were evidently chosen from a list supplied by Cage.

There were 26 of Cage's works, the earliest being the Clarinet Sonata of 1933, played by Virgil Blackwell, and the most recent *49 Waltzes for the Five Boroughs,* played by Yvar Mikhashoff,. and *Inlets,* music for conch shells (both 1977). 20 of the works were written before 1961, the other six were from the seventies. No large-scale collage works or orchestral pieces were included, as, it was claimed, the length and cost were out of the question for the Symphony Space schedule and budget. Considering that Morton Feldman's violin piece *For John Cage,* premièred here, was almost an hour long, and all artists gave their services, I am a little sceptical about those reasons. However, there was a fair cross-section of Cage's output, and what I heard—about five hours' worth—was well performed.

There were what could be called 'uptown' as well as 'downtown' performers. Ursula Oppens, for instance, pretty much the former, played Christian Wolff's piano piece *Hay una mujer desaparacida* (1979), a most moving piece superbly performed called *For Cornelius* (1982) by the now Rome-based American Alvin Curran, and three of Cardew's piano works of the seventies—*Revolution is the Main Trend in the World Today* (1974), *Father Murphy* (1973), and *Bethanien Song* (1974). (Many people seemed to be unaware of Cardew's death, and John Rockwell's preview in the *New York Times* announced his participation in the day's events.) Oppens (on cello this time) joined others in a performance of Wolff's *Burdocks* (1970-71), directed by the composer; her desire in this piece to crawl round the floor on all fours mystified many. Later she teamed up with another establishment pianist, Paul Jacobs, in Satie's *Trois morceaux en forme de poire,* the earliest pieces presented. Jacobs also played Schoenberg's *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke* op.19 and Cage's *Credo in US* (1942). Some of Cage's early rhythmic studies—*Living Room Music* (1940), *Double Music* (1941) in collaboration with Lou Harrison, and *Third Construction* (1941)—along with Cowell's *Pulse* (1939), were given excellent performances, mostly by the New Music Consort, a group of present or recent students, whose commitment and skill could not be doubted but whose self-conscious rhythmic jigging was most annoying and distracting (to me) yet succeeded in bringing the house down. Dean Drummond brought along his own invention, the zoomoozophone, a microtonally tuned kind of vibraphone, to play Partch's *Two Studies on Ancient Greek Scales,* with flute (1946), and his own *Copégoro* (1978).

Other items included three of Tom Johnson's inconsequential theatre pieces; Alvin Lucier's *Sferics* (1971) for large-loop antennae, tape, and audio playback system; Cunningham's dancers in *Changing Steps* (1973), danced to *Cartridge Music* (1960); Cunningham himself in *Solo* (1973) to *Child of Tree* (1975); *4'33"* (1952) performed by David Tudor; *Six Melodies* for violin and piano (1950); *Water Music* (1952); *Speech* (1955); and part of the mammoth *Études australes* (1974-5), sadly not played by the dedicatee Grete Sultan who has worked so devotedly on the whole collection with Cage, but by Joseph Kubera (evidently a pupil persuaded Sultan that this kind of affair was not for her).

And so it went on . . . I popped out for a 'rest', some food and to make a couple of phone calls (as one must at least every two hours in New York) to find on my return about 800 people queuing round the block; I never managed to get back in. The organisers in fact had been pleading throughout the day with people inside to leave so as to allow others the opportunity to hear something. I even met someone who had camped out all night. There was certainly plenty of interest shown by the public, and the organisation of the occasion was first class. Furthermore WNYC broadcast a large proportion of the day's events (BBC please note—where were you at Britain's only Cage celebrations?).

Kimiko Shimoda

Cage and Zen

Cage at 70: the Almeida Theatre Cage Festival, St James's Church, Chillingworth Road, London N7, 28-30 May 1982

The presence of John Cage throughout a three-day festival of his music, organised by the Almeida Theatre in honour of his 70th birthday, was a rare and exciting occasion for British audiences, and transformed many of our perceptions of Cage's philosophy and music. Those of us who went with an impression, based on anecdotes concerning such notorious compositions as the silent piece *4'33"*, of Cage as a composer who likes to outrage knowing critics and enjoys composing deliberately awkward pieces were surprised and charmed to see this gentle anarchist in person.

The festival events were not mounted only for the enjoyment of those who were able to attend them live: they will also feature in the highly ambitious 'Composer' series to be shown on Channel 4 television in 1983. John Cage has visited Britain a few times previously, giving lectures and performances, but a festival of this scale—three days devoted almost entirely to his music—has not been held in this country before, despite the vast influence on contemporary music of Cage's work. Excellent organisation and publicity attracted capacity audiences from all over London to the unfamiliar venue of St James's Church, off the lorry-ridden Holloway Road. Apart from a special performance on 29 May of Cardew's *Treatise* (1963-7) as a tribute to the composer, who was killed in a road accident last December, the entire programme consisted of works by Cage, with an interview by Keith Potter and Stephen Montague (29 May) and an hour-long lecture called 'The Composer Talks' (30 May). The performers were mainly British musicians and composers.

It was clear from the interview that Cage regards his silent composition *4'33"* (1952) not as a joke but as his most important piece, and one that marked for him a radical departure from what had preceded it. This interview, his talk, and above all his responses to each of the pieces performed, convinced many of us that Cage has a genuine deep belief in such statements as 'the most important piece is my silent piece' and 'purposelessness is the real purpose of my music'. Cage's preoccupation with concepts such as chance, indeterminacy, and purposelessness is a natural outcome of his lifelong interest in Oriental thought, especially Zen Buddhism, which he first encountered through Daisetz T. Suzuki's lectures at Columbia University in the 1940s. His deep commitment to Zen and its significance in his music make it appropriate for me to attempt some exposition of aspects of Japanese culture to which his work is related.

A number of 20th-century composers, Stravinsky for example, have expressed the view that striving for self-expression can harm creativity. Works of art are often explained as the artist's assertion of his individuality, as an extension of his ego crystallised in a painting or a musical composition. The insistence on personal expression at all costs can result in the exploitation of art and its use as a vehicle for the artist's own egotism. Cage has long been outspokenly opposed to the subjugation of an artist to his own ego, and he goes much further in rejecting harmony, thematic development, the arousal of emotion (likes and dislikes), and the kind of formal structure that characterises the great tradition of Western music.

In Japan an emphasis on the individual artist has never been so dominant. Traditionally works of representational and musical art (though not prose and poetry) are attributed to a group of people, the members of which are not individually mentioned; the work is considered to be the outcome of a collaboration. This tradition is supported by the philosophical and spiritual background: Zen Buddhism has exercised a formative influence, both directly and indirectly, on Japanese culture and has created an entirely different artistic climate from the one developed in the West.

Cage has adopted a concept of music as a dynamic process, whether it is the product of chance operation or design. He says:

> One may give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind and set about discovering means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments.[1]

> The sounds were just sounds, this gave people hearing them the chance to be people, centred within themselves where they actually are, not off artificially at a distance as they are accustomed to be, trying to figure out what is being said by some artist by means of sounds.[2]

> The purpose of this purposeless music would be achieved if people learned to listen, so that when they listened they might discover that they preferred the sounds of everyday life to the ones they would presently hear in the music programme; that was alright as far as I was concerned.

The sounds of everyday life, especially those associated with nature, have long been objects of aesthetic appreciation in Japan, even though they have not been taken out of context and played in an auditorium. The Japanese have been ingeniously inventive in creating 'instruments' that are operated by natural forces, such as wind-bells and -chimes and the 'shishi-odoshi'. This device, which is placed in traditional Japanese gardens close enough to the house to be heard, is a hollow upright bamboo tube with a weighted base, pivoted below its centre, into which water drips from a stream; when it is almost full it suddenly topples over and strikes a rock, giving an echoing 'thwack', and then, the water having run out, it swings upright again and the whole process begins anew. Temple gardens are sometimes so designed as to amplify the sounds of wind and rain to give the listener, sitting quietly inside, the impression of the rushing of a mountain stream. Tuning in to the sounds of nature is so much a part of the Japanese way of life that the boundary between such sounds and 'music' does not seem to exist as it does in the West.

Zen has also profoundly influenced traditional musical training in Japan. At its most basic this consists of contrasting silence and sound, since it is felt that sounds can be truly appreciated only in juxtaposition with silence. The concept of *ma* (literally, 'a gap', but used in musical terminology to mean a span of time where there is no sound—silence) has long been the key element in Japanese music. Indeed, the role of silence in music making is as familiar a concept as the incorporation into traditional garden design of the 'passive' space outside the garden—the distant landscape, the mountains, and the sky. By creating a certain sound one suddenly becomes aware of the silence; by creating a design in a garden one realises that it is part of the entire environment. Similarly the whole of music may

become suddenly apparent from a single musical gesture. The Japanese tendency 'not to state everything' derives from the Zen-inspired tradition of 'not explaining the whole but just leaving things open' so that we become aware of the rest.

It is no accident that Cage has been profoundly affected by such a tradition. For someone who has intuitive sensitivity to all forms of sound, as well as silence, it must have been a very significant experience to encounter not only such a culture but, more important, a body of spiritual knowledge that encompasses 'silence' at the same level as sound.

But Cage did not unquestioningly adopt Zen attitudes to art and daily life, and he maintains an individual approach particularly in the way he uses time. He has been deeply preoccupied with the structuring of time—that is, absolute (physical) rather than relative (musical) time—as the essential form-building element in music. Traditional musical training in Japan takes no account of mechanical time; the Western practice of writing down music and specifying the duration of each note, which has found a place in some areas of Japanese music making, would be considered useless by traditionalists, who believe that such matters can be decided only intuitively and that intuition must be fostered within the relationship between master and apprentice. It is quite clear that Cage is not trying to compose music according to the criteria that a master teaches to his apprentice, nor according to the Zen concept that the revelation of a part implies the whole.

Zen teaching has many complex aspects and, depending on one's degree of commitment, it may exercise influence on many levels. For the average Japanese, Zen is understood first and foremost within the context of daily life, where it characteristically governs the way in which he deals with time and space. There are others who are more seriously involved, and some who devote their lives solely to the spiritual path. Zen teaches that the goal of the dedicated follower should be to grasp the whole truth by direct realisation, without any intermediaries; it is pure and simple. It seems to me that this is what Cage attempts to achieve through sound: he is not trying to make Zen-inspired music but to live Zen; the sounds he employs are the vehicle for direct realisation.

I shall now return to the Almeida Festival and try to trace some parallels between Cage's preoccupation with Zen and the works performed there.

The recent piece *Roaratorio* (1979), loosely based on James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake,* received its UK première on the first day of the festival. It was perhaps the most complex work performed, both musically and conceptually, for it combines several ideas—chance, indeterminacy, purposelessness—that are found individually in earlier works. Irish musicians, including members of the Chieftains folk group, sang and played flute, fiddle, *bodhrán* (frame drum), and pipes, while an impressive 16-channel playback system produced a tapestry of the everyday sounds mentioned in *Finnegans Wake*. Cage read one of his own chance-derived texts from the book, and the musicians contributed when and as they pleased, the only restriction being that each had to perform for a total of 20 minutes. At the first hearing I was rather taken by surprise: the various familiar sounds on the tape, overlaid with Irish folk-tunes, gave an authentically ethnic impression which was not at all what I had previously associated with Cage's music. But by the third performance (the work was repeated at evening concerts on the second and third days), after hours of austere electronic sounds, the breath of the Irish countryside was thoroughly relaxing and soothing; every array of sound became progressively more interesting and the work came to seem almost joyous.

Inlets (1977) was the only other piece performed on the first day of the festival. This is a piece for three large and three small conch shells; the shells contain water and are tilted at random so that when amplified they produce gentle gurgling sounds. The work shows with particular clarity the special meaning of 'randomness' for Cage, in many ways a concept closely akin to the Zen idea of non-involvement of the self or ego. In his talk Cage described *Inlets* as a form of 'improvisation based on chance'. Improvisation in the usual sense is something that Cage does not allow when his works are being played, since it reflects the 'likes and dislikes' or the emotions of the performers, which he wishes to exclude as far as possible. He seems, however, quite content with improvisation on the conch shells, for the sounds they produce are so unpredictable that they cannot be determined by the performers' intentions; improvisation thus comes to play the same role as chance.

Among the many works performed, those in the concert entitled 'Tape Music' on the final day seemed to contain some of the fundamental concepts in a relatively pure form. It goes without saying that *Fontana Mix* (1958-9) and *Cartridge Music* (1960) had an enormous influence on subsequent developments in experimental music. The score of the first consists of a set of ten transparent sheets containing drawings, each having six differentiated curved lines on a graph which presents a time unit. When one is superimposed on another they offer numerous ways of producing patterns of possibilities for any one or a number of performers to realise on tape. At the time it was composed *Fontana Mix* was the first tape work ever made whose outcome could not be foreseen. Such music allows chance to operate in every conceivable way, so that each realisation is different. The version I had heard previously used human voices; in the Almeida version electronic feedback and howling noises often exceeded the limits of the bearable. However, this seems to be the perfect realisation of Cage's desire to create 'indeterminate music' through discontinuous works in which random events unfold within a fixed time-span and a true sense of purposelessness is achieved.

The last work in this programme, *Cartridge Music,* was given a highly amplified live-electronic performance, in which four 'players' generated scraping and screeching sounds by manipulating chairs and tables to which contact microphones had been attached. The level of amplification seemed to change randomly. To tell the truth I found the serious expression of the performers far more interesting than the sounds they were creating, and perhaps this is not, after all, an attitude to which Cage would object. In each of his pieces he offers both audience and performers an opportunity to become aware, to acquiesce in a particular realisation that reaches beyond the sounds themselves to encompass everything both within and outside the performance; this extends to a point at which it ceases to be interesting to ask whether the music is interesting or not.

[1] Quoted from Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music* (London: J.M. Dent, 2/1980), p.502.

[2] This and other quotations not otherwise accounted for are taken from the interview and talk given by Cage during the festival.

Stephen Montague

Cage Interview

John Cage is one of the most influential and important creative artists to have emerged this century. On 5 September Cage was 70 years old. The following material is taken from interviews by Stephen Montague with the composer on 18 March 1982 at Cage's loft in Greenwich Village, New York, and during the Almeida Festival, London, 28-30 May 1982.

STEPHEN MONTAGUE: You are 70 years old in September. What are the best and the worst things about being your age? What are some of your reflections?

JOHN CAGE: Well, I have a friend named Doris Dennison who is 74 and whose 96-year-old mother lives alone in Oregon and is still taking care of herself. Doris called her one day and asked how she was. Mrs Dennison said: 'Oh, I'm fine, it's just that I don't have the energy I had when I was in my 70s.'

My attitude toward old age is one of gratitude for each day. Poor Henry David Thoreau died at age 44. You know he had the habit of walking through the streets of Concord in the dead of winter without any clothes on, which must certainly have disturbed the local citizens no end. Later there was a lady who each year would put flowers on Emerson's grave, and mutter as she would pass Thoreau's: 'And none for you, you dirty little atheist!' Anyway, as I get older and begin to be almost twice as old as Thoreau, I am naturally grateful for all this time. It strikes me that since there's obviously a shorter length of time left than I've already had, I'd better hurry up and be interested in whatever I can. There's no fooling around possible. No silliness. So where I used to spend so much of my time hunting mushrooms, I've recently become interested in indoor gardening. I now tend to spread myself thinner and thinner. I'm always looking for new ways of using my energy, but meanwhile continuing the other activities.

About five or six years ago I was invited to make etchings at the Crown Point Press in California. I accepted immediately, even though I didn't know how to make them, because about 20 years before I was invited to trek in the Himalayas and didn't. I later discovered that the walk was going to be on elephants with servants, and I've always regretted that missed opportunity. I thought I was too busy. I am now multiplying my interests because it is my last chance. I don't know what will turn up next. The doctor told me at my age anything can happen. He was right. I got rid of arthritis by following a macrobiotic diet. Work is now taking on the aspect of play, and the older I get, the more things I find myself interested in doing. In my talk during the Almeida Festival I said: 'If you don't have enough time to accomplish something, consider the work finished once it's begun. It then resembles the Venus da Milo which manages quite well without an arm.'

SM: Do you have any regrets, anything you might have done differently as you review your 70 years?

JC: You mean how would I recreate the past? Well, I said long ago that if I were to live my life over again, I would be a botanist rather than an artist. At that time the botanist Alexander Smith asked me why. And I said: 'To avoid the jealousies that plague the arts. Because people think of art so often as self-expression.' (I don't, but so many people do.) 'And therefore, if their work is not receiving what they consider proper attention, they then feel unhappy about it and get offended.' One of my teachers, Adolf Weiss, got very angry at me simply because I became famous. He was sure I was, in some way, being dishonest, because he had been honest all his life and he'd never become famous; so he was sure I was doing something wrong and evil. But when I said to Alexander Smith that I would like to change my life by being a botanist, he said that showed how little I knew about botany. Then later in the conversation I mentioned some other botanist, and he said: 'Don't mention his name in my house!' So I think that all human activities are characterised in their unhappy forms by selfishness.

SM: Earning a living as a composer in any era has traditionally been difficult. How old were you when you could really say you were earning a living just as a composer?

JC: I began to make money not from actually writing music, but from lecturing, concerts, and all such things—what you might call the paraphernalia of music—not until I was 50. But then I did. Now I could get along without giving any concerts if I chose to live in a poor corner of the world. My income from my past work is sufficient to live on in a very modest situation.

SM: What is your most important work?

JC: Well the most important piece is my silent piece, *4'33"*. Why? Because you don't need it in order to hear it. You have it all the time. And it can change your mind, making it open to things outside it. It is continually changing. It's never the same twice. In fact, and Thoreau knew this and it's been known traditionally in India, it is the statement that music is continuous. In India they say: 'Music is continuous, it is we who turn away.' So whenever you feel in need of a little music, all you have to do is to pay close attention to the sounds around you. I always think of my silent piece before I write the next piece.

SM: What do you do for leisure?

JC: I don't have any leisure. It's not that I have my nose to the grindstone. I enjoy my work. Nothing entertains me more than to do it. That's why I do it. So I have no need for entertainment. And my work is not really fatiguing so that I don't need to relax.

SM: This is your 70th year. The beginning of a new decade for you. Your life-style and the macrobiotic diet seem to agree with you. You're in good health and seem very fit.

JC: I'm gradually learning how to take care of myself. It has taken a long time. It seems to me that when I die, I'll be in perfect condition.

JOHN CAGE

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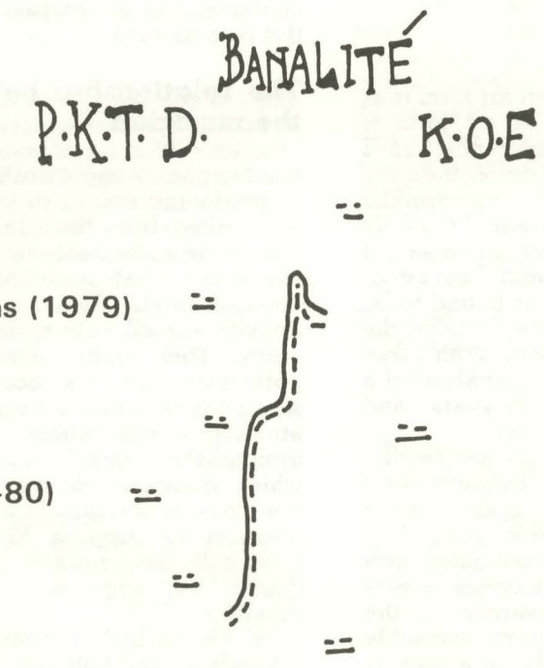

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Eddie Prévost

The Aesthetic Priority of Improvisation: a Lecture

The following is the lecture I gave as part of the Actual '81 Festival of Improvised Music at the ICA in London in August 1981. It is an interim formulation of ideas and a contribution to the continuing debate. Despite its incompleteness, I have been persuaded to publish it because of the apparent disparity between the information given and the information received: some reports bear little resemblance to what I actually said, so it is necessary to establish the truth as well as to assert the emphasis of the thoughts expressed. I have also replied to some of the points raised in the discussion that followed the lecture; these replies are printed in light face in the body of the text. As this lecture was not prepared with publication in mind it is almost devoid of bibliographical references, for which the reader's forebearance is requested. Before passing to the text of the lecture itself I would like to refute Hanna Charlton's assertion[1] that the title of my lecture is inappropriate and that I 'side-stepped the affective aspect of the music'. I can best answer Hanna and alert my readers to my general perspective by quoting from Raymond Williams:

> An essential hypothesis in the development of the idea of culture is that the art of a period is closely and necessarily related to the generally prevalent 'way of life', and further that, in consequence, aesthetic, moral, and social judgements are closely interrelated.[2]

Introduction

Locating the determining impetus of an art form is as difficult as it is necessary. When an art form is intimately involved with social experience, as I believe contemporary improvised music is, then the aesthetic enters an exacting and controversial dimension. It is imperative, however, that an understanding is sought, if only to observe how easy it is for a form to be diverted from its original course or diluted to insignificance. Assessment is bound to be elusive, especially while a form is active, because the analysis enters the life of the aesthetic. With these considerations in mind I am offering an analysis of a music to which I have devoted over 20 years—and there seems to be some playing in me yet.

As a category improvised musics do not readily lend themselves to analysis, largely because their numerous manifestations—which span many cultures—are not necessarily compatible. And while improvised music might usefully be contrasted with music more formally structured, such a comparison is not an adequate guide to the integrity of the improvisational element. No music that recognisably persists over a long period can qualify, in a precise sense, as being improvised. Continuity implies that some kind of consensus has been achieved. While it is possible to point to manifestations that resemble contemporary improvised music, for example in folk forms, tribal musics, religious chants and even in contemporary 'serious' music, these resemblances are not proof of any categorical continuity. The difficulties experienced by zoologists and botanists in establishing genus ought to be warning enough. Not all creatures that live in the sea are fish.

I intend to show that a very distinct ethic is generated by the structural basis of contemporary improvised music. (This may seem a forlorn hope, since it is thought to be a lack of structure that marks out improvised music making. My analysis will be more readily understood if the reader recognises the holistic sense I give to the word 'structure', according to which musical configurations are seen as manifestations of sociological forms.) The best general description of this ethic is socialist, because it exemplifies the ideal of full personal expression located within, and made possible by, a sympathetic collective environment. In order to illustrate the accuracy of this description I propose to contrast contemporary improvised music with the form most favoured by capitalist society and with some of the musics generated by pre-industrial social formulations. I shall show, I believe, that contemporary improvised music reflects neither the romantic utopia nor the mystical revelation but legitimate aspirations which arise as a specific and revolutionary response to the world as we find it now. I shall try to corroborate and illuminate these propositions by historical analysis and above all, I hope to demonstrate, even if by default, that contemporary improvised music needs such analysis if it is to survive.

The relationship between the music and the musician

Contemporary improvisation is a completely new way of producing music, in which the creative emphasis has shifted from the composer to the performer. It allows the individual musician a fullness of personal expression that is simply not available in other musical forms. Music is intrinsically a collective activity—as all culture by definition is a collective entity. This applies even to the solo improvising performer, for his contribution can only have significance within a conducive ambience. In effect an improvised music can only exist within a sympathetic social–musical environment, from which musicians derive strength and within which they give confidence to one another. It is not simple idealism to suppose that such a relationship is potentially more rewarding than one based either on a destructive, aggressive, competitive ethic, or on quietism.

In established Western forms the composition interposes itself between the musician and the music he produces and between him and his fellow performers. In effect the mode of musical production—the way the music is made—is determined by an interceding process in which the musician acts solely as a factotum. Depending on the availability of the skills required to execute the composition, the musician is replaceable. Here we may note something

of the fallaciousness of liberal ideology, with its distorted notion of individual freedom: the interpretative musician is 'free' only to play the music as required or to remain unemployed! Of course, the fact that few classical players would even accept that such a situation exists is an indication of the extent to which the 'free enterprise' system is characterised as the natural and right way of things. Indeed the relationship of the musician to composed music is softened by the relative scarcity of musicianship and the cultural reverence attached to the more complex forms of 'serious' music: his market value, self-esteem, and social status are some compensation for the skilled musician. But the more the music is a commodity the more the musician is likely to be alienated from what he produces.

As a musician's relationship to his product—the music—is determined by the mode of production, one would expect that a new way of playing would bring about a changed relationship to the music produced: remove the tyranny of the composition and a freer musical-social ethos should automatically arise. But no such determinism prevails, for while relationships cannot alter until there is a change in the way music is produced, it is clearly not sufficient for the mode to change in order for a new relationship to be formed. Contemporary improvised music does not automatically construct appropriate institutions to help sustain it. In this connection we should remember that in a general sense all successful modes of production build up customs and a legal framework for protection and to encourage continuity. When a new mode emerges it is subject to the customs and institutions that already exist, and these customs and institutions—like ideas generally—are quite capable of being sustained long after the factors that caused them have diminished. The pressure, therefore, is always for the new mode to accommodate itself to the existing institutional structure. Any significant change from this position inevitably acquires a political dimension.

The ownership of music

The contrast between the prevailing ideological figure in our society—namely property—which in the case of music is amply represented by the composition, and the search for a tenable alternative, which in our case is improvisation, indicates that music itself can be class based. For the composition creates a situation where there are those who own the music and those who do not. Most improvising musicians have had the experience of participating in a composed work to which they have contributed more than the composer, even if only quantitatively. The perception that this is an irrational situation indicates that the established cultural hegemony of a property-based society is not ideologically stable. There has been and must continue to be a response to this irrationality. The nature of the response will be the political dimension.

The mid-19th-century stirrings in and around New Orleans were the beginning of the most prominent example of an improvised music form to appear in a modern market society. Since then we have seen a progressive, if faltering, international development of this type of music making. From the use of simple themes and chord structures as the basis of improvisation, the music has moved (if erratically) towards more complex and more self-assertive forms until, in the past few decades, there has evolved a very strong movement of improvisation, internally free from the musical strictures and cultural constraints that encrust the institutions with which the music must inevitably have some intercourse.

Despite the external pressures, there is now a very selfconscious aesthetic which gives total priority to improvisation. Nevertheless, this predominantly collective form of music making is still subject to the customs and economic structures of established music; and these, on the mundane though crucial economic level, favour whoever has the most specific claim of ownership over the music. This institutional bias is instructive, for it shows the tenacity of ideology and how improvising musicians themselves act to perpetuate a system even when the conditons make it inappropriate and often contrary to their interests. Throughout the short history of contemporary improvised music we have seen how its precursors and hybrid forms—jazz and latterly the graphic works—have economically favoured the alleged composer and consequent owner of the music rather than the musicians who produce it. To take a very uncontroversial example: what moral or musical grounds give the tunesmith of *Body and Soul* (and his heirs!) all the performing rights and royalties of the famous Coleman Hawkins recorded version? There may be a legitimate argument that the theme and chord structure stimulated Hawkins's masterly creativity, but the rewards should surely have been commensurate with the contribution. As it was, Hawkins got nothing and was, legally and by custom, entitled to nothing.

Keith Rowe offered me an interesting observation arising out of this issue, suggesting further how prevailing ideas and conventions continue to affect behaviour even after the basis for them has diminished. Rowe noted that the composition, or even simply the style of composition, especially in jazz and aleatoric pieces, has often been used by a performer to confer an authority on his work other than that which flows naturally from his own creativity. In a sense the composition functions like a commercial franchise, allowing the musician to acquire credibility via the works of already established artists. This, of course, is the intrinsic definition of 'provincialism', which negates personal expression and promotes compliant (as opposed to creative) responses and a general ethic from which the musician cannot easily escape. A negative corollary to this situation is that the 'franchise' can often become more popular than the original article, as has been the case with much white jazz, which has exploited the vitality and creativity of the black art without adding anything. This is imperialism in music; its consequences are, of course, alien to the whole ethos of improvisation. Not that imperialism necessarily takes such a simple form. US diplomacy has not been above using the real thing—black jazz—in the service of the cold war: Ellington, Armstrong, and other blacks have been featured heavily in Voice of America broadcasts and sent off on State Department trips to woo the Third World. This displays a keenness to extol the liberating virtues of the black art. There has been none of the same kind of keenness to offer the much-vaunted Western freedoms to blacks back at home!

A shift in the mode of music making (as in the Hawkins case outlined above) is not sufficient to change the relations of music making, even though the existing relations may be irrational. An improviser may produce the bulk of the music after the perfunctory execution of a theme. In agreeing to

this—and it might be an implicit condition of his employment—he parts with the rights attached to his music, which in financial terms may be worth many times the amount he is paid to perform. While the system favours the composer (or the organising bandleader, who claims some kind of priority on the ownership of the music by virtue of his power to hire and fire), the hegemony of the compositional formula will continue, not only as a means of justifying the exploitation of creative musicians, but as an ideological buttress for the kind of society that the formula most reflects. My argument is not that the compositional element should be penalised, but that all the creative contributions should be recognised and rewarded commensurately.

The compositional method is obviously an important technical development in the history of music. However, it is not difficult to discern that, because it reflects the property form so accurately, it is politically bolstered beyond its usefulness to musical expression. Perhaps this is the underlying ideological reason why funding bodies find it difficult to finance improvisation directly. Contemporary improvised music is undoubtedly a break with established means of making music. If the customs and economic institutions that have grown up to service the composition (for example, the Performing Rights Society) were reformed to favour the predominantly productive component in improvisational works, I suspect that a much more critical perspective on those compositional forms used as a basis for improvisation would result. If the onus were on the composer to justify his contribution solely on artistic grounds (rather than as a means of generating and controlling income), compositions would tend to be much stronger. The quality of composition, where it was needed at all, would be raised if the means of musical production were firmly in the hands of the musicians.

Structural analysis

I hope by now to have indicated the extent to which economic, and therefore political, structures impinge on the free flow of human expression. Contributing something to an understanding of the structural nature of this music is a difficult task, for it seems to me that no worthwhile example of contemporary improvised music prescribes a syntax for universal application. Indeed it is expected that each improviser brings to the music his own unique formulation. My inclination has been to look beyond surface representations for a deeper structural basis to the music. Musicians of the European classical tradition relate to the composition: it determines their modus operandi and economic relations; they re-create and re-emphasise a system of cultural values which, despite infinite variation of expression, broadly asserts the primacy of formal authority. Improvisers operate in a dialectical fashion, seeking to understand and express the connections between people and things in a directly investigative and creative process.

Since giving this lecture I have been concerned, mostly under the auspices of the Association of Improvising Musicians, to arrive at a succinct formulation of the moments that determine the contemporary improvised music ethic. I suggest the two following interlocking elements: the application of 'problem-solving' techniques within performance; and the dialogical interaction of musicians. These moments become more vivid when contrasted with the classical mode of making music, where: essentially the problems of making music are solved before the performance; and the composition interferes in the relations between musicians. Such a formulation indicates the cultural emphasis embodied in musical configurations, reflecting general aspirations and perhaps even the world view of the music makers. It would be strange, for example, if Cage's avowed anarchism was not evident in his music. Is it not therefore plausible to assume that this could be true (even if less obviously so) of all musics?

Nobody during the discussion denied the validity of the structural analysis, but there were some misgivings about its implications. It was felt that any art form that selfconsciously adopts such a premise will be constrained detrimentally. According to one speaker I was advocating 'social realism' which, in his view, has produced many monsters. Despite an invitation, these 'monsters' were not specified. There are two things to say about this kind of criticism. The first (to paraphrase John Tilbury's response on the day) is to ask whether the work of Shostakovich, Gorky, Brecht, and Eisler ought to be included in such a list of monsters. If so then contemporary improvised music could find itself in very good company! There have also, of course, been plenty of monsters produced by artistic philosophies other than socialist realism. Unlike the speaker, I am prepared to name names. I would refer anyone to Brian Ferneyhough's *Time and Motion Study II,* for example. Here the main purpose seems to be an exhaustive examination of how far the performer can be driven by noise and impossible scoring before he is broken down and destroyed. In this sense it is an ugly and dehumanising piece. It exemplifies the extreme position to which the composer – musician relationship can be pushed, and the antithesis of the aspirations associated with contemporary improvised music; yet (to my anger) such pieces generally acquire much more credibility as 'works of art'.

The second point to be made is that while improvised music provides the necessary conditions for a different cultural emphasis to emerge, it does not automatically generate that new emphasis—hence the need for some kind of 'realism' and action based on it. As long as musicians remain unaware of the structural implications of their music their development both as musicians and as human beings will be denied. If this is to be construed as socialist realism, then so be it.

This attempt to appreciate the structural nature of improvised music has not been undertaken out of dry academic interest. I hope above all to have convinced you that mere existence is no guarantee of development or survival. A political dimension, no matter how repugnant it might seem to some, is necessary. But political effectiveness can only come from a more comprehensive understanding of the music we make.

Self-awareness and ethnic musics

Since many of the world's ethnic musics have strong improvisational elements, improvising musicians often look to them for inspiration. But do contemporary improvised music and ethnic musics have the same improvising priority? I have argued that contemporary improvised music reflects the desire for a form of personal expression, which directly counters the prevailing 'market-property' individualism of Western society. However, when we come to

look at the social base of traditional musics it becomes apparent that they are hardly compatible with a socialist overview of human relations: the priority lies elsewhere.

Traditional Scottish music, for example, has no compositional or property base, nor was it created as a reaction to the excesses of capitalism. On the contrary, it characterises, and in its modern form romanticises, the feudal society of pre-Union Scotland—although, ironically, this folk form has come to represent the Scottish reaction to the cultural dislocation caused by a modern, market, industrialising society. This gives us another insight into the power of ideas, for a yearning for old Scotland does not offer a possible means of ameliorating adverse political and cultural conditions. It would be wrong to suppose, therefore, that any free aspect perceived in Scottish folk music is in any way analogous to social-economic freedoms in feudal Scotland: there were none. The only freedom such aspects do represent is that of Scotland from capitalism and its political counterpart—English imperialism. The Scottish folk form may be a reminder of another kind of Scotland but it does not portray any inherent social freedoms within traditional Scottish society. Indeed if it reflects anything other than false nostalgia, the music perpetrates an unconscious belief in the hierarchical clan order, which activists in Scottish nationalism would probably be the first to fight.

In almost any music there is an element of play: the musician can give expression of himself even within highy constraining formulae. This is perhaps the redeeming feature of music as an art form. Except possibly in the case of total serialism, where the manipulative demands are so great as to crush the musicians' sensibilities, it is possible to transcend any form and use it as a means of personal expression. Given this saving grace, we nevertheless have to explain why specific forms of cultural expression arise and persist.

Many of the improvised musics of the world with long, continuous traditions, classical Indian music for example, have an undeniably strong social function outside individual expression. Educated Hindus are reputed to like the delicate music of the vina, and the general aesthetic of Indian music is meditative, ideally leading to 'samadhi'.[3] It is a soothing music which can be of great therapeutic value, as many Westerners have found. But few would extend such a quietist ethos to all aspects of their lives. Yet passivity of a kind that veers towards fatalism is acknowledged to be a dominant, if debased, characteristic of Indian culture. The totality of the Indian social experience shows that music combines with other aspects of Indian life to encourage tolerance of this world but never the need to change it. A cursory glance at Indian society reveals an essentially static condition, almost immune from change: many aspects of traditional social structures exist essentially untouched today. It appears, therefore, that music generated by tribal or caste societies tends to characterise and bolster hierarchical divisions of labour and class stratifications. In this sense Indian music can be seen as politically repressive.

Western musicians who emulate such forms without recognising the social implications of the music may well find themselves advocating, albeit unconsciously, social formulations which in practice they find abhorrent. Despite the obvious therapeutic lessons to be learned from classical Indian music, it can never be directly applicable to the Western situation. The problem with cross-cultural apperception is that the observer inevitably introduces his own conditioned perspective; what he perceives and finds meaningful may well relate more to his own background than any hoped for understanding of what he is observing. The ability to appreciate the internal structure of a cultural form is restricted to those who follow the fragile discipline of anthropology. The untrained observer will inevitably filter from the experience what he needs to fulfil his own expectations. This can lead to very crude levels of expropriation. For example, to extract aesthetic value from recordings of primitive aboriginal peoples spewing and farting in drug-induced orgies simply because the sounds are 'interesting' is, to my susceptibilities, repugnant and degrading. An Oriental might do as well with a microphone in Sauchihall Street on a Saturday night. I defy anyone who believes in the primacy of human dignity to make a case for such aesthetic values.

The connection of contemporary improvised music with any pre-modern form seems to me ultimately untenable, and it is difficult to see why any such connection is sought, save as an expression of discontent with the musical forms available to Western musicians. In this sense, as the Scottish and Indian examples have shown, the adoption of traditional ethnic forms represents a negation of contemporary Western market values but does not offer acceptable alternatives, given that there is no going back to pre-industrial social-economic forms.

Evan Parker was among a few who voiced their unease with my analysis of the relationship between contemporary improvised music and the ethnic musics of non-industrialised societies. He argued that there are very dynamic and interactive aspects in Indian music, which would seem to deny that the music is essentially quietist. However, my principal point was not that the music itself is passive, but that it is generated by and supportive of a quietist philosophy. Thus our disagreement perhaps rests on semantics: I can see no reason why a music with dynamic qualities (much rock and roll for instance) should automatically fail to qualify as quietist, just as there is no reason why music with passive and peaceful qualities cannot be very revolutionary. A great deal of the music of the improvising group AMM contains long, peaceful interludes, yet the very basic structure of its music-making relationships is so at odds with the established patterns as to make it the antithesis of 'quietism'. The same may be said of many blues.

I have also been reminded by Gerry Gold that, given the changes occurring in India today, some contemporary Indian musicians must be seeking to break the devotional mould of their traditional music. But, again, I was trying to make a more general point, namely that music tends to characterise and bolster the kind of society that generates it. To widen the perspective I should like to bring in the instructive example of Chinese imperial music. Formal music in imperial China was inextricably bound to Confucianism. The correct social hierarchy and moral order were consciously exemplified by solemn rites (*li*) and music (*yueh*): 'For they were the outward embodiment of the wisdom and virtue of their creators (the ruling members in the old feudal system), the expression of reverence and perfect hierarchical order in society'.[4] According to this analysis the aspirations of contemporary Western improvising musicians and those of Chinese court musicians have almost nothing in common. By extension there can be

little compatibility between traditional musicians and those whose expression arises out of alienation from modern Western industrial society.

Evan indicated that he saw himself as part of the continuity of reed players through the ages. While this notion (in its primary state) is impossible to dispute, it is questionable whether the continuity goes beyond the common use of the reed. Of more relevance to my general line of argument are the palpable differences that exist between Evan's mode of musical production and that of, say, a court musician of the Sung dynasty. If there are no fundamental differences then we are entitled to ask why Evan chose not to take the more formal route of European musical expression but to follow a path that led to his notable individual contribution to a new ethic of music making. There is much in Evan's work and associations to confirm that they are concerned implicitly with notions of community and collectivity.

The development of the improvisation aesthetic

The multi-culture approach to improvisation tends, because of its romantic, mysterious, and mystical connotations, to distort the underlying aspirations of the music. To reach an understanding of the aspiration that generates the contemporary aesthetic priority of improvisation, some appreciation of its historical growth is necessary.

As I have already indicated, the most prominent example of improvised music generated specifically in response to an emerging industrial market society is jazz. Slave society in the southern USA gave way to an even more uncertain, and perhaps more cruel, existence in which the 'free' blacks owned their own labour power. Towards the end of the 19th century, jazz in New Orleans was in part a response to the social needs and economic realities of an impoverished and beleaguered black community. The music they devised to meet their social requirements developed into a new cultural form. The blacks were a dislocated people, unwelcome in a land to which they had been brought by force—a land which had been developed and which prospered by their sweat. Despite freedom from slavery, the subsequent proliferation of 'Jim Crow' laws made the negro acutely aware of the differences the white community wished to maintain. These differences forced him to create a separate cultural identity.

I suggest that the unique characteristic of this cultural development is its apparent predilection for change. This should not be explained away simply as a reflection of the constant state of flux induced by an ever-developing technology—as the automatic result of the nature of modern society. In most traditional societies there is a recognisably sympathetic refining process within a visible continuity. Such a sympathy is not so readily perceived in the history of contemporary improvised music, which perhaps explains superficially the often violent antagonism of one school to another. We must view the development of black American music differently. 'Refinement' cannot be an appropriate description of the development of jazz, if by that word we mean striving for perfection within generally accepted and sympathetic ideological parameters. For the changes in jazz, given the unwillingness of US society to accept the equality of the negro, must be seen as a continual reaction to the incursions of white-dominated, capitalist structures, which have constantly emasculated and frustrated black aspirations. On such an analysis, change must, by definition, be endemic in black American culture.

Change in the music of the black community has been necessary because so often the music has been diluted and exploited commercially, or because its more sophisticated forms have been incorporated into a pseudo-egalitarian ethos with which liberals of all shades feel comfortable. The assimilation of the black man's art has not meant a genuine integration of blacks within US society. This explains why some strands of black jazz have become more self-conscious, more aggressive and consequently less susceptible to (although not entirely immune from) capitalist exploitation or incorporation within a reformist political ethic. The question for white jazz and improvising musicians is whether their sense of alienation has the same root as that of their more militant black brothers, or whether they are feeding off a unique artistic development that grew out of the struggles of a harried community. This dilemma may well be at the heart of the desire to perceive a multi-stranded connection with the world's non-industrial cultures. If, however, as I have already suggested, white musicians (and black for that matter) accept musical influences without recognising the impetus that created them—which, in jazz, is undoubtedly the desire for a means of expressing human dignity—then they not only fail to comprehend the full significance of their music, but risk debasing it.

It can be no accident that it has been the proletarian musicians of the advanced industrial societies who have demonstrated a preference for this form of music. And, given the racist tradition that sprang from north European culture, their preference cannot be attributed to a deep-seated admiration for all things black. The impetus for improvised music does not come from the custodians of western European culture, although ironically it does represent one of the most positive and noble strands of humanism. The music remains a medium of self-expression which is the exclusive domain of those who have felt stifled or excluded by the approved routes to artistic experience, which in turn reflect the oppressive character of the dominant political mode.

In recent times there has been a rejection by many European improvisers of the black American heritage, as there has been a tendency to seek parallels with the music of the under-developed parts of the world. As I hope to have shown, these reactions are superficial and divert attention away from the more tenable connections that exist between communities that share the modern industrialising experience. Much of the rejection of black American jazz is really a rejection of US values.

To my mind the most debasing element within much that passes for jazz is a quality of appeasement. This can be identified in two principal ways, each encouraging a particular emotional response—one quietist, the other nullifying and edging towards brutality: both run counter to black and general working-class aspirations. The more romantic modes appeal most to reformist susceptibilities: on the one hand they confirm that blacks feel much the same way as the white men, while on the other they generate interludes of pleasant tranquillity for all. They tend to assuage the very affliction that the modern liberal is dedicated to eradicate—eventually. Other aspects of jazz have succumbed to the crude insistences of rock culture. Rock developed from a grass-roots entertainment music into a vehicle for big business; along the way it has evolved an obscene giantist perspective,

which acts to divorce it from the very populist aspirations that generated it. There have, of course, been many reactions to this development, but each counter-form has been very easy meat for the capitalist process. As the rock culture specifically relates to jazz, Max Roach has called its most pernicious form 'fusion music'.[5] Here the physical relentlessness of the music, aided and abetted by image makers and technology to make it less resistible, causes the listener to capitulate to instinctive responses which lessen his powers of discrimination. In doing so he becomes brutalised and much less of a human being. The adulteration of jazz also negates the struggle of previous generations who fought to develop the rights of blacks and maintain their integrity through a community music. Much of this retrogressive development in a music that has always been intrinsically a vehicle for freedom and self-respect can be laid at the door of some black jazz musicians as well as the white assimilators. But maybe it would be uncharitable not to understand the capitulation of some negroes in the face of a tempting reformist programme for political equality. Unfortunately the reverse of capitulation has also occurred—namely an automatic rejection of all contributions made and values held by white people, even the more progressively humanitarian ones. The Black Muslim movement perhaps characterises the most virulent manifestation of this attitude, but after reaching a high point in the 1960s its attraction has receded.

It is not difficult to sustain the comparison of the black community in the USA with working-class history in advanced industrialising societies. The relationship of both groups to a market society, if not strictly identical in structural development, arose from the same impetus. In many ways the plight of the English working-class during the 19th century was as bad as, if not worse than, that of the black American. The misleading portrayal of the 'slave' South as feudal and therefore not susceptible to the industrialising impulse has also been dispelled. The historical fact is that negroes have been 'emancipated' and theoretically equal participants in the system for over 100 years. But the reality of their political position has been that they remain an under-privileged section of US society and are manipulated as a huge pool of reserve labour. This acts as much to keep white workers in check as to give an oblique nod to Jim Crow's ghost. What black and white deprived peoples have in common is the desire for a civilised existence. For a long time white society saw civilisation and equality with blacks as somehow mutually exclusive. Of course the reverse is true, for no society can develop its humanity while fettering fellow human beings.

The argument I have tried to make here is that contemporary improvised music is essentially a phenomenon of a modern industrialising society. The common experience it portrays is that of alienation arising from the economic, social, and cultural deprivation caused by a modern, market-orientated political system. The structural aspect common to these musical manifestations, which differ widely in style and performance emphasis, is that which expresses individual aspirations, and that which is the least susceptible to a commodity ethos, namely the improvisation.

Conclusion

If, as I believe I have shown, improvisation persists as a graft upon an essentially compositional body, it remains subservient to the musical and general cultural constraints of the compositional form. If the improvisational element is seen solely as an experiment or an ephemera, it will either be subsumed in the host body or it will be rejected. Either way if the composition is (or is seen as) the initiating mode, then it will be the dominating element. In the same way political observers may note that when aspects of socialism are grafted on to a capitalist body the inevitable result is a weakening of the socialist component. Capitalism and socialism are antagonistic and ultimately mutually exclusive. So it is with improvisation, I suggest. The moment it attempts to accommodate itself to compositional structure it weakens its own integrity.

As I said at the beginning of this lecture, contemporary improvised music offers a means of personal expression that is simply not available in other musical forms. But what does 'personal expression' mean? To assert individuality entails being able to contrast the self against other selves, to perceive where one person ends and another person begins. Yet the paradox is that such a distinction is only possible when the existence of other people is fully accepted, with all the creative attributes and frustrating difficulties that contrasting personalities bring.

The aesthetic priority of improvisation is, in my view, the reflection of the legitimate aspirations of people who want to live free from the irrelevant and irrational dictates of a market society. It is an assertion of the primacy of collective human will over the crude determinism that masquerades as the fairness of *laissez-faire*. This is why an understanding of the nature of the music is vital for its survival, for beneath all cultural preferences there lies a system of politics. In choosing our art we choose a model for life.

1 Hanna Charlton, 'Improvising Actualities', *Melody Maker* (29 August 1981), p.16.

2 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), p.137.

3 'Samadhi' is a complex notion. The main parts of the word are 'dhi' (idea) and 'sam' (union). In brief, it refers to perception of and integration with an underlying and harmonious unity of all things.

4 'Confucius', *Sources of Chinese Tradition,* vol.1, compiled by William Theodore De Bary, Wing-Tsit Chan, and Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p.18.

5 Karl Dallas, 'Evolutionary Forces' (interview with Max Roach), *Melody Maker* (23 August 1980).

John Tilbury

Composer for Socialism: Betz on Eisler

Albrecht Betz, *Hanns Eisler: Political Musician,* translated by Bill Hopkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), £25.00

A book on Hanns Eisler in English has been long overdue, not only because of his impeccable credentials as a composer (his teacher, Schoenberg, regarded him as highly as he did his two other talented pupils, Berg and Webern), but also because Eisler wrote and spoke brilliantly on the subject of music. Albrecht Betz's book, *Hanns Eisler: Musik einer Zeit, die sich eben bildet* (1976), which was capably translated by the late Bill Hopkins, has the advantage of having been written by an author who identifies with Eisler's philosophical (that is, Marxist) standpoint, and whose admiration for Eisler therefore does not stop short at the music. Betz is in sympathy with Eisler's *aims,* which Eisler himself stated quite explicitly in 1957 at a conference of German composers and musicologists: 'I have always striven to write music that serves socialism. This was often a difficult and contradictory exercise, but the only worthy one for artists in our time.'[1]

It is to Betz's credit that throughout his excellent book the contradictions within 'music for socialism' are documented in an illuminating fashion. Regrettably our own Western critics do not seem capable of addressing themselves to the problem of the contradictions within music and capitalism in the same way. Eisler himself remarked on the importance of the relationship between banking and music and castigated his musical colleagues for underestimating it!

In particular Betz gives space to two crucial debates within the socialist camp: first, the debate between Eisler and Lukács, which touched on many problems and which today still concerns all thinking musicians, whatever their ideological persuasion. Lukács's doctrine of the exemplary value of the art works of the rising bourgeoisie and the subsequent destructive decadence that resulted from the decline of the bourgeoisie, was attacked by both Eisler and Brecht for being mechanistic and undialectical. They regarded his attitude towards the classics as unduly reverential and academic, and considered that he applied economic determinism in a crude way, such that anticipatory movements in art and science were denied. Betz writes:

> For Eisler and Brecht questions of assimilating and reworking the heritage had nothing to do with conservation or doctrinaire discussion, but were specifically creative problems which occupied them in a practical way. [p.165]

The second issue, concerning Eisler's projected opera *Johann Faustus,* for which he wrote the libretto himself, makes for fascinating reading. In the light of recent German history Eisler had set out to reinterpret the Faust legend. Faust is depicted as the vacillating intellectual, unable to commit himself; finally, irrespective of his will, he finds himself in the conservative camp. In 1952 the Communist Party initiated a debate on the theme of Eisler's re-interpretation of Faust; Betz describes the setting at the Academy of Arts in Berlin as that of a court-room, with Eisler, in the role of defendant, having only a few friends such as Brecht and the director Felsenstein to support him. Even Walter Ulbricht, the General Secretary of the Party, entered the debate against Eisler, and finally a universal ban was put on Eisler's Faust. Eisler had

> perpetrated an affront to German history, to 'humanistic' intelligence, and above all to Goethe. Goethe's 'Faust'—the 'positive hero' *par excellence*—he had transformed into a negative, destructive figure. [pp.223-4]

The negative aspect of this affair does not have to be spelled out; Eisler returned to Vienna, where he was living, depressed and unable to compose. On the other hand it does demonstrate a serious and critical attitude on the part of the State towards its artists, which contrasts with the *laissez-faire,* often indifferent stance adopted by most Western administrators. Eisler was an artist who took up an issue of profound importance to his countrymen, treated it in a controversial manner, and bore the consequences. The Party functionaries acted and, because of the specific relationship between State and artist, *had* to act in what they, as German socialists, regarded as a responsible manner. Bearing in mind the traumatic experience, particularly in the aftermath of the Second World War, of the German working classes, the Party's case was arguable: this was not the time for intellectuals to undermine the Faust image. If history is able to make fools of the functionaries in this instance it is because the functionaries had no option but to commit themselves. In the West our functionaries, who also dole out or withhold money and favours, can hide, play safe, or simply opt out, while even talented composers write unaccountable abstractions; unlike their Eastern counterparts, the contemporary crisis of criteria need not concern them.

Betz divides Eisler's life and music into four periods. The early, formative period, when he was a student of Schoenberg, includes compositions written in Vienna up to 1925. In the late twenties and early thirties Eisler lived in Berlin, where he became music critic of *Rote Fahne* (Red flag), the German Communist Party journal, and was active as pianist and composer in an agitprop group; here he met, befriended, and collaborated with Brecht, the single most important influence on his life, and produced some of his finest political songs. The third phase is the period of exile. Eisler eventually settled in the USA in 1938, where he composed some of his best concert music as well as film music for Hollywood. But in 1947, at the height of the cold war, he was summoned before the House Un-American Activities Committee; accused of being the 'Karl Marx of Communism in the field of music', he was deported, despite a petition signed by many renowned artists and scientists. Eisler finally made his home in the GDR, became professor at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik (which now bears his name), and continued his prolific work for films and the theatre. This was the final phase: he died on 6 September 1962.

Betz brings a wealth of musical material and information to illuminate each phase of Eisler's life, and in doing so, because of the breadth of Eisler's activity, contributes to a general understanding of the important developments and conflicts of the last 50 years. Even the break with Schoenberg, which Schoenberg could understand only in purely personal terms, cannot be explained except by Eisler's political motivation. Betz writes:

His [Eisler's] political criticisms of new music were initially focussed on its *isolation*, and on the fact that although its hermeticism and inaccessibility were supposed to be proof of real quality, it was actually transparently lacking in content . . . In short, it was the fact that music 'turned a deaf ear' to the conflicts of its times, its social confrontations, that disturbed him and made him want to break away from it. [p.43]

The 'hermeticism and inaccessibility' of new music had of course been defended by the Frankfurt School, a leading light of which had been Eisler's erstwhile friend and collaborator Theodor Adorno. Betz quotes Eisler's view of Adorno's post-war positions:

It is one of the peculiarities of that Institute in Frankfurt that it sees all tendencies towards dissolution as progressive, with a sort of half-baked Marxism . . . They only want to be more clever than the bourgeois theorists, but they do not want to take issue with them. [p.244]

For all this it is clear that Eisler's profound respect for Schoenberg never wavered; nor for that matter did it ever degenerate into sycophancy, or blind him to Schoenberg's faults. Eisler championed Schoenberg's music in Eastern Europe when it was considered to be the embodiment of formalism and anti-populist decadence, and at the end of 1954 he gave a major lecture on Schoenberg at the Berlin Academy of Arts:

I have no need of the Chinese saying: 'He who does not honour his teacher is worse than a dog' in order to assert here that Schoenberg was one of the greatest composers, and not only of the twentieth century. His mastery and originality are astonishing, his influence was and is vast. His weaknesses are more dear to me than the strengths of many other. The history of music is unthinkable without him. The decline and fall of the bourgeoisie, certainly. But what a sunset! [pp.227-8]

According to the violinist Rudolf Kolisch, Eisler was the only pupil of Schoenberg who dared to voice dissent openly.

Eisler annoyed him a great deal, particularly because of his . . . intellectual independence. In fact Eisler was never intellectually submissive . . . He was always rebellious, and even contradicted, which was a mortal sin, of course—quite inconceivable. [p.7]

In the extensive central section of his book Betz discusses the militant songs and political ballads of Eisler's Berlin period, with just the right balance between musical content and social function; a section entitled 'The Great Syntheses' deals with two of Eisler's masterpieces from the early thirties: *Die Massnahme* and *Die Mutter*. Betz's discussion of the relationship between text and music in *Die Mutter*, though necessarily brief, highlights some significant details and also includes (p.109) a revealing quote from Brecht on Eisler's method in the song. Betz's dictum in his final chapter characterises this relationship: the text is primary and the music is not secondary.

In his American exile Eisler produced an abundance of marvellous songs, as well as some of his best chamber music, including *14 Arten, den Regen zu beschreiben*, which, in view of Eisler's own high opinion of the work, probably merited more attention from Betz. But he does provide interesting information on Eisler's film music, with particular reference to *Composing for the Films* (1947), the book, born out of his experiences in Hollywood, that Eisler wrote in collaboration with Adorno. The witch-hunt that resulted in Eisler's deportation from America is well documented and Betz records the signficant tribute paid to Eisler by the future President of the United States, Richard Nixon (which also reminds us of his role in the affair): 'The case against Hanns Eisler is perhaps the most important ever to have come before the Committee.' (p.199)

The final chapter of Betz's book is entitled 'Eisler's Modernity', which, in the light of what has gone before, is almost redundant. Eisler's relevance to the present day shouts out at the reader on every page. In an interview, Alexander Goehr, explaining his dedication of a work to Eisler, described him as 'a wise man'. Wisdom seems to be in short supply in our musical life these days, and on reading this book our shortcomings, both as musicians and as human beings, become painfully obvious. At a time when the establishment is laying siege to socialism on all fronts, Albrecht Betz's book is a crucial contribution on one of the most significant composers of the 20th century, which all progressive musicians will enjoy.

[1] Hanns Eisler, *Materialen zu einer Dialektik der Musik* (Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reclam jun., 1976), p.5.

Roger Heaton

ISAM Monographs

Richard Jackson, *United States Music: Sources of Bibliography and Collective Biography,* ISAM Monographs, 1 (New York: Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, 1973; second printing, with corrections and additions, 1976)

——, *U.S. Bicentennial Music I,* ISAM Special Publications, 1 (1977)

Bruce Saylor, *The Writings of Henry Cowell: a Descriptive Bibliography,* ISAM Monographs, 7 (1977)

Vivian Perlis, *Two Men for Modern Music: E. Robert Schmitz and Herman Langinger,* ISAM Monographs, 9 (1978)

Sherman Van Solkema, ed., *The New Worlds of Edgard Varèse: a Symposium,* ISAM Monographs, 11 (1979)

Richard Franko Goldman, *Selected Essays and Reviews, 1948-1968,* edited by Dorothy Klotzmann, ISAM Monographs, 13 (1980)

The Institute for Studies in American Music, under the direction of H. Wiley Hitchcock, has no exact British counterpart, yet its success and the value of its publications (including a popular and racy newsletter) should be the envy of our diminishing universities and dull academic societies. The beautifully, and cheaply, produced paperback volumes, some 18 in all since the Institute's inception in 1971, seek, according to the publicity leaflet, 'to fill the need for publication of scholarly studies, essays and basic reference works . . . that are longer than article-length, shorter than full-scale book-length, and unlikely to find publication through normal commercial channels'. The consistent quality of these monographs proves that an imaginative lead can produce authoritative and yet eminently readable studies, while the established publishing houses, cowering with recessionitis, give us extortionately priced tomes, or more synthetic 'concise histories of' and descriptive 'introductions to' than we really need.

The scope of the Institute's research is much broader than America's brief musical history might suggest: aspects of popular black and white musics, 19th-century liturgical music, and art music have been covered. Another project under the Institute's direction is the Recent Researches in American Music series of musical editions, published by A-R Editions of Madison, Wisconsin, in which the first two volumes are an *Anthology of Early American Keyboard Music 1787-1830,* edited by J. B. Clark (1977).

The reference works are not purely lists of source material but have descriptive text abstracts for each entry, often, as in the case of *The Writings of Henry Cowell,* using sentences from the original work. Cowell was always an enthusiastic and outspoken advocate of the 'ultra-modernists' (an article in *Musical America* (January 1925), p.9, is entitled 'Modernism Needs No Excuses, Says Cowell'), but what Bruce Saylor's bibliography interestingly reflects is Cowell's adoption during the thirties of a more modal and exotic sound-world, with fewer of the earlier radicalisms; this resulted from his passionate and informed interest in ethnic music, fostered by his study of Oriental music and comparative musicology in Berlin and his contact with folk music, particularly that of Eastern Europe, while on concert tours. His later music shows the same eclecticism as do the subjects of his nearly 200 articles, but he was not an intellectual magpie, picking and skimming through second-hand knowledge; as Richard Franko Goldman says in his tribute 'Henry Cowell 1897-1965: a Memoir and an Appreciation' (no.13, p.202):

> What Henry learned or experienced went into music and not into documents; it became part of himself rather than part of an archive. Henry exemplified the important difference between learning things and studying them, or being taught them . . . he did not read about the *shaku-hachi* or the nose-flute; he learned to play them.

The ISAM's first monograph, Richard Jackson's excellent *United States Music: Sources of Bibliography and Collective Biography,* categorises items as reference, historical, regional, and topical works, the last ranging from 'Country and Western' to 'Women in Music'. Jackson's annotations are informally informative and sometimes honestly dismissive: for example, of entry 82, Edwin Barnes's *American Women in Creative Music* (Washington, 1936) he says, 'As opposed to women in the uncreative kind? Trashy pamphlet useful only as a source of names for further research.' Jackson's *U.S. Bicentennial Music I,* a list of music that appeared mostly between 1973 and 1976 specifically to celebrate that event, is of less interest for British readers but does contain a useful section giving publishers' addresses.

The three non-reference monographs all make fascinating reading, but the jewel among them is clearly Richard Franko Goldman's *Selected Essays and Reviews, 1948-1968.* Goldman lived for most of his life in New York, teaching at the Juilliard School and conducting his father's outdoor concert band, but he is known in Britain primarily as a contributor to the *Musical Quarterly.* He died in 1980, just a few days after this book went to press.

What characterises Goldman's writing is a dedication and commitment to modern music, which he discusses with the intellectual penetration and artistic integrity considered the norm in the best commentaries on older music. Goldman's message throughout these pages is one of an uncompromising seriousness of idea, which allows him a keen and often wry sense of humour: 'Seriousness is not the same as earnestness, of which there is plenty; the relation is that of jargon to idea.' (p.1) He has nothing but contempt for the 'culture industry' and its trivialisation of art through marketing, publicity and the like:

> The machines—radio, film and phonograph—seem to make art accessible and easy; they affect music in a special way, and reduce it, in a sense, to a species of useful noise. It would be false to say that music does not have a place in society today: it exists, if nothing else, to feed these machines, and to prevent silence. [p.2]

This was written in 1954 and, with mindless pap a growth industry, is even more valid today.

But Goldman is not always wildly enthusiastic about every aspect of the avant garde and he does not, like many critics today, remain non-committally on the fence about works he honestly doesn't like. He does have his particular loves: Carter, Dallapiccola, Wallingford Riegger, and, surprisingly, Barraqué. Of Barraqué's *Séquences* he says:

> the work has power, intensity, and contrast . . . The opening sections . . . are . . . the most beautifully imagined sounds since the opening of *Canti di prigionia* [by Dallapiccola]. They are a far cry from the cute nonsense of Berio or the mindless pounding of the red-blooded American school. [pp.148-9]

Boulez's *Le marteau sans maître* fares less well: 'it is indecisive stylistically and retrogressive esthetically' (p.179), and Berio's flute *Sequenza* is 'inconsequenzial' (p.183).

Three important issues frequently recur. First, the composer whose theories are more interesting than their realisation in music; second (and more disturbing), the composer who assumes that his grubby little ego is of concern to others (a Romantic throwback all too prevalent in the present neoromantic—I almost typed necromantic—climate); and third, highly systematised forms of analysis, about which Goldman has some cruel words to say, 'a rather small crumb, and, alas, usually a stale one' (p.118). In his discussion of Barraqué's *Séquences*, a work he considers to be of extraordinary technical interest without making these techniques the central issue, he says:

> One senses the ordering, as in all good music, but is not obsessed by it; it is a means rather than an end. Analysis can demonstrate it; but more important, the *effect* justifies the analysis. We have wasted a lot of time in the last few years . . . dissecting music already in an advanced state of decomposition. We have found out not what made it live, but merely the causes of its death. [pp.147-8]

In a general discussion of *Wozzeck* he states that some of Willi Reich's analyses, 'remind me of a meticulous description of all the parts of an automobile engine, [which] neglects to mention that gasoline is used to make it go' (p.157), a delightful crystalisation of the analyst's perennial problem.

For all Goldman's strictures on analysis his extended articles on Carter's music are disappointing: panegyrical, descriptive, and repetitive. Many of his comments are concerned with the usual problem of complexity and the justification of intellectualism in music. In 1951 he wrote:

> He [Carter] has had the reputation of being an intellectual composer with a gift for calculated complexity applied to a background of Boulanger and Piston, a composer of music never lacking in skill but sometimes ingeniously uninteresting. Such a reputation may, however, often be unjustly earned, and its origin, in an age like ours, is always

suspect as being the poverty and sloth that will prefer dogmatic simple-mindedness on all counts. [p.69]

This is a thoughtful and entertaining collection of writings which hardly show their age; as Elliott Carter says in his Foreword, 'One wonders how much of what is being written at present will stand up so well in ten or twenty years.' (p.ix)

Briefly, Vivian Perlis's *Two Men for Modern Music* is a fascinating story of two little-known champions of new music: E. Robert Schmitz (1889-1949), a French pianist – conductor pupil of Debussy, who performed works by Schoenberg, Ravel, Prokofiev, and others in the States after emigrating there in 1918; and Herman Langinger (b. 1908), an Austrian who became the engraver of Cowell's journal *New Music* and works by Ives, and was a friend of Schoenberg.

Sherman Van Solkema's *The New Worlds of Edgard Varèse* had its origin in a symposium, with major contributions from Carter, Chou Wen-Chung, and Robert P. Morgan, and a final open discussion. Carter's short essay is introductory and a little vague: '[These] are the remarks of a composer and friend which make no pretense to musicological accuracy, since I have no time for research, and rely on memory and, I hope, as little fantasy as possible.' (p.1) Morgan's 'Notes on Varèse's Rhythm' usefully discusses the interrelation of rhythmic and pitch structures, with examples from *Hyperprism* (1922-3) and *Intégrales* (1924-5). Chou Wen-Chung, who studied with Varèse in 1949 and became a close musical associate, is the executor of Varèse's musical estate. His article, 'Ionisation: the Function of Timbre in its Formal and Temporal Organisation', is a thorough and lengthy analysis of the piece, which describes in some detail procedures common to much of Varèse's work; this could be a good starting-point for an undergraduate study of Varèse's compositional technique.

All in all an excellent batch of studies: university and college music department libraries should obtain the entire series if they haven't already.

Brigitte Schiffer

Kelemen Reflects

Milko Kelemen, *Klanglabyrinthe: Reflexionen eines Komponisten über die Neue Musik, mit einem Interview von Joachim Kaiser* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1981)

Although the Yugoslav composer Milko Kelemen (b.1924) has been writing 'avant-garde' music for the last 25 years, although he belongs to the brotherhood of Messiaen pupils and Darmstadt followers, has pursued every possible compositional trend, been played at all the major music festivals, often by famous soloists, and received commissions from orchestras, ensembles, and opera houses all over the world, his fame in Britain rests entirely on his role as founder and organiser of the Zagreb Biennale, and almost nothing of his music has yet been heard in this country. His book, therefore, can give to most of us only a second-hand impression of a music the sound of which is so far unknown.

The title of the book ('Sound labyrinth') is a rather curious choice considering its subject matter. Kelemen seems unaware of the implications of the word 'labyrinth', a concept that goes back to antiquity (it is known in the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilisations) and has a venerable history in modern times, beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries. In our own time it has been used as a powerful symbol in the work of Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, Ṣalvador Dali, Jean Cocteau, Henri Michaux, Paul Éluard, Franz Kafka, Federico Garcia Lorca, Jorge Luis Borghes, Dylan Thomas, and many others. W. H. Matthews (*Mazes and Labyrinths* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922)) defines the labyrinth in ancient cultures as a metaphor for the unification of the predictable and unpredictable in the world, a symbol of the truth that perfection is achieved only by following a tortuous route. Kelemen entirely ignores the resonances set in motion by this potent image. His labyrinth is simply the multiplicity of characteristics that are covered by the term 'new music' and the state of apparent confusion in the contemporary musical world; he attempts to explore and explain this complexity by asking the far from original questions 'What is new music?', 'Why is new music so difficult to understand?', 'Has new music got a future, or will it soon be forgotten or regarded as an aberration?'.

The book is a collection of 26 essays of which 18, collected under the subsidiary title 'Meine Klangwelt', are Kelemen's reflections on his own compositions; the remaining eight investigate music education, musical institutions, the manipulation of public opinion, the role of the mass media, and music criticism, and are written in a rather contentious spirit.

From the moment Kelemen finished his musical education at the Zagreb Academy of Music (1945-52) he seems to have been a favourite of the very 'institutions' that he castigates so bitterly: he proceeded from one scholarship to the next—awards for study at the Paris Conservatoire with Messiaen and Aubin (1954-5) and at the Freiburg Musikhochschule with Fortner (1958-60), a Humboldt Scholarship to enable him to work at the Siemens electronic studio in Munich (1966-7), and a scholarship from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst to finance a period (1968-70) in Berlin; he then passed straight into his first appointment, as a teacher at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik, Düsseldorf (1970), followed three years later by a similar appointment at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Stuttgart. He has been equally fortunate with his publishers: for several years he was connected with Schott of Mainz, Universal Edition, and Heinrichshofen, and then he entered into a permanent contract with Peters. And commissions keep coming his way from all parts of the world—which makes his disapproving reference to 'certain composers, who have a way of getting commissions' seem rather inappropriate.

The biographical facts about Kelemen are elicited in an introductory conversation with Joachim Kaiser, but by far the most interesting information comes out in the 18 essays in which Kelemen writes about his musical development and discusses his work. When he first left Yugoslavia in 1954 he was deeply steeped in folklore and was ignorant of any developments in the musical world after Bartók. As a result he was open to all kinds of influence, ready to absorb whatever came in his way, and he started to make up for lost time by a tremendous productivity.

One of the features of Kelemen's music that most strikes the listener is a certain sensationalism: at the climax of *Composé* (1967) for two pianos and

orchestra, chains are thrown from high up onto a tam-tam lying on the floor; *Changeant* (1968) for cello and orchestra has an 'impossible' and absurd-sounding cadenza, accompanied by a harp beaten with the open hand, a harpsichord the box of which is struck with fingers wearing thimbles, and bongos on the skins of which the player 'writes' with his fingernails; in *Passionato* (1972) for a set of five flutes (one player) and three orchestral groups, the soloist is asked to shout a magic word into the instrument; and in *Olifant,* a concerto for exotic instruments, the trombonist is required to mix groaning, panting, gasping, snoring, growling, and howling with the musical sounds. In summarising Kelemen's motives as a composer Kaiser characterises this tendency as 'a wish to do, at all costs, something that goes to the very limits of the possible'. Earlier Kelemen himself makes a remark that corroborates Kaiser's conclusion: 'there can be no art without the element of surprise'. This is hardly a novel discovery—Dyagilev made it 70 years ago—but it explains the 'sensationalism' as springing from a desire to amaze; Kelemen describes his frequent recourse to stunning effects as the result of a 'readiness for wild thinking and for moving heaven and earth in order to penetrate into new regions of music'.

Another weapon in Kelemen's arsenal is noise. *Splintery* (1977), his second string quartet, breaks up when a calm, melodic – harmonic canon is suddenly obliterated by the brutal noise of exaggerated bow pressure; the work culminates in destruction. This type of treatment is used for a directly contrary purpose in *Der Belagerungszustand* (The state of siege) (1970), an opera based on Albert Camus' *La peste* (1947). Kelemen records that until it came to shaping the end of the work he and Camus were in complete agreement; but he felt unable to adopt Camus' suggestions that the work should close with an aria and then fade away. Instead he created a more positively optimistic ending, one of protest and action, in which the 'plague' theme that has permeated the whole work is augmented and then absorbed into a noisy orchestral tutti.

That Kelemen is capable of more subtle climaxes appears in another opera, *Novi stanar* (The new lodger) (1964) after Eugène Ionesco's *Le nouveau locataire* (1957). Here he remains faithful throughout to Ionesco's 'absurd' idea: the 'empty' room of the new lodger becomes gradually more and more cluttered with furniture, and, as it finally overflows into the street and down to the river, the music thins out and gradually disintegrates.

There can be no doubt that Kelemen has an exceedingly keen sense of theatre; in discussing this he claims that his dream for the future is of a spherical auditorium, suited to the ultimate stage work, a 'total' opera. In *Apocaliptica* (1973), a ballet-opera with a text by Fernando Arrabal, he has gone as far as prevailing conditions permit: his next theatre piece may well have a super surprise in store for us.

Kelemen's book makes interesting reading and, when he talks about his own compositions, is full of valuable information. The 'Reflexionen eines Komponisten über de Neue Musik' lack originality and perspective, and the introductory interview with Joachim Kaiser is not particularly informative, but what Kelemen has to say on the subject of his own work fortunately occupies more than two-thirds of the book. It can be warmly recommended, especially to the reader interested in the present state of musical life in Yugoslavia.

Brigitte Schiffer

Composer Monographs in German

Musik-Konzepte: Die Reihe über Komponisten, ed. Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik)
1/2 *Claude Debussy* (December 1977)
4 *Alban Berg: Kammermusik I* (April 1978)
Sonderband *John Cage* (April 1978)
6 *Edgard Varèse: Rückblick auf die Zukunft* (November 1978)
7 *Leoš Janáček* (January 1979)
9 *Alban Berg: Kammermusik II* (July 1979)
11 *Erik Satie* (January 1980)
16 *Dieter Schnebel* (September 1980)
Sonderband *Arnold Schönberg* (November 1980)
19 *Karlheinz Stockhausen . . . wie die Zeit verging . . .* (May 1981)
20 *Luigi Nono* (July 1981)
22 *Béla Bartók* (November 1981)

Musik-Konzepte is a series of studies on single composers, ranging from Bach to Bartók and Verdi to Varèse. Under the editorship of Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn, each issue (six are scheduled to appear annually) consists of essays by specialists who have recent discoveries or analysis to make known, together with texts by the subject of the volume himself where relevant. It appears, from the rather odd collection of composers to whom the first 24 issues have been devoted, that the exposure of new material is the chief *raison d'être* of the series; given this emphasis on the archival approach, it is most heartening to find that more than half the volumes that have so far appeared take 20th-century composers as their subjects.

The texts are entirely in German, sometimes of a highly convoluted and difficult kind; in cases where material has been translated into German from previously published English versions, readers may be best advised to seek out the original publications. There are, however, great advantages in having collected together in single-composer volumes the best and most detailed of recent research. No issue is without special interest: the Debussy number pays welcome attention to the unfinished opera *La chute de la maison Usher* and the little-known ballet *Khamma;* that on Cage contains valuable photographic documentation; Cage himself is a principal contributor on Satie; and the Varèse volume contains a most useful collection of the composer's writings. No reviewer could hope to do justice to such a wide range of excellent material, so I shall concentrate here on the numbers that deal with Nono and Berg, which I found particularly fascinating.

Most of the contributors to the Nono issue (no.20) try to come to terms with the string quartet *Fragmente—Stille, an Diotima,* which so surprised the audience when it was given its first performance in Bonn in 1980. Hubert Stuppner ('Luigi Nono oder Die Manifestation des Absoluten als Reaktion einer gesellschaftlich betroffenen Ichs', p.83) attempts to trace a connected line through Nono's output that will account for the composer's several changes of direction: in the total serialism of Nono's early Darmstadt period, in the total Marxism of his second,

political phase, and in the no less radical withdrawal of the late seventies, which he describes as 'narcissistic', Stuppner sees a development which has at last reached its ultimate goal. For 15 years, from *Intolleranza* (1960) to *Al gran sole carico d'amore* (1975), anger and indignation were the dominant characteristics of Nono's music: he seems to have felt incapable of thinking of beauty in the face of all the suffering and injustice with which he found himself surrounded. But in *Al gran sole* he quoted, significantly, the statement of Che Guevara that there is no contradiction between beauty and revolution, and his very next work, *Sofferte onde serene* (1976) for piano and tape, bears out Guevara's words. For Stuppner, however, the change in Nono, far from being deliberate, was brought about by his failure to communicate with the masses; what looks like resignation is, in reality, a home-coming. Years of frustration have come to an end and old longings are at last being fulfilled; Stuppner speaks of 'a sleepy world, in which the composer indulges in complacent loneliness'.

Dieter Schnebel's reaction is just the reverse ('Gruss an Luigi Nono', p.80). Having been converted instantaneously by Nono's early serial music, he was very much disappointed by the later, politically committed compositions; the quartet is, for him, the work of a great composer who, though no longer young, has once more chosen a new direction.

This new direction is also the subject chosen by Luigi Pestalozza ('Ausgangspunkt Nono (nach dem "Quartett")', p.3), who traces its causes back to their early beginnings, when spiritual introspection, and the concepts of the fragment, disintegration, and the 'moment' were already present. He too sees the 'overwhelming commitment' of the later years as something that has now been superseded, and in confirmation of this he quotes from an interview that Nono gave to the Italian Communist paper *Unità* in May 1981; in speaking of the first performance at the Maggio Fiorentino of *Das atmende Klarsein* (1980-81; for bass flute, 18 solo voices, and live electronics) Nono made it clear that he himself considered his past a closed chapter.

Heinz-Klaus Metzger, whose 'Wendepunkt Quartett' (p.93) is the last item in this volume, also quotes Nono, but this time the composer makes no confession about a change of heart or direction. In a conversation with Metzger, Nono attributes what others regard as a personal and musical transformation to his intensive concern with Judaism, particularly that of Eastern Europe under Nazi rule. The 'fragments' of the title of the quartet are excerpts from verses by Hölderlin; though written in the score they are not to be heard but to be 'sung' by the players in their minds as they perform the music. This idea resembles the ancient Jewish tradition of practising sacred texts by humming them inaudibly to oneself, and it throws an interesting light on Nono's conception of the function of texts (Pestalozza examines this aspect of the work with great insight). *Fragmente* is marked by a number of extended silences—Nono tends to share Webern's attitude to silence and reject that of Cage, though Metzger claims that he is beginning to be able to reconcile the two. The pitches of the quartet are derived from the *scala enigmatica* of the first of Verdi's *Quattro pezzi sacre,* the *Ave Maria,* which Nono uses not only as compositional material but also as a model of thought, 'a paradigm of fragmentary thinking in time'.

Metzger, who, as the title of his essay indicates, regards *Fragmente* as something of a new starting-point, tries to reconcile his own views with Nono's denial of a change of direction; he characterises Nono's recent development as a 'transformation into his own opposite while maintaining and even building up his identity'. Nono's turning away from powerful and occasionally violent music of a committedly collective character to an austere chamber work is, according to Metzger, evidence of a private as well as a political change: 'with all its subtlety [this piece] is, world-shattering'. But having expressed this opinion, Metzger allows Nono to contradict it. At a symposium on Schumann in December 1980 Nono declared: 'I have not changed. The delicate and private aspect has also its political and collective side. Therefore my string quartet is not the expression of a new, retrospective line of thought, but of the present stage in my experiments: my aim is to achieve the most rebellious pronouncement with the smallest means.'—an apposite comment for an occasion designed to investigate the work of the composer who 'turned his great sorrows into small songs'.

Musik-Konzepte no.4 was the first of two Alban Berg issues. Except for a bibliography and a discography by Rainer Riehn, the volume has only two contributors: Constantin Floros and George Perle. 'Das esoterische Programm der *Lyrischen Suite* von Alban Berg' by Constantin Floros is the reprint of an article that first appeared in the *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* in 1975. The author explains how he came to suspect the existence of a programme governing the *Lyric Suite,* and how his method of investigation led him to its uncovering. Berg, who had previously been regarded as a composer of 'absolute music', turns out to have based the *Lyric Suite* on a detailed programme, and Floros suggests that from now on the work cannot be viewed other than in an autobiographical context.

'Das geheime Programm der Lyrischen Suite' by George Perle is a translation of an article published in 1977 in the newsletter of the International Alban Berg Society and in the *Musical Times.* In it Perle announces his find of a pocket score of the *Lyric Suite* containing numerous annotations in the composer's own hand. The score was a secret present to Hanna Fuchs, sister of Franz Werfel and wife of a wealthy Prague industrialist; Berg's commentary not only reveals the work's programme but decodes a number of musical messages which declare his love for Hanna. Perle's discovery is obviously of primary importance and it has led to an entirely new approach to Berg's life and oeuvre.

Far from diminishing Floros's achievement in detection, Perle's revelation seems only to make it the more impressive. But Floros apparently did not see things in this light, and a bitter controvorsy ensued between the two scholars; this was pursued in the pages of a second *Musik-Konzepte* volume (no.9), in which Metzger and Riehn also included the evidence of an earlier witness, Theodor Adorno. It seems that Adorno knew from the very beginning about the programme of the *Lyric Suite*, but considered himself bound to silence by his friendship and respect for Berg. At his death in 1969, however, there was found a collection of his writings from 1955 headed 'Notes about Alban Berg'. From these it is clear that even the annotated score of the *Lyric Suite* does not tell the whole story, and that parts of the hidden meaning of the work may never be known. It is possible that some of the coded messages concern not only Hanna Fuchs but Helene Berg, there being some confusion owing to the identity of their initials.

In the same issue Metzger and Riehn reprint the text

of Berg's address to Schoenberg on the occasion of his 50th birthday. Berg greets his teacher with the prediction that through him the supremacy of German music will be guaranteed for the next 50 years—a rather mealy-mouthed compliment considering that Schoenberg himself, only two years earlier, had told Josef Rufer about 'a discovery that will assure the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years'.

Musik-Konzepte is not a series for the faint-hearted or slapdash. It is difficult to read, the subject matter is demanding, and the answers are never cut and dried. But to those who are prepared to make the effort of concentration and thought it will offer ample rewards in the way of insight and understanding.

Nick Barrett

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To an English ear there is something odd, and fascinating, about the French approach to music. Since the election of the socialist government in June 1981 there has sprung up like mushrooms a crop of independent radio stations, catering for the widest interests and sponsored by all kinds of organisation. Many of them play popular music of one kind or another. In Paris you can tune in to a *radio libre* and hear a relaxed and funny presenter swapping discs and wisecracks with a studio guest in a way never dreamed of across the Channel; he can be rude about what she chooses and she about what he chooses, but both of them are adventurous. It makes for fine radio, original and entertaining. On France-Inter Paris, a state station that plays an extraordinary range of music interrupted only by the occasional news bulletin or time check, I have heard songs that would make the BBC blush for a week and provoke angry correspondence for a month to come. But then the BBC wouldn't play them.

Shift along the VHF band and you come to France-Musique, a national institution: the élite catering for an élite, say a lot of people. Imagine a BBC Radio 3 presenter telling you that you're going to hear an outstandingly good performance of so-and-so's Fourth Symphony, with someone else chipping in to tell you what's so good about it. Often you get the feeling you're being talked down to, but sometimes it makes for more good radio. The published critics can wax very personal, and the replies are just the same: 'How dare Monsieur X presume to complain about my being over-polite to my studio guests, when he himself was once a producer for the network and never took a risk in his career?'

Yet the whole thing is a little tame compared with Radio 3—itself battered often enough for élitism: 'Not enough jazz', say some; 'Not enough contemporary music', cry others; 'Too many tidy little packages', complain others again. Maybe they're right; but listen to France-Musique for a week or several, and slowly but surely you start to miss the grand follies of poor old Radio 3. Yes, there is plenty of jazz, at least an hour a day and well presented (never mind that few people are at home at lunchtime), and certainly you can get an earful of something new and even something ancient as often as you want it. But where is the six-part series on Vagn Holmboe ('70 last year'—the BBC's favourite reason for an effort like that) or one man's passionate view of 'Aspects of the Blues'? There are good ideas on France-Musique, such as a weekly recording made by listeners themselves and the regular magazine programme of music from all cultures, 'Chants de la terre'. This year there is also a splendidly ambitious series of half-hour programmes broadcast early every weekday evening called 'Repères contemporains', each presenting a 'key work' in the modern repertory in an attempt to bridge the yawning gulf between composers and the general public. The most retrograde listener must now be able to explain to you what a set is and why Schoenberg felt he had to invent it. Good stuff. But on the other hand 'Le matin des musiciens', the French equivalent of 'This Week's Composer', goes on not for about 50 minutes a day but around three hours! Sometimes one cannot avoid the impression that if the French adore music, they adore talking about it even more.

Who better to do so than Pierre Boulez, the wizard of IRCAM? In each of these two series of illustrated lectures he discusses a particular problem in music, analysing in some depth a number of works taken mainly from the 20th-century repertory. A principal aim of both series is to elucidate aspects of contemporary music for the benefit of people who find it difficult and off-putting. The first consists of recordings of four lectures given in February 1978 at Paris's futuristic palace of the arts and sciences, the Centre Georges Pompidou. In them Boulez looks at the question of time in music, devoting three sessions to works by himself, Ligeti, Messiaen, and Carter, and in the fourth taking us at a gallop through Western music from Guillaume de Machaut to modern times. The works discussed were performed in a concert at the Théâtre de la Villa on 23 February 1978, but no recording of that occasion is available. France-Culture, the radio network that sounds like a cross between Radio 4 and the Open University, used much of the material on the air, and Radio-France and IRCAM subsequently decided to issue the cassettes, which became available in February 1980. Fairly hard on the heels of that series came another, this time of three cassettes drawn from lectures on the relationship between composition and the materials available to the composer, from the string quartet to the digital computer. The works studied here are by Debussy, Varèse, Webern, Stockhausen, John Chowning, and York Höller. The musical examples in both series are performed for the most part by Boulez himself and his splendid band, the Ensemble InterContemporain.[1]

'Time is a function in music that is normally taken for granted', says Boulez. 'Musical education involves, for example, composition exercises, harmony exercises, and exercises in counterpoint, but rhythm has, until very recently, been considered a natural phenomenon, a given.' There are rhythmic figures that everyone knows, such as dance figures, and there is, more generally speaking, a rhythmic vocabulary to be drawn on, but Boulez investigates the question of rhythm more deeply, prompted by the

much greater importance it is now accorded in relation to other aspects of music. In fact he has a very great deal to say about it, starting from the premise that Western music has a habit of going somewhere—from a beginning to an end—and finishing with some reflections on the role of the musician as the unpredictable, even irrational, element in performance. On the way he is by turns interesting, enlightening, and occasionally amusing. I should add at once that he is also clear and agreeable to listen to, apart from the rare moments when he steps away from the microphone. The fact that he speaks in his native tongue should not put off those willing and able to lend him an ear.

It is perhaps not surprising that Boulez is at his most expansive when discussing his own piece, *Éclat,* which occupies the whole of his first lecture on time and also part of the last. But the piece merits the attention anyway, as a work that breaks away from the tradition of music with a beat. As Boulez points out, there are two conceptions of time in music, the first related to physical activity, as in work-songs and dances, the second to the complexities of scholarly notated music. In both sorts of music, however, time is measured out in the beat, which can be subdivided into smaller units. Melodic elements are tied up with the rhythm, and this relationship identifies themes and accounts for the listener's recognising them as such; in some cases (such as the minuet, which was absorbed into Classical tradition) the rhythm may, to some extent, define the genre. But it is Boulez' opinion that with the advent of notation composers began to worry about music that looked as good as it sounded. In the Middle Ages, composers such as Machaut were already appreciated for skilful tricks that some people are surprised to find in use before the 18th century. By way of illustration Boulez plays an isorhythmic excerpt from Machaut's *Messe de Nostre Dame,* in which at the mid-point the rhythm is reversed to become its own mirror image.

At the beginning of our own century there were two distinct trends in composers' attitudes to time. Schoenberg and Berg are among those who elaborated the harmonic language but tended to stick to old rhythmic formulae: as an example of this Boulez cites *Wozzeck,* in which a traditional rhythmic figure can dominate a whole scene. Stravinsky and Bartók, on the other hand, turned things upside-down, as in parts of *Le sacre du printemps* where the larger rhythmic units are made up of smaller ones. It is here that Messiaen comes on the scene: his series of piano pieces, *Quatre études de rythme,* jumps us into a new universe, where note values can be highly irregular, totally unrelated to bodily rhythms. We perceive time in music quite differently here: it becomes suspended, non-directional, like a slice out of something that goes on forever, from nowhere to anywhere—which brings me back to that lengthy discussion of *Éclat.*

Composed in 1964, *Éclat* is a work for chamber ensemble in which the composer seems to invite us to contemplate sound itself. Boulez takes us through the piece at times almost bar by bar (in so far as I may use the word). His explanation of how the ensemble is divided up and parts assigned reveals that remarkable sensitivity to the specialities and capabilities of each group of instruments that makes him a veritable French poet in timbre. In *Éclat* time is suspended, or at very least made of rubber. The sounds themselves, their birth and death, become the main point of interest. There are, for instance, rapid sequences for tuned percussion which, in their own right, are tight enough, but which take on an ethereal, floating quality when played over layers of decaying sound from other instruments. The conductor acts as co-ordinator, being in a better position than the player himself to judge the exact 'dosage' of each sound, the point where it loses its efficacy. Because we are not worrying about a destination we can give all our attention to the interferences set up between different instruments, or to sounds whose persistence irritates, but which, when they stop, reveal a richness as they decay.

A different kind of 'timelessness' is felt in Ligeti's Chamber Concerto, the subject of the second talk. Here the audience is forced into 'statistical' listening: some passages are so fast that one cannot hope to distinguish particular rhythmic values or even instruments, but only the overall texture. Indeed, Ligeti puts texture right in the forefront in this piece: musical lines without firm rhythmic structure, neutral in themselves, together create an interesting amalgam; qualities such as timbre are often suppressed so that instruments sounding together have no individuality. Time itself can change the texture as instruments enter one after another, working in different tempos, their voices sometimes standing out from the ensemble and sometimes blending with it, creating layer on layer of sound.

Layers interest Elliott Carter too. He is the only composer to make a contribution to the series in person; he explains how his preoccupation with time in music developed from his reading of Proust, who superimposes the past on the present and vice versa, the two interacting with each other. In his third lecture, Boulez looks at two sections, 'Argument' and 'Sandpiper', of Carter's masterpiece for soprano and chamber orchestra, *A Mirror on which to Dwell.* He draws attention to groups of instruments, each pursuing its own rhythm but interleaving with the others; some play mechanically in unchanging tempos; some have parts that are almost improvisatory in their flexibility; the oboe in 'Sandpiper' catches the spirit of the bird in Elizabeth Bishop's text as he runs back and forth across the music in his own time. Boulez also discusses Carter's concern with 'metrical modulation'—an idea used by Stravinsky in *Les noces* —where the rate of the beat remains the same but the number of notes to the beat changes. These games with time help a highly evocative score.

The first part of that third talk deals with one of Messiaen's *Quatre études de rythme,* the influential *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités* (1949). Time is one of the four dimensions of the work—the other three are pitch, attack and dynamics—that are organised by a mode that remains fixed throughout the piece; notes cease to be part of a phrase but leap out as objects. As Boulez says, the use of such techniques is more rudimentary here than in Messiaen's later works (and I understand that the composer himself does not count the piece among his finest) but it is all the more clear for that. Boulez shows how Messiaen's rhythmic forms derive from the classical vocabulary and from his investigation over a long period of Asiatic music, particularly that of India—a study that was highly theoretical since recordings of ethnic music were few and far between in the 1930s. His rhythms may be based on the augmentation and diminution of units of notes, and as the process becomes more and more abstract and mathematical he lifts us out of time altogether.

Messiaen's experiments with time and mathematics in music helped a group of young composers in the 1950s to sort out their own thinking. In *Zeitmasze*

Stockhausen sought to escape the constraints of systematic composition by relying on the accidents of performance. After all, as Boulez argues, systems of organising time in music are essentially systems of constraint. People rarely think of the performer's role; he has to find expressive freedom within the scope of the score. Boulez wrote *Éclat* to bring out this element in music, moving away from the strict serialism which had been his main preoccupation, and which left the poor musician far too busy trying to find his way round the score to worry about personal expression. *Éclat* is a game: the musician has his score but there are still moments when he doesn't know quite what to expect from the co-ordinator. This keeps everybody lively and involved, which is very much the point of the piece, but, like the audience, the performer often has leisure to explore the sound, to take it apart and then put his memory to work to reconstruct the texture.

In the 19th century composers gave more and more of their attention to texture; the evolution of the orchestra itself goes hand in hand with this process, for an instrument is more than the servant of a musical idea. Composers started by notating pitch, then rhythm, and then nuances such as dynamics, but these days many are equally concerned with timbre. There are, in short, new relationships between the composer and his materials. Webern, the subject of the second lecture in the series *Matériau et invention musicale,* is a particularly interesting example of this. Boulez takes two works separated in Webern's career by nearly 30 years, the *Sechs Bagatellen* for string quartet and the Cantata no.1. With the first he suggests, Webern introduced 'global' or 'statistical' listening. It is totally chromatic, the intervals are strained, and successive notes in one musical line can be quite differently played—a trill followed by a harmonic followed by a *pizzicato.* The musical motifs are 'atomised', and because the instrumental parts cross each other continually and the tempo is sometimes too fast to permit aural analysis, the ear becomes disorientated. This, says Boulez, is the intention. As with Kandinsky's paintings of the same period (1912-13), there is a deliberate dissolution of form. Silence becomes important too, but the principal effect is the submission of the listener to textures which cannot be immediately analysed but in which individual elements fall into a coherent whole. Boulez claims that there is no repetition in the work because Webern was frightened of repetition, always varying material if he brought it back; his deep sensitivity to the individuality of each instrument, to the nature of sound itself, could not work itself out in traditional, repetitive forms.

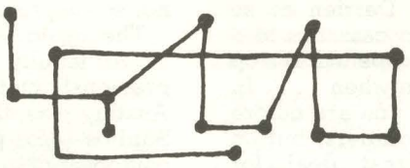
By contrast, the Cantata, written near the end of a period of extreme discipline, uses the instruments to 'colour in' the musical thought, a completely different approach. Here the idea comes first, and the instruments add spots of colour to the vocal line, sometimes doubling and sometimes contrasting with it. Debussy, too, in his 'Étude pour les quartes', takes the 'idea' as a starting-point. Using an interval that has always been ambiguous in tonal composition, he creates a rich piece which shifts in and out of chromaticism and tonality, deriving colour from a melodic line that evokes exotic Oriental music. Varèse's *Intégrales,* which shares with the 'Étude' the first cassette in this series, is a work that springs out of the nature and character of the instruments used. Boulez offers fascinating and detailed accounts of both these works; he shows how Varèse creates blocks of sound with intense internal life, using the 'hierarchical' relations of pitched wind instruments in contrast with the 'anarchy' of percussive sound.

There are two distinct approaches, then: the organisation of given material according to the demands of the composition; and composition dictated by the material that is taken as a starting-point. Both can appear in the same piece, and the problems of the composer in relation to his material are not only intellectual but practical. In the last of the three lectures, Boulez introduces us to the problems and potential of electronics in music. First there is an excerpt from *Stria,* a richly textured and meditative piece by the father of frequency modulation, John Chowning. Excerpts from Stockhausen's *Kontakte* (1960), in which piano and percussion move into foreground and background against the tape, are used to point up the relation between live and recorded sound; Boulez shows how this relatively early electronic piece makes us think about our preconceptions as to what constitutes 'civilised', ordered sound, and what constitutes 'noise'.

Finally, Boulez turns to a recent work by York Höller, *Arcus,* which was completed for an IRCAM commission in 1978. The 'R' in IRCAM stands, of course, for 'Recherche', and *Arcus* shows what can be done with a very expensive computer. Following a complex code of his own devising, Höller used the computer to modulate the recorded sounds of an orchestra, making a tape with fluctuations in sonority that could not be produced by other means; in performance the playing of live musicians is synchronised with the taped material, highlighting the differences between the 'real' and recorded sound-worlds. From the longish extract that concludes the casette the piece comes across as interesting and attractive.

A recurring point in both series of talks is the role of the musician, whose 'accidents' are very important for Boulez. 'The musician's gesture, after all, does not exactly destroy the system, but it renders it bearable. All systems as such, strict and rigid, would be absolutely intolerable. You realise this if you create rhythm in an irreproachable fashion by means of a machine; if rhythms remain always the same they lose interest, in the same way as a timbre loses interest if no accident is involved.' There is plenty of accident in that sense in these recordings. It is a pity that not all of the works are performed in their entirety, for the musicianship throughout is extremely good; we have to be content with complete performances of the Messiaen study, the Webern *Bagatellen,* and *Éclat,* the only works short enough, presumably, to be included whole. The Groupe Vocal de France add a fine chorus to the instruments of the Ensemble InterContemporain in the first and third movements of the Webern Cantata, obliged occasionally to be pretty quick in providing Boulez with his illustrations. These examples are usually well placed, and every time you think 'I didn't quite catch that, could we have it again please?' Boulez obliges.

Technically the recordings are almost faultless and the linking of one section to another is handled by Radio-France's Jean-Pierre Derrien with a discretion I sometimes wish he could exercise on the air, especially when he is getting excited about Boulez. But for all their interest, I do have a few less favourable things to say about these cassettes. As with the programmes of France-Musique, it's sometimes difficult to judge for whom they are really intended. In the attempt to 're-establish the approach of today's composers within the main intellectual currents of the age', Boulez takes altogether too much account of the



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composers and too little of the currents. There is a great amount of unexceptionable theoretical discussion and analysis, but little effort is made to put the music in context, apart from a glancing reference to that writer or this painter. The cassette jackets give you dates as well as other pertinent facts and translations of texts, but Boulez and Derrien do so most infrequently. Playing one of the cassettes to a friend, I found myself occasionally compelled to stop and say, 'Well, you see, that all began when . . .'. In other words, you have to know where you are before you start. It's all a little heavy for beginners, but on the other hand there's not a great deal for professionals to get their teeth into. The level is more that of a student course, I would say, with some unusually interesting ideas thrown in. I find it difficult to picture the mainstream classical music lover sitting back in an armchair and shoving off mentally into new waters, with a dictionary of terms at hand to help him chart the unknown. It would also be useful to see what Boulez is doing with his hands on the one or two occasions he makes references to conducting technique! On the whole, though, these two series of cassettes embody a good idea. Would that the Arts Council and the BBC could get together and do something similar! But perhaps their problem would be to find somebody like Boulez who can teach as lucidly as he conducts.

[1] The contents of the two series are as follows.
Le temps musical cassette 1: Pierre Boulez, *Éclat*, 1964—cassette 2: György Ligeti, Chamber Concerto, 1969-70—cassette 3: Olivier Messiaen, *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités*, 1949 (Pierre-Laurent Aimard, piano); Elliott Carter, *A Mirror on which to Dwell*, 1976 (Deborah Cook, soprano)—cassette 4: 'Introduction à une histoire du temps musical de Guillaume de Machaut à nos jours' *Matériau et invention musicale* cassette 1: Claude Debussy, 'Pour les quartes', *Études*, 1915 (Alain Neveux, piano); Edgard Varèse, *Intégrales*, 1926—cassette 2: Anton Webern, *Sechs Bagatellen* op.9, 1913; Anton Webern, Cantata no.1 op.29, 1939 (Groupe Vocal de France)—cassette 3: John Chowning, *Stria*, tape, 1977; Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Kontakte*, electronic sounds, piano, percussion, 1960 (Pierre-Laurent Aimard, piano; Michel Cerutti, percussion); York Höller, *Arcus*, instruments, tape, 1978
A third series, *L'oeil et l'oreille*, became available in February 1982.

Melvyn Poore

Computer Music in Texas

International Computer Music Conference, Denton, Texas, 5-8 November 1981

With the financial assistance of the Hinrichsen Foundation, I was fortunate last autumn to be able to sample the delights of Texas and attend the International Computer Music Conference in Denton. Before the Conference began I visited the music department of the University of Texas at Austin, which is about 250 miles south of Dallas. This is a very large university: Austin has a population of *c*300,000, of whom 60,000 are students—not to mention the faculty, staff and ancillary workers. Austin itself, though large, has a low profile (physically, that is) and is a very clean city. It is also very sunny! It has large interests in the microelectronics and computer industries and I was surprised not to see a link between one or more of these companies and the university music department; on the other hand, since the university, even in these troubled times, is not wanting for money (Texas is very rich), it is perhaps not so surprising.

The music department has somewhere in the region of 70 faculty members. The person whom I had previously met in Europe, and with whom I stayed in Austin, was the Director of the Electronic Music Studios (yes, plural), Dr Barton McLean, himself a composer of instrumental and electro-acoustic music. There are three studios: a 'small' analogue learning studio for students who have little or no experience of electro-acoustic music, a main analogue studio for more complex and/or larger-scale composition work, and a digital studio which is centred on the Fairlight CMI—a real-time digital synthesizer. (There are now several of these instruments in British studios.) I met a number of the students who were working in the studios and had interesting discussions with them. One stimulating feature of the post-graduate work with the Fairlight is its use as a controller for laser graphics—a function for which the instrument was not specifically designed—making possible exact co-ordination of and relationships between graphics and sound.

I had sufficient time in Austin to visit some computer stores: the market in America is not vastly different from that in Britain, except that everything is relatively cheaper. This is partly because a large percentage of microcomputer products in Britain are imported from the States and are consequently inflated in price owing to the number of middlemen involved, the transport costs, taxes, and so on; moreover, the price of a small computer system relative to the average salary is much lower than in Britain. Naturally the prices of British goods follow market trends set by American products in this country. As a consequence ownership of a home computer system is far more common in the USA than it is here (which is not to say that it is not growing extremely fast in Britain—just look at the number of computer magazines on the bookstalls nowadays), and access to local and national computer networks, data banks, and electronic mail and mail-order systems is becoming fairly common. Such facilities are available in Britain through Prestel, but for most individuals and many smaller businesses they are still too expensive to have gained widespread popularity.

The International Computer Music Conference was hosted by North Texas State University at Denton. Denton is a small college town about 45 minutes' drive north of Dallas. In common with countless other small American towns, Denton is impossible to reach by any means of transport other than private—public transport does not exist in such places. For those who have never heard of North Texas State University in relation to computer music, I quote the Dean of the School of Music, Marceau Myers, writing in the conference prospectus:

> Our computer music facilities include a software synthesis system using Vercoe's MUSIC 360 on the National Advanced Systems AS/5000, converted on our Hewlett-Packard 21MX; a hybrid system interfacing an IMSAI 8080 micro-computer with Moog synthesisers; and a Synclavier II with Script/graphics software capability. Computer-assisted instruction in music theory is fully implemented and in full operation in the School of Music with eight user terminals providing 600 undergraduate theory students with 344 access hours per week of ear training.

The conference was directed by Larry Austin, the associate director was Tom Clark, and there was the usual battery of big names from the usual computer music composition and research centres. There were exhibitions by Casheab, *Computer Music Journal,* Digital Keyboards, Digital Music Systems, Fairlight, and New England Digital Corporation. Special guest composers were Lejaren Hiller and John Cage (with a special performance of *HPSCHD* on 6 November), and there were numerous special guest performers who took part in the five formal concerts and the continuous performances, in the Gallery, of works which did not find their way into the formal concerts.

The conference began with a five-star-rated three-hour tutorial session—Lejaren Hiller, James Beauchamp and Charles Dodge appearing every hour, on the hour. This became more interesting as it went on. Jerry Hiller spoke about compositional algorithms, which he had himself utilised in various works, and attempted to assess their usefulness both in the past and the future. James Beauchamp spoke on producing computer-generated sounds that have a 'definite acoustic flavour'; he outlined the means of achieving control over this factor of sound in a very clearly illustrated, though hurried, talk. Charles Dodge covered a little of the same ground, but aimed more specifically at speech synthesis.

Over the next four days, there were 13 'Papers' sessions in which participants were allowed 20 minutes (some, more privileged, were allowed 30, 40, or even, in one case, 45 minutes) to rush through as much material as possible about their recent work. We had Compositional Approaches, Compositional Philosophy, Studio Reports, Computer-assisted Composition, Musical Data Structures, Computer-assisted Instruction, Synthesis Hardware and Signal Processing, Real-time Synthesis, Psycho-acoustics and Sound Analysis, Computer-assisted Analysis, and, finally (on a Sunday morning), Music Notation and Printing. The main criticisms of these sessions (I did not attend them all, of course—in fact some were run concurrently) were that there was too much material, that one speaker followed another too quickly, and that most of the speakers were, in any case, ill prepared: (often they had too much to say for the time allotted to them, or their visual material was illegible or non-existent or lost). Coupled with the difficulties of hearing soft-spoken participants (in spite of the microphone supplied) and understanding speakers whose mother tongue was not English, I found these paper sessions a little frustrating and more than a little tiring. The same problems surely arise at every conference ever organised anywhere in the whole world: someone somewhere ought to come up with a solution. In the meantime it is up to individual speakers to make themselves comprehensible. We can, fortunately, look forward to the publication of the proceedings of the conference to fill in some of the gaps; these will be available fairly soon from The Computer Music Association, PO Box 1634, San Francisco, CA 94101, USA.

The conference as a whole was well organised and very firmly run. There was no overrunning of schedules, equipment was available where and when it was required, with people to operate it (and it worked). The sun shone almost continuously throughout.

Christopher Fox

Darmstadt 1982

31st Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, Darmstadt, 11-28 July 1982

For the visitor from Britain, used only to the Dartington—Glasgow—Huddersfield—SPNM round of new-music gatherings, Darmstadt is something of a revelation. I found it hard not to be utterly seduced by the seriousness (in the best sense of that word) of the whole event, by the concern that things should be done as well and as thoroughly as possible. For the more regular Darmstadt participants the 1982 course also seems to have had some novelty value. Although the days of the Stockhausen, Boulez & Co. composition faculty are long gone, this was the first year without any representation from the old guard (Caskel, Kontarsky, *et al.*) among the instrumental teachers. In their place was a cosmopolitan collection of personnel, including the American oboist Nora Post, the German pianist Herbert Henck, the stupendous French flautist Pierre-Yves Artaud, and a strong London contingent consisting of Irvine Arditti, Rohan de Saram, Roger Heaton, and James Wood. A new spirit also pervaded the composition course, for alongside the mainstream avant-garde figure of Brian Ferneyhough there were much more idiosyncratic, experimental composers such as Horatiu Radulescu and Walter Zimmermann. On the other hand this new spirit was less discernible in the pieces submitted by participating composers, which, with a few exceptions—most notably James Dillon's *Parjanya-Vata* (1981) for solo cello and Robert HP Platz's *Maro* (1980-81) for solo violin, the two pieces that shared the Kranichsteiner Preis—consisted of longwinded recyclings of all-too-familiar contemporary music clichés.

Much of the credit for the broadening of Darmstadt's perspectives must go to Friedrich Hommel, whose first year as director this was. But the Ferienkurse still have a little further to go perhaps before the adjective 'Internationale' is truly deserved, for although that former Darmstadt iconoclast, John Cage, was duly reverenced in the year of his 70th birthday—by a spellbinding performance of *Music of Changes* (1951) from Herbert Henck, by an early morning mushroom hunt on the day the weather broke (bearing out Cage's dictum that a meal without mushrooms is like a day without rain), and by marvellously exact and enthusiastic performances of *First Construction in Metal* (1939) and *Double Music* (1941)—there was very little other American music to be heard. At a time when both Phil Glass and Steve Reich, for example, have been significantly extending their compositional vocabularies, this seemed a considerable omission.

The first three days were largely given over to the work of the composers and musicians of the Paris-based Ensemble de l'Itinéraire. The principal composers of the group, Hugues Dufourt, Gerard Grisey, Tristan Murail, and Michaël Levinas, introduced the main ideas behind the group's work and played examples of their music, stressing that although their creative personalities are quite distinct they nevertheless share a common theoretical perspective. In particular they proposed a musical empiricism based on a close study of the properties of

sounds themselves, so that, in Gerard Grisey's words, 'La musique est alors le devenir des sons.' (Music, then, is what sounds grow into.)

L'Itinéraire's work began almost ten years ago, spurred on by the new resources offered by computer analysis of sound and the 'scientific' (as opposed to 'subjective') virtuosity of an emerging generation of instrumentalists, combined with the already available means of generating and transforming sound electronically. There was a tendency for l'Itinéraire and their supporters to make large claims for the innovatory nature of the group's work, but essentially their central philosophy seems a logical extension, into the domain of instrumental music, of the ideas of the Groupe de Recherches Musicales. Certainly l'Itinéraire's compositional interest in the exploration and gradual transformation of individual elements of a sound-object is directly congruent with that of GRM composers such as Jean-Claude Risset and Bernard Parmegiani, the only difference being l'Itinéraire's preference for a predominantly live medium.

In their concerts the divergent creative personalities of the composers became clear. The expanded time-scale that had been argued as necessary for the microscopic examination of the music's sound-world was most evident in Grisey's and Dufourt's work, whereas Levinas emerged as a much more extrovert composer. Thus the first concert by l'Itinéraire's two instrumental groups, the Groupe de Musique de Chambre Expérimentale and the Ensemble d'Instruments Électroniques, contrasted Levinas' short, overture-like *Appels* (1974) with Dufourt's protracted *La tempestà, d'après Giorgione* (1976-7). *La tempestà* is scored (like Dufourt's *Saturne* (1979))[1] for an ensemble rich in low instruments (bass flute, contrabass clarinet, etc.) whose readily produced overtone characteristics are meticulously but slowly exploited. *Appels* is an altogether more strident piece for a wind-dominated ensemble, with each of the wind instruments exciting a side drum so that every note is surrounded by an aura of white noise.

Paradoxically, given the group's penchant for exploring the untempered world of the overtone series, I found the most satisfactory piece to be Tristan Murail's *Territoires de l'oubli* (1977), written for that most even-tempered of instruments, the piano. Here, at last, was a piece that employed the by now familiar painstaking exposition of individual sound-objects within a larger structure of some complexity. Roger Heaton remarked on the 'colour and brilliance of orchestration' of these composers in his review of Darmstadt 1980,[2] but by the end of two-and-a-half days of lectures and three evenings of concerts featuring the work of the Itinéraire four (as well as some fairly forgettable satellites), I was yearning for more than just brilliant orchestration.

To some extent this yearning was satisfied by the music of Clarence Barlowe, whose *çoğluotobüsíşletmesí* (1975-9) Roger Heaton also discussed. Barleugh, whose Joycian delight in respelling provides light relief in the book of the piece,[3] lectured on the research work that had led to its composition. He was also represented by his *Im Januar am Nil* (1982); this is much more accessible than *çoğluotobüsíşletmesí* and is scored for flute, piano, seven strings, and two clarinets tuned respectively a quarter-tone and a sixth-tone flat. The work opens with string harmonics which articulate the overtone spectra of the pitches of a barely discernible bass clarinet melody. Then the piano and double bass enter in their lowest registers, accompanied by flute and clarinets, with the same melody which, over about 25 minutes, is subjected to several processes simultaneously: it accumulates pitches, which gradually fill out the metre; there is a series of *accelerandi;* the winds emphasise particular beats with increasingly frequent multiphonics; and the strings progressively replace quiet harmonics with loud down-bow attacks. The overall effect is of an inexorable progress towards faster, denser, and noisier music. In the concert I sat next to a player-member of l'Itinéraire whom the piece obviously annoyed, but on a second hearing, without distractions, I found the piece enormously compelling.

There is a superficial resemblance between moments in Klarhenz Balo's music and American systemic music of the late sixties and early seventies, but a much more profound absorption of American experimental music in general was evident in the music of Walter Zimmermann. We heard a concert of all the chamber music from his *Lokale Musik* (1977-81),[4] a collection of pieces derived from the folk melodies of his native Franconia (an area of southern Germany), which also includes a 50-minute orchestral work, *Ländler Topographien.* The chamber pieces range from an extraordinarily fragile string quartet, *Fränkische Tänze,* in which melodies are picked out on upper harmonics and hocketted between players, to a very vigorous and comic duet, *Erd-, Luft- und Wassertöne,* for trombone and prepared piano, to which an ethereal third part for rubbed wine-glasses is added. I hope to write at greater length on Zimmermann's music in a future issue of *Contact,* but suffice it to say here that *Lokale Musik* is a considerable achievement. Particularly remarkable is the way in which Zimmermann's 'arrangements' (and he suggests 'sublimation', 'transformation' and 'substitution' as more suitable terms than 'arrangement'), preserve some vestiges of the former identify of his local tunes but also invest them with the attributes of a bewildering range of other musics, from gamelan to Christian Wolff and Kagel, from medieval music to early Cage.

Curiously, a large section of the Darmstadt audience found this music sufficiently disturbing to want to disrupt it, and the atmosphere at the end of the Zimmermann concert was electric, with cheers countering boos and crumpled programmes being thrown at composer and performers. Similar scenes were caused by my *Dance* (1980) and Erhard Grosskopf's *Lied* (1977) for bass clarinet and string quartet.[5] Grosskopf is perhaps best known outside Germany for his musical and political kinship with Cardew and Wolff in the early seventies. The bass clarinet quintet marks the start of a new development for him, away from the process-ish music of that period, towards a 'new complexity' (his description), of which *Lied* was the least successful example I heard. More impressive was *Quintett über den Herbstanfang* (1981-2) for large orchestra, written in the autumn of 1981 during the squatter riots in West Berlin; here sustained chords are overlaid with disruptive, generally aperiodic and fragmented figures.

Grosskopf's ability to synthesise elements of folk-like material, late Romanticism, and free atonality into an effective musical language contrasts sharply with Wolfgang Rihm's struggle to progress beyond Berg. Rihm—the only survivor of the neoromantic boom of Darmstadt 1980—played a recording of the third movement of his Third Symphony, and James Wood's percussion class performed his *Tutuguri VI*

(Kreuze) (1980-81). Both revealed the same weakness: as Roger Heaton noted, 'his pieces tend to be hyperemotional and overlong'; although individual moments were often exciting, the hyperbolic excess of the whole quickly blunted my interest.

Rihm lectured in tandem with the more senior Helmut Lachenmann. I found this pairing curious, not only because Rihm had little to say, but also because he would seem to be a prime example of the 'avant-garde hedonists' against whom Lachenmann rails in his splendid polemic 'The "Beautiful" in Music Today'.[6] Of Lachenmann's music, we heard *Wiegenmusik* (1963), *Ein Kinderspiel* (1970), and *Guero* (1970), all for piano, and the more substantial *Salut für Caudwell* (1977), given a marvellously dead-pan performance by the guitar duo, Wilhelm Bruck and Theodor Ross. The later music is spare and economical, employing new playing techniques with great aesthetic refinement, so that the studiously contrived absence of conventional playing adds cultural resonance to the precisely articulated new sounds (guitar strings 'bowed' with the edge of the hand, for example).

Whereas Lachenmann appeared towards the end of the course, performances of Brian Ferneyhough's music were a recurrent element throughout, with the Second String Quartet (1980) in the Arditti Quartet's opening concert, followed later by *Time and Motion Study I* (1971-7), *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1971), *Unity Capsule* (1975-6), the *Sonatas* for string quartet (1967), and a new piano piece, *Lemma-Icon-Epigram* (1981). Of these, the piano piece and the Second Quartet were completely new to me, while *Unity Capsule* I knew only through a fascination with the dense calligraphy of the score.

I set out on this extended course in Ferneyhough familiarisation with a fair degree of scepticism, as someone who admired *Transit* (1972-5) and *Time and Motion Study III* (1974) but detested *La terre est un homme* (1976-9) and was bored by the *Sonatas*. The Second Quartet jolted me straight out of this frame of mind and totally convinced me, even at a first hearing. The accumulated tension as the instruments enter one by one with explosive but short-lived phrases, and its eventual tumultuous release, generates the impetus for a 'psycho-dramatic action' (as Ferneyhough terms it) of overwhelming intensity. What is especially impressive is the sense of an organic unity at every level of the work, fully realising the composer's declared intention that 'in any given figure the same sort of intensity as that of the entirety of the work must be present'

In retrospect, this same intention seems to hold for all the works from *Transit* (1972-5) to the recently completed *Superscriptio* (1981) for piccolo, and it was interesting to be able to compare the flute pieces and quartets from before and after this watershed. As Ferneyhough admits, the *Sonatas*—insect-like—wear their formal skeleton on the outside, whereas the structure of the Second Quartet is absorbed within the music itself; the result is music of a far greater coherence and expressive power in the later work. Similarly the musical discourse of *Unity Capsule* is much more direct than that of *Cassandra's Dream Song,* where Ferneyhough's decision to leave the performer some choice in the ordering of sections means that the piece as a whole has a rather lifeless quality, at odds with the frenetic impetus of the individual sections. Unfortunately the new piano piece was then rather disappointing, particularly since it succeeds the Second Quartet in the Ferneyhough canon. Before hearing *Lemma-Icon-Epigram* I was able to have some time with the score and the composer, and so I feel certain that in this case James Avery's performance did the work an injustice; it lacked in particular, the dynamic range the piece demands. It is to be hoped that a pianist of real power (Michael Finnissy would seem ideal) will take up the piece soon.

For Harry Halbreich, the most vocal of the musicologists on the staff, Ferneyhough's music is an example of 'radicalised tradition', the logical extension (and perhaps conclusion) of the western European school of structural dynamism, which Halbreich sees as running from the post-Renaissance polyphonists to Schoenberg. As an opposite tendency, devoted to a dissolution of the time sense of this school and a return to the timeless world of Eastern musics, he traced a line of development through Schubert, Liszt, Bruckner, Debussy, Messiaen, Xenakis, Ligeti, and Scelsi to l'Itinéraire and, especially, to the Paris-based Romanian, Horatiu Radulescu.

While the driving of such paths through music history is rather silly (like picking World cricket XIs to play Mars) and sometimes, as in Halbreich's case, a blinkering activity, Radulescu's music does represent an extreme example of the interest in musical stasis that characterises areas of the work of Messiaen and of Ligeti, Stockhausen, and Xenakis in the sixties. Unlike l'Itinéraire, Radulescu discusses his music not in terms of acoustic research but of magic, describing it as 'coming from and going towards the ETERNAL (the outer time)'.[7] While I distrust any composer who erects mythologies (whether political, theological, or pseudo-scientific) around his compositional practice, I found Radulescu's *Thirteen Dreams Ago* (1977), played by 13 strings of the Ensemble Köln, very beautiful, with each of its sound-constellations full of the 'inner life' that the composer promised. The other pieces played—*Capricorn's Nostalgic Crickets* (1972) for seven flutes, *Écous atins* (1979) for five players and 'sound icon' (a grand piano on its side so that nylon threads attached to the strings can be excited), and three other pieces programmed in a concert that started after my bedtime—were all prepared during the course and suffered accordingly, since the players did not have time to become acclimatised to life within Radulescu's 'sound plasmas'.

As well as providing a forum for the main lectures and concerts, Darmstadt also serves as an invaluable context for the exchange of scores, addresses, and the like.[8] Herbert Henck and Walter Zimmermann also took the opportunity to create an occasional, fringe-like alternative to the main course, playing tapes of, for example, a fascinating String Quartet from 1945 by Conlon Nancarrow, Cage's *Roaratorio* (1979) and *Pulse Music (1)* (1977-8), and a superb process piece for tape by John McGuire. However, these sessions were sparsely attended, with the hard-core avant-gardists rarely turning up for a bit of useful head-cleaning. But perhaps 'official' Darmstadt will have moved its focus a little further west by 1984.

1 *Saturne* was broadcast on BBC Radio 3's 'Music in our Time' earlier this year and is available on record on Sappho 004.

2 Roger Heaton, '30th Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik', *Contact 22* (Summer 1981), pp.33-7.

3 Clarlow, *Bus Journey to Parametron* (Cologne: Feedback Studios, 1978). Although the book is 'all about *çoğluotobüsişletmesi*', there is much of a more generally useful nature as well. I, for one, will be exploiting the fruits of Barlot's researches into metric and harmonic cohesion. *çoğluotobüsişletmesi* is now available on record on Wergo WER 60 098.

4 Parts of *Lokale Musik* and the piano piece *Beginner's Mind* (1974-5) were heard in the 1980-81 MusICA season. *Lokale Musik* is on record on the Edition Theater am Turm label.

5 Zimmermann and Grosskopf later suggested that this response was provoked by our music's use of consonance and an imagined concomitant lack of seriousness!

6 Helmut Lachenmann, 'The "Beautiful" in Music Today', *Tempo*, no.125 (December 1980), pp.20-24.

7 Horatiu Radulescu, *Sound Plasma—Music of the Future Sign* (Munich: Edition Modern, 1975), p.20.

8 For example, the Canadian musicologist Donna Zapf gave me a copy of a recent issue of the interesting Canadian journal, *Musicworks* (address: 30 Saint Patrick Street, Toronto, Canada M5T 1V1), on this occasion dealing exclusively with the new-music scene in and around Vancouver (Murray Schafer, Sten Hansen, Kenneth Gaburo, and others), though normally it deals with a much greater geographical area.

Correction

In Adrian Thomas's article on Lutosławski's *Jeux vénitiens* in *Contact 24* Example 1 on p.5 is wrongly printed: the penultimate chord lacks the notes *g″* and *d‴*. We apologise for this error.

Material Received

Periodicals

Composer: Magazine of the British Music Information Centre (Spring – Summer 1982)
Le monde de la musique, nos.35-48 (June 1981 – September 1982)
Musical Times, vol.123, nos.1670-74 (1982); vol.124, no.1675 (1982)
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Scores

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Louis Andriessen, *Hoketus* (1975-7) (Donemus)
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Luciano Berio, *Chemins IV, su Sequenza VII,* for oboe and eleven strings (1975) (Universal)
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——, *Who do you love,* for voice and five players (1980-81) (Peters)
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Klaus Hashagen, *Mobile Szenen II,* for percussion and piano (1967) (Peters)
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Jan W. Morthenson, *Alla marcia: Metamusik,* for large orchestra Salvation Army women's choir, stroboscope and tape (1973) (Hansen)
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