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New Scores

EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC CATALOGUE — 1: STRING ANTHOLOGY SUPPLEMENT (£1.20); VISUAL ANTHOLOGY (£1.50); LOGOS ANTHOLOGY (£1.10); CHRISTIAN WOLFF: PROSE PIECES (£1.50).

Experimental Music Catalogue, 208 Ladbroke Grove, LONDON W10, from where a booklet listing all the pieces with descriptions etc. can also be obtained.

KEITH POTTER

When the EMC, the most important single source of experimental (as opposed to 'avantgarde') music in this country reached its fourth edition in 1972, CONTACT began regular reviews of its contents. A large proportion of the music then available was examined by reviewers of intentionally widely differing sympathies in CONTACTS 6—9 (1973-74) and Gavin Bryars, one of the EMC's three editors, himself contributed an introductory article on the Catalogue to CONTACT 6.^{1*}

Since the expanded list of the fifth edition was published earlier this year, a number of new anthologies have appeared. Not all the new material is yet available, so we will, as before, be covering it over the next few issues. Experimental music is not often treated seriously by the established musical press, and certainly not by those journals who regularly review new scores. (An exception occurred in *The Musical Times* recently,² when Roger Smalley reviewed five EMC anthologies and Michael Nyman's book *Experimental Music: Cage and beyond*, (London: Studio Vista, 1974);³ the previous issue of MT had, as it happens, also contained an article on experimental music by Brian Dennis.⁴ So perhaps things are changing, after all, though much more attention is still given to the 'big' foreign names of experimental music — Cage, Feldman, Wolff — than to the British musicians.) CONTACT will, therefore, continue to publish information and opinion on experimental music on a regular basis.

Some main points to note about the fifth edition of the EMC:

1. Though it does not amount to a major shift in emphasis, the new scores are drawn from a wider range — both stylistically (I think) and geographically. Not all of these have actually appeared yet, so it is hard to tell what, if anything, this means: certainly most of the new music published so far seems to be firmly 'experimental' in outlook as that term has been defined.⁵ Among the new composer anthologies are Paul Burwell (*Subtle Sculpture*), Cornelius Cardew's recent political anti-experimental work (*Piano Album 1973*) and some earlier pieces (*Three Bourgeois Songs*), Alvin Curran's *Music for Every Occasion*, a collection of pieces by the Mexican composer Julio Estrada and a Stuart Marshall anthology (*Lies, Mistakes and Idiolects*) as well as some of the publications reviewed here. In addition, individual pieces by such composers as the Americans John Adams and Malcolm Goldstein, the Canadian Barry Foy and the English expatriate Martin Bartlett mark these composers' first appearance in the catalogue, either separately or in the new anthologies. This both reflects current concerns (political music) and an awareness of the dangers of the development of an EMC 'style'.

2. There is now much more emphasis on anthologies. New ones have been added (*Chamber Music, Educational and Majorca Orchestra* anthologies (the last-named in three volumes), *New and Rediscovered Musical Instruments*, Vol. I and anthologies of criticism and on performances of Satie's *Vexations*, in addition to those reviewed in this issue), and pieces have been located in new anthologies where possible, either under subject-matter headings (*Chamber Music, Educational*, etc.) or in individual composer anthologies (Cornelius Cardew's *Piano Album 1973*, for instance).

3. The anthology of critical writings and that on performances of *Vexations* already mentioned (neither of which is yet available), the increased information about each work, the biographical notes on the composers published in the Catalogue, the link-up with the American magazine *Soundings* (some copies obtainable direct from EMC) and the advertising of David Toop's *Quartz/Mirliton* publications, books on new music from Latimer New Dimensions, etc., are all evidence of a desire on the part of experimental musicians to create a bigger and better-informed public: what

Gavin Bryars in his introduction to the fifth edition calls "an indication, perhaps, of a climate of reduced secrecy". With Nyman's previously-mentioned book, these should provide ample information and discussion collected under a few easily obtainable covers on music that is still seriously underrated, and on which reliable facts and informed opinions are still hard to find.

4. The policy of optional withdrawal of scores from publication which EMC operates has now been brought out into the open, yet at the same time possibly nullified, by the publication of a list of officially banned compositions in the introductory booklet: pieces that no longer reflect the composers' current concerns and which therefore "may be obtained for genuine research only and not for performance". Some material previously reviewed in CONTACT has now been placed on this slightly sinister 'Death Row': for instance, the *Bryn Harris Anthology*,⁶ and the better known *Scratch Anthology* (original edition, June 1971, but available in the EMC's fourth edition in 1972).⁷ Other condemned works include — not surprisingly, I think — all of Cardew's music previously published by the EMC: the collection of five songs (1972), both versions of *The Great Learning* (1971 and 1972), *Schooltime Compositions* (1968) and *Octet '61* (at least I presume it is this, not *Octet '71* as printed in the introductory booklet), though this latter was (also?) published by Hinrichsen (Peters Edition) and *The Great Learning* (original version?) is shortly to be published by Universal Edition. Some of this material is still available in the anthologies, though, and, of course, no composer could actually prevent a performance of a 'banned' piece (or could he?). (I'm even thinking of presenting a concert consisting entirely of the 'forbidden music': in a lonely and secret place in the half-light of early morning, in which the pieces would be ceremonially executed (in both senses); all their composers to be present to witness the scene of destruction . . .) No, the point is obviously that the composers concerned no longer wish actively to promote these works which now have no value for them. This may seem the most obvious solution, though the fact that some of these compositions may still have a value for others (an educational one, for instance) should be allowed for.

So there is no fundamental policy change in the fifth edition of the EMC, only an extending and strengthening of previous decisions, with a wider variety of music, not all of it English, and a practical and creative attitude to the business of promotion and dissemination of music and ideas by the composers themselves. By and large, standards of production are high, bearing in mind the cheap methods of reproduction used, and most of the prices are eminently reasonable, since each anthology contains a sizeable number of compositions, often mixing attractively the known and the unknown and different methods of composition (conventional notation, verbal and graphic scores). The EMC would seem to be maintaining its position as an important force for new music, and as an example to other composers of how to participate successfully in the process of getting published and performed. Academics are slowly learning to take advantage of cheap methods of reproduction to publish their work independently of the conventional publisher who, increasingly, has neither the money nor the inclination to take them up. Composers should likewise be learning to capitalise on this situation and turn it into a positive force; an attitude which seems to me not only more realistic, but actually healthier in some respects.

The *String Anthology Supplement* adds five pieces (not four, as stated in the introductory booklet) to the original collection reviewed in a previous issue.⁸ The extra piece is *Dargason Dream* by Robin Kearsley (no biography given): this consists of a single page of syncopated snippets in F major for three cellos: the structure is a little unclear, but involves overlapping of parts and repetition ad libitum, also the instruction "parts are to be written by the players". Howard Skempton's *Bends for Cello* is another single page: a solo piece of 24 pizzicato notes marked "slowly"; rather like his *African Melody* published in the original anthology. *Upon the String Within the Bow. . . Breathing* by Malcolm Goldstein is a more ambitious project for string quartet or string ensemble no

* Notes at end of the review.

smaller than a trio. It is partly graphic, but with copious and helpful instructions; fine bow control is required. It would be good for professional quartets who want to try something other than Haydn. Goldstein is an American violinist and composer in his early 30s.

The other pieces in the *Triing Anthology Supplement* are conventionally notated. *Long-Player* by Gavin Bryars is for any combination of violin, viola and cello with piano (again not as listed in the introductory booklet, which contains quite a number of mistakes). It is slow, soft and consonant, being based, in part, on the vocal music of Percy Jackman. The viola and cello parts double the violin an octave lower. Since the piece was written for the artist-composer Tom Phillips' young children, the parts are technically quite simple, though there are a few awkward rhythms. All the players, including the pianist, are instructed to leave the stage while playing the final bars . . . Cornelius Cardew's arrangement for violin and piano of *The East is Red*, on the other hand, is a virtuoso work written for Janos Negyesy, who first performed it with the composer in Munich in 1972 shortly after it was written. While Bryars' simple piece has an honest experimental virtue about it, Cardew's bombastic arrangement only echoes the fundamentally bourgeois nature of the style it rather ineptly seems to be imitating.

The pieces in the *Visual Anthology* are much more typical of what the EMC has been associated with in the past. There are nineteen works, all of which have a strong visual element in performance. Nearly all the notations are verbal or graphic (Gavin Bryars' *Marvellous Aphorisms* are scattered richly throughout these pages includes photographs), and the contents inevitably resemble those of the *Scratch* and *Verbal Anthologies*⁹ — indeed some pieces appear in more than one of these collections.

Seven pieces are by Greg Bright, whose maze-making activities have recently received some publicity owing to an ICA exhibition and the publication of his new books *Fontana Mazes* and the appropriately titled *Visual Music* (the latter published by Latimer New Dimensions in October this year). His maze pieces *Labyrinth II* for tracer and watchers (the maze used here is reprinted from *Greg Bright's Maze Book*, hdbk. Latimer, 1973; ppbk. Deutsch) and *Labyrinth III* for co-ordinator and a large group of people would be worth trying, and so would *For Your Amusement* for conductor, 'walker' and at least six other performers, though it is a little derivative. I particularly like *Tractors in the Snow* for eleven performers in a dark open space, using battery torches, a watering can, sand, flour, corrugated cardboard, lengths of string and various small objects. The cardboard is used to make three 'toy' tractors which are then 'driven' back and forth along routes covered with sand and flour, directed by torch bearers and assaulted by water and flour. "When a tractor breaks down, the driver buggers off home. The two torch bearers concerned pocket their torches and stand about chatting and freezing. (There are opportunities here for the histrionic but don't make a meal of it.) When three breakdowns see all the lights extinguished, everybody sods off out of it. It's too bloody cold to hang about."

Six pieces by Gavin Bryars include *To gain the affection of Miss Dwyer, even for one short minute, would benefit me no end* (he always did have a nice line in titles) for stereo playback equipment and at least 14 moveable, small loudspeakers strung on pulleys. Material fed into the system consists of typical 'stereo' demonstrations: the aim of the performers manipulating the pulleys is to make the moving stereo sounds absolutely still. . . Some walking pieces by Michael Parsons and Christopher Hobbs complete the collection.

It is in the nature of many of these pieces that they are more fun to do than to listen to or watch. Yet at the same time, the frequently simple performing actions may often validate the whole philosophy behind 'audience participation' in a vital way, and help to destroy the mystification that still surrounds so much new music today. By actively participating in such creative projects, the 'listener' will soon discover for himself that 'music', 'theatre' and 'everyday life' cannot be considered mutually exclusive. And, who knows, he may even enjoy himself a little.

The *Logos Anthology* is a collection of six pieces by members of the Logos group from Ghent, Belgium. Most European new music is, by definition, avantgarde rather than experimental, concerned with preserving the European musical heritage and the Art Object rather than breaking down the barriers that divide the listener from new music by reassessing the whole function of the composer to the society in which he lives. So it is interesting that this group of young musicians and students should look towards England, taking their lead from composers such as Cardew, Bryars, Hobbs and John White. Godfried-Willem Raes, the leader of the group, is represented by two pieces. The material for the four voices of *Elektronika* is inevitably geared to Dutch or French pronunciations, and the instructions in several of the pieces in the anthology are

either vague or rather badly translated. A more careful presentation of material in, for example, *Globe* by the interesting young composer and mathematician Jean Paul van Bendegem, would probably result in several performances over here. *Globe* points back to avantgarde origins in its use of ideas from Xenakis, but also forward to an experimental attitude in its use of a large balloon to represent three-dimensional space, on which the score is written. More 'purely' experimental are Stefaan van Ryssen's *A letter to an unknown person called 'Mr. AO' written on a pianowriter* and *Five People's Allegro* by Rui Galapez Gomez, the latter of which uses a contact-miked frame, a blackboard, a toy piano playing a classical piece and a recording of it played backwards. Logos are planning a British tour this season: hear them if you can. Further experimental music from Europe would be welcomed in the EMC.

Finally, a brief word only about Christian Wolff's *Prose Pieces*. Six of the 13 pieces presented here were published privately in 1968 as the *Prose Collection for Tom Phillips* (counting the two versions of *Play* separately); as such they have become an important part of the repertoire of many experimental music groups — being not only very successful pieces, but having the widely applicable virtues of variable performance numbers and, in most cases, variable instrumentation. The seven other pieces were added later, but the whole collection has anyway been available on photocopied sheets from EMC for some time, and a 'deluxe' edition which omits *Sticks* is published by Tetrads Press.

Though Wolff himself has now moved away from this sort of experimentalism into an experimental political music (in contrast to Cardew's anti-experimental political stand), the *Prose Pieces* continue to represent much of what is best in Wolff's music. The dedication of the performer in the precise execution of the intricate rules of *Fits and Starts*, *For Jill* or *Play* is vital if the truly experimental sound of these pieces is to be captured, even for a moment. To play Wolff's *Prose Pieces*, or any of his other music, is to know the meaning of the term 'experimental'.

NOTES:

- 1 Gavin Bryars, 'Experimental Music Catalogue', CONTACT 6 (Spring 1973), pp. 23-25.
- 2 Roger Smalley, 'Experimental Music', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 116, No. 1583 (January 1975), pp. 23-26.
- 3 For a further review of Nyman's book see CONTACT 10 (Winter 1974-75), pp. 38-41.
- 4 Brian Dennis, 'Repetitive and Systemic Music', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 115, No. 1582 (December 1974), pp. 1036-38.
- 5 For a full discussion of this see Nyman, op. cit.
- 6 See CONTACT 6 (Spring 1973), pp. 25-27.
- 7 See CONTACT 9 (Autumn 1974), pp. 29-30.
- 8 See CONTACT 6 (Spring 1973), pp. 27-30.
- 9 For a review of the *Verbal Anthology* see CONTACT 7 (Winter 1973-74), pp. 31-32.