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Huddersfield: a Retrospect

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, 1978-83

Since the first Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival took place in 1978, the fortunes of the festival have changed. The time has come for a review of its history, which will chart the changes and examine their wider significance: the sixth festival offers a good opportunity for such a review. The seventh, to be held this autumn from 6 to 14 November, sees Huddersfield, and its originator and artistic director Richard Steinitz, secure in terms of artistic reputation and about as secure financially as such an enterprise could probably hope to be in the 1980s, certainly in Britain.

The first festival, held from 13 to 17 October 1978, was a relatively modest attempt to bring some new music to an area of West Yorkshire (including an unusually large, but also somewhat beleaguered music department in the major polytechnic of that area) that had had very little exposure to it in the recent past. To outsiders in particular, new music in Yorkshire all too often meant at that time simply 'new music at York University' further north-east; the music department there had over the course of 14 years developed a reputation for its avant-garde and experimental composers, which (perhaps not quite coincidentally) had already peaked by the time Steinitz's festival came along.

The whole project was very much the brainchild of Steinitz: there would, undoubtedly, have been no festival without him, neither would there be one now. But in fact the Yorkshire Arts Association was already thinking about a festival of contemporary music as early as 1976, and it was then being mooted as an event to be based in York. This would have been logical in view of the reputation of the university music department there. The YAA, though, was also considering the possibilities of a festival of early music, and it was equally logical to mount this in York because of the use such an event could make of the city's glorious heritage of old buildings and other musico-historical connections. At what point Steinitz first suggested a contemporary music festival at Huddersfield I'm not sure. But in the end York was host first to an Early Music Week in 1977 and then to a fully fledged three-week Early Music Festival in July 1978, and contemporary music was taken on by Huddersfield. I rather think the cards were in favour of the early music project's taking place in York before Steinitz came along; and I am by no means suggesting that York had any right, God-given or otherwise, to mount Yorkshire's contemporary music festival. But it is interesting to note that things might easily have turned out differently.

Steinitz's department at the polytechnic—initially quite unimpressed, it seemed, by the potential the festival held—responded, for the most part, with its corporate and individual feet and headed for home. I attended that first festival for three days and was dismayed to find not only very little critical attention being paid to it but, much more important, very little local attention either; indeed, for several years Steinitz ran the whole festival virtually as a one-man operation. I remember queuing for a cup of tea in the student common room on a chilly Sunday afternoon and asking the students who served it what they thought of the festival. 'We're enjoying it quite a lot', I recall as the gist of their response; but then one of them added that there were only six students attending the concerts at all—three of them were those with the tea urns. Huddersfield Polytechnic's music department had well over 100 students in 1978. When groups of students had trekked not only from Manchester and Sheffield but from London too (in response to a valuable scheme involving cheap accommodation with local people, which has been a useful feature of the festival ever since), why were the local ones, as well as those from York, so apathetic?

The first festival was not only unsuccessful in attracting a student audience—the most obviously ready-made audience it had—it was unsuccessful, I think, in attracting much local audience at all, and not conspicuously successful in attracting others either. Even worse, in one sense, was the cancellation of the two programmes to have been given by the Gaudeamus String Quartet from Holland, which was reported to be fogbound in Amsterdam. These promised to be about the most interesting things on offer, and despite heroic efforts from other players at almost no notice, the total effect was a bit like a damp squib. George Crumb, the featured visiting composer and long a particular enthusiasm of the festival's director,² hardly helped much, proving diffident, not to say refractory, in public. I was told, by the way, that his music's 'complete lack of substance' was the reason why the sophisticated York students stayed away.

Hardly an auspicious start, one might think, for a festival dedicated to the kinds of music that tend to have an uphill struggle anywhere, let alone in a 'grimy industrial' town in northern England.³ If the Huddersfield Festival had been the only event of its kind in

England, there would perhaps in an odd way, have been a little more cause for optimism. Surely the country's lack of an annual festival dedicated to a wide range of musics, mostly of the more avant-garde and experimental varieties, had been lamented long enough by enough people (including a few fairly influential ones) for any serious, well-meaning attempt at one to find some support.⁴ And, as the notions of devolution and 'regionalism' spread, the location of such a festival in the West Riding of Yorkshire rather than London—or even, say, Manchester—should have proved some kind of asset. But in fact there was now another contemporary music festival in England, based at St Bartholomew-the-Great in West Smithfield, London: the first festival had been held there in July 1978, just three months before that in Huddersfield. While also having its problems, it was not only larger and more ambitious than Huddersfield 1978, but also more successful; and, probably simply because it took place in London, more conspicuously successful. Admittedly Huddersfield had all the 'devolutionary' arguments on its side. But at St Bartholomew's the church's organist and festival director Andrew Morris had established connections with both public and private support that appeared rather stronger than Steinitz's.

There is of course no reason, at least in theory, why both festivals should not have prospered; if a small country like Holland can find the money and the enthusiasm for several such events, why shouldn't England? But the fact remains that St Bartholomew's 1979 was far less successful than St Bartholomew's 1978, and the London festival has since had a rather chequered history: no festival at all in 1980; the tatters of one in 1981; a more impressive event in 1982, when the Park Lane Group took it over; but nothing after that. At the same time a festival based at the Almeida Theatre in Islington has come to flourish,⁵ proving that the story of London's attempts to establish an annual festival of contemporary music is by no means complete.

Meanwhile, as John Shepherd predicted in his review of the first festival, Huddersfield 1979 turned out both bigger and better than Huddersfield 1978. Held from 25 to 31 October, its joint themes 'of solo virtuosity and of folk-inspired music'⁶ brought some superlative performers and composer-performers to the city: Vinko Globokar, Frederic Rzewski, and Harry Sparnaay. It also caught the moment when serious and reasonably informed discussion of what the avant garde might do after the days of the avant garde were over became possible in this country—as usual, somewhat behind in things musical—but before it had become as widespread and therefore as unfocused as it is now. The Musica Nova festival in Glasgow that year caught it too, I think, with Brian Ferneyhough (then the subject of heavy promotion in Britain for the first time) representing the powers of avant-garde darkness against those who wanted to make the whole thing a festival of light, whether neoromantic, political, or whatever.⁷

Unfortunately though, local support in Huddersfield, while better than that of the previous year, was still far from overwhelming. There were other problems too, notably the sudden closure of the Town Hall (owing to dry rot), and the consequent use of even more venues that were less than ideal, as the festival 'retreated even further inside the boundaries of the Polytechnic'.⁸ The introduction of an orchestral concert—something that had been absent from Huddersfield 1978—was also thereby frustrated: in the original plans, Boulez was to have been 'featured composer' and to have conducted a new revision of

his *Éclat/Multiples*. In addition, the ever present problem of finance seemed to be growing greater rather than smaller.

It was therefore dispiriting, but perhaps not entirely surprising, that the 1980 festival, held from 24 to 29 October, was reduced in both scope and interest. Making the best of a very poor financial situation, Steinitz sensibly capitalised on local resources: there were more appearances by local players and more performances of works by composers based in Yorkshire. But, in keeping with the idea of featuring not only a particular composer or composers but also the contemporary music of a particular foreign country, Steinitz did manage to inject a modest dose of Italian music into the festival, pursuing an interest he had developed when he spent some time in Italy as a student. (The attempt at a Dutch flavour in 1978 had been followed by a Yugoslav one in 1979—not terribly successfully, I thought.) But horns were very much drawn in. 1980 was the first year in which I had not found the Huddersfield Festival interesting enough to warrant a visit.

The festival's future looked bleak. Indeed, at the time I think many of its supporters thought that both it and St Bartholomew's were dead, thus proving once more that England was incapable of sustaining the kind of annual contemporary music festival to be found in so many countries in continental Europe. Certainly the odds were heavily stacked against a festival organised by a far from well-known composer teaching in a polytechnic department, recently beset by internal problems, in a small northern town hit hard by the recession and rising unemployment. What price contemporary music in such circumstances anyway?

Steinitz struggled on, however. And what he eventually achieved—to some extent in 1981, more resoundingly in 1982, I think—was the establishment of his festival on firmer ground both financially and administratively. Grant aid for the 1981 festival was estimated to be roughly two-and-a-half times that for the previous year. The Arts Council of Great Britain and West Yorkshire County Council (now Labour-controlled) gave money directly for the first time. There was also more support than before from such cultural organisations as the Goethe Institute and from the small trusts. Huddersfield has regularly relied on at least one visit from among the groups touring the country on the Arts Council's Contemporary Music Network scheme; in addition 1981 saw the start of another regular arrangement, this time with the Society for the Promotion of New Music, which, enjoying a new lease of life under young management, was keen to foster connections with other organisations and to present concerts out of London.

Administratively things were improving too. Although it seemed that in 1981 Steinitz was still doing a lot of the basic administration that should have been done by others, practical support—indeed to some extent philosophical support—for what had been spoken of as 'his festival' in 1979 was improving. The process of tightening up the festival's organisation seems to have begun in 1981, and was consolidated in 1982 and 1983. Though still quite small, a network of support among both staff and students in the music department of the polytechnic had clearly been fostered by the festival itself over the years. I would guess that the more home-grown festival of 1980 was to some extent responsible for this: local support is always encouraged by the promotion of local talent, and perhaps the improved balance between the festival's 'local' and 'international' aspects dates from that time too. 1981 also saw a considerable

improvement in accommodation for the festival. The Huddersfield Town Hall finally reopened and incidentally celebrated its centenary. And, more important, the polytechnic now had its own small concert hall in the form of the old St Paul's Church on the edge of the campus, splendidly converted for musical use.

Artistically too the festival thrived. Harrison Birtwistle was the featured composer and the presentations of his music included two world premières (the Clarinet Quintet and *Pulse Sampler* for oboe and claves)—the stuff of which international contemporary music festivals are made. Birtwistle even made Huddersfield the centre for a moment of a little bit of new-music gossip when, in a public interview with Steinitz, he volunteered the information that his long-awaited *magnum opus*, an opera based on the myth of Orpheus, was finally completed. Since, as it transpired, Birtwistle still had to go to Paris to work on the tape music for the opera at IRCAM, and no opera house would schedule the piece until they received it in finished form, this, and the news that ENO would mount it in the 1983-4 season, all seemed rather strange. We haven't, of course, seen the Orpheus opera yet; I believe 1986 has been mentioned. Scandal too is a prerequisite for any self-respecting international festival of contemporary music!

Huddersfield 1981 contained a lot of other high-quality music and music making, including the first ever orchestral concert. The featured country was Hungary, represented by a celebration of the Bartók centenary (did you know that Bartók once visited Huddersfield?) and by the presence of Sándor Balassa, Attila Bozay, and that eloquent and indefatigable spokesman for contemporary Hungarian music, Bálint András Varga. Several works by Balassa and Bozay were heard, the latter appearing as performer as well as composer, and the Hungarian theme was further extended by the inclusion of pieces by Durkó and Ligeti, as well as Kodály and Liszt. A wide variety of other events included a lecture and performances of three works by John Casken, the polytechnic's composer-in-residence for most of the previous two years, and a whole programme of English experimental music—a Regional Contemporary Music Circuit concert of works by Gavin Bryars and John White, again with a lecture (from Bryars).

Steinitz had told me before the 1981 festival began that he had instituted a sales campaign which he described as 'quite militant'. He had also changed the festival's dates to 19-25 November, at least partly to allow publicity time to circulate during students' term time. Certainly the audiences were better than those I remembered from my last visit in 1979, but this was due in some measure to the presence of more visitors, especially critics and 'media' people, and it is hard to believe that student interest was all that much greater than it had been two years before.

It seemed that Huddersfield had suddenly become an International Contemporary Music Festival with a reputation for quality that quickly spread and was pretty well confirmed by the festival of 1982, which took place from 24 to 30 November. It was from 1982, I think, that Huddersfield took on the authentic sparkle of such an event. If there had been any doubt after 1981 that it could finally take its place beside Donaueschingen, the Gaudeamus music week in Holland, the ISCM festival, Metz, La Rochelle, Warsaw, and Zagreb, it would seem that Huddersfield 1982 finally decided matters. When you can attract composers and other musicians of international reputation, who would not otherwise be

there, to a small city in northern England to hear an all-day programme of Xenakis, then you have arrived in the first division.

Xenakis was one of the 1982 festival's two featured composers; the other was the less well-known Henri Dutilleux, whose fastidious and rather 'classical' scores have recently received considerable acclaim outside his native country. The French orientation of this pair, who represented Steinitz's first exposure of two featured composers rather than the original one, was offset by a good deal of emphasis on Britain as the featured country, with David Bedford and Nicholas Maw receiving particular attention. But there was also, as usual, a good range of other music on offer that year. I was sorry not to be able to get there.

By 1983, then, Huddersfield had the reputation of being England's leading festival of contemporary music. Indeed, treading carefully around the few obstacles to its dominance in a notably thin field, one could say that it is now Britain's leading annual festival of contemporary music—at least partly because it would be possible to argue that it is the only one: Glasgow's Musica Nova is normally held every three years; the Almeida Festival is not modelled along the normal lines for a European contemporary music festival and is arguably a special case. Steinitz has at last established what so many of those involved with new music in Britain long desired, and have envied when they go abroad and see what is done in other countries, some far less well endowed with indigenous new music: a contemporary music festival of international stature, 'an essential rendezvous for adventure-seekers of every persuasion'.⁹

This achievement seems to me essentially a very important one. It is natural and sensible, as well as philosophically and, dare I say, politically very necessary that this country—which boasts so many composers, a large number of them young, and a thriving new-music scene in its metropolis—should have an internationally reputable festival of contemporary music. For specialists it is a valuable means of finding out what is going on in the field, particularly abroad, and of assessing, or reassessing, the work of major figures in the light of sustained exposure to their music and ideas over an intensive period. In these respects Huddersfield fulfils many of the requirements of the academic conference, including the provision of time and opportunity to meet other specialists informally as well as formally. I would recommend it to professional composers and performers of new music, to the small band of academics engaged in research into contemporary music, and to all serious students of this music, whether composers or not.

At the same time I have to admit to a certain unease about the implications of what is generally regarded as élitism that this commendation inevitably raises. Should any musical event be targeted solely, or even principally, at those who have a professional interest in contemporary music? Is it right that the critics, music publishers' representatives, BBC producers, and others who make up so much of the new-musical fraternity in London should decamp to the north for a week in the belief (one supposes) that they are contributing to an artistic event important not only to themselves but to the local community, that they are contributing to 'culture' in some broad, philosophical, and generally uplifting sense, as well as in the narrower one which offers the illusory reassurance that, anyway, they are really the ones who matter?

The continental contemporary music festivals have often suffered from this problem, or at least a rather generalised guilt about it. They have allowed it a

sufficiently important place in the cultural scheme of things to have invented a word for it: *parachutisme*. The metaphor is undeniably a powerful one: culture descends, no doubt entirely unwanted, briefly on an unsuspecting but rightly suspicious local population and then takes its leave to get on with the Real Business of Art elsewhere, that is, in the capital, where it belongs. Talk of *parachutisme* can get the talker dangerously near being tarred with the brush of feigned concern, a scarcely concealed contempt for the great uncultured masses, which masquerades as a fear that the grand desire for communication might be swallowed up by the dark forces of apathy as soon as it touches the ground. Has Huddersfield avoided this splendidly selfish sin?

I think it has. The festival and its director are, after all, locally based, as are its administration and at least some of its performers and even composers. The Huddersfield Festival is in part a Huddersfield Polytechnic festival: many of the events take place on the campus, and while some outsiders might view this as academically élitist, the festival's proximity to large numbers of non-music students, teachers, and others enhances its chances of relating to more people. A polytechnic, anyway, normally has much closer connections with the local community than does a university. Steinitz also makes efforts to acquaint the local community, especially other educational establishments, with the festival. Even the competition for young composers, a regular feature of the festival from the outset, could be adduced as forming a connection between the festival and the outside world just as effectively as it could be said to encourage a 'ghetto' approach. Sponsored by the Yorkshire Arts Association, the festival's chief grant source, this competition was started as a service to local composers before Huddersfield came along and gave it an entirely natural focus, and a good deal more publicity. Though entry is no longer confined to composers with Yorkshire connections, the competition is intelligently run principally to provide an opportunity for largely unknown composers to hear their work performed and discussed by professionals; the more questionable business of awarding prizes seems to be regarded by everybody concerned as less important.

One other aspect of Huddersfield can be interpreted as a demonstration of the festival's avoidance of *parachutisme*. From the outset Steinitz sensibly organised his events around a weekend; once the festival expanded to a full week in 1979 it was able to start quietly in midweek, peak over the weekend, and carry some of that momentum over into the following weekdays, when events were less tightly packed. In my experience this has meant that there are effectively two festivals: one on weekdays, the other at the weekend.

The weekdays tend to offer the more conservative fare, including something of a cabaret nature and the orchestral concert on the last night, which has to be more 'populist', if anything, than the cabaret in order to attract a big enough audience to the Town Hall. (The 1983 orchestral programme was a good example: Ives's *Decoration Day*, Gershwin's Piano Concerto, Carter's First Symphony (serenely diatonic and quite unlike his more familiar later music), and Copland's *Billy the Kid* suite (replacing the advertised Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* by Bernstein). It is interesting that Steinitz tried to give this programme of Americana a little more grit by attempting to persuade the BBC Philharmonic and the concert's conductor, José Serebrier, to play Ruggles's *Suntreader*, a major but rarely performed example of the American spirit at its most incisive;

oddly, it seems that Serebrier, who is renowned for his work on Ives's extremely tough Fourth Symphony for example, refused to do it.) Works by local composers tend to be done on weekdays and the workshop sessions and performances in connection with the composers' competition also avoid the weekend.

From Friday night to Sunday night, though, things could be described as more *parachutiste*, since the intensive sessions of concerts and discussions devoted to the featured composers and countries all happen within those 48 hours. Performances of single works by the composers, and also sometimes films about them and the like, do take place during the weekdays. But the sheer intensity of the weekend, the relative toughness of its approach, as well as the usually more avant-garde nature of its subject matter, and the presence of more visitors, particularly those from London, all give it a very different feel. And though the local population is presumably as free at the weekend as are the visitors—indeed, their generally amateur status as 'music lovers' would suggest they might be less free to come during the week than the professional representatives from London—the tendency has been for the weekend to take on a more international flavour: bigger audiences, more excitement, but also more hobnobbing and gossip, more 'them-and-usness'.

All this has brought us back, of course, to the question of the audience for such a festival. The response of Steinitz's own students has improved since 1978 but has not become as strong as I feel it should be. To some extent Steinitz has solved the philosophical and aesthetic problems involved here (as well as the sheerly business-orientated one of 'bums on seats') by means of the weekday/weekend split, which provides for professionals and amateurs, visitors and locals. I suspect that Steinitz would find my analysis of this 'split' too divisive, and perhaps it is a little. Clearly there are overlaps of several kinds, and the more these overlaps can be encouraged, the more those initially disinclined to sample the more 'advanced' music that Huddersfield offers might come to appreciate some of it. And by starting out from an acceptance of things as he sees them (most of the locals involved with music, including many of the polytechnic's music students, are unlikely to touch most contemporary music with a barge pole) and by providing intelligent programmes that will attract at least some of those unlikely to come for Stockhausen or Cage, Steinitz has been able to suggest, not that this audience then 'progresses to higher things' (the real contemporary music or whatever), but simply that, without being coerced or talked down to, it then samples other kinds of music out of a spirit of curiosity, even adventure.

The festival clearly aims to attract music lovers from Huddersfield and the surrounding area, and by accepting grants from local government and arts bodies it is indeed bound to do this. It is hard for an outsider to assess the impact of the festival on local people, but I was pleasantly surprised last year to find myself staying with a couple who demonstrated an almost boundlessly enthusiastic but entirely unpretentious concern with the aims of the festival and the music it presented. Such concern contrasted markedly with the self-interest of those for whom the Huddersfield Festival is now, odd though it may seem to those of us who were there in 1978, a place to be seen. How many more people there are of the kind with whom I stayed I'm not sure, but an important part of the festival's future rests with them. For those few days I felt unusually optimistic about the ability of new music of even the most arcane sorts to matter outside

its own little world.

When it comes to the polytechnic's own music students, though, I continue to feel disappointed by how few of them seem to take much interest in the festival, and to some extent also by the attitude that the music department and the polytechnic as a whole adopt. For the students, the weekday/weekend split in the festival could work too easily and thus in some respects to the detriment of any attempt to persuade them to enter fully into its activities: too easily because it seems that many polytechnic students go home at weekends and are thus not disposed to attend even a concert then, still less anything more obviously educational, like a lecture or discussion; detrimentally, therefore, because the weekend events tend to be precisely of the type that they are least likely to encounter otherwise, and these are the very ones they are most likely to miss.

Not only does Huddersfield's large body of music students constitute the most obvious audience for the festival, but the students represent the best means in the longer term of communicating to people the fact that the music of our time can sometimes be enjoyable, interesting, and even important. To those of us who believe that even the more difficult contemporary music can be these things, it seems imperative that students try it for themselves; besides, this should surely be an essential part of the business of educating oneself musically, whether one finds the music attractive or not. At least some of these students, even in times of unemployment and education cutbacks, are going to have the chance to communicate their musical views to others, whether as performers, teachers, or whatever. It is extremely important that the festival makes every effort to interest music students in general, and Huddersfield Polytechnic students in particular. In fact it seems to me that one of the best things the Huddersfield Festival could do to counter the argument that much contemporary music is inevitably elitist would be to concentrate particular attention on its potentially large student audience. This does not mean encouraging the mindless imbibing of new music without thought for its quality or purpose, but the promotion of an educational spirit of inquiry out of concern.

The implications of this are practical as well as philosophical. Although the polytechnic now has a splendid concert hall, this is probably too small to accommodate even all the music students, never mind others; also, it cannot, practically, be used for all festival events, and the music department's own recital hall is smaller still. One could, in fact, argue that Huddersfield's success in attracting an outside audience, in particular the recently increased specialist audience chiefly from London, is at odds with its need—one might even say its duty—to provide educational opportunities for its students. Certainly at many concerts and other events during the 1983 festival it was difficult to get a decent seat on the unnumbered-ticket system unless one turned up very early. And while this was mainly true of the weekend events, it was even occasionally so of weekday ones as well.

What is the answer to this? I'm not sure myself, except that it's not simply for the festival to congratulate itself on a certain degree of national and even international success and forget the students. The festival would not, it seems to me, be ducking the issue if it spent more time and money on promotion on its own campus and less (dare I say none?) on attracting more 'prestigious' listeners from outside. And if London's new-musical intelligentsia still insists on coming, it may become necessary to consider

other action. Have more open rehearsals? Present more events simultaneously? Even present some concerts more than once? This need not all be done immediately, of course; it would have to be justified by student demand, and that clearly has to be worked on. But it does have to be considered. After all, what would have happened if 120 polytechnic students, rather than the twelve I was told about in 1983, wanted to attend the festival regularly? Would they be turned away in favour of the music critics? Would the music critics be turned away in favour of them?

One other small but significant practical point while I'm about it. The polytechnic should, I feel, demonstrate a little more general enthusiasm for the festival than it sometimes seems to. One contribution it could make would be to adopt a more flexible line about letting students off lessons and extending deadlines for work so that students would have time to attend. I have the feeling that the institution is still not sufficiently behind the festival director. And if it wants sound, practical arguments for doing a little more, then one could reasonably argue that the festival's reputation should be enhanced by its host organisation, not sabotaged by it. Word does get around about these things in the long run.

The 1983 Huddersfield Festival (which was held from 17 to 23 November) took as its featured composers Elliott Carter (who celebrated his 75th birthday on 11 December 1983) and Hans Werner Henze; the featured country was France. In addition, Steinitz's introduction in the programme book made a good deal of the element of music-theatre in the programmes, a feature largely new to the festival.

Considering the inevitable budgetary limitations, Huddersfield 1983 presented quite good surveys of the work of the two featured composers: eight compositions by Carter and nine by Henze. Both men were present—Carter for the whole festival, Henze just for the weekend—and gave public interviews; Henze also conducted, and there was a film about each of them. These two are such opposites that the festival ought really to have made more of the contrasts, I feel; there must be ways of doing this that go beyond mere rivalry and into serious argument. The sort of dialectic that arises from considering two such major figures of the second half of the 20th century and what they stand for is exactly the kind of thing that Huddersfield should be encouraging; it could have been instructive for all of us, and worth 20 lectures and seminars as far as the music students were concerned. The music itself, of course, offered plenty of chances to 'compare and contrast' if one was so disposed. And Carter gave of himself fairly unstintingly right through the week. But the sparks of dialectic didn't really fly.

The French side of the festival was potentially exciting, since it offered chiefly works by composers belonging to the Paris group *L'Itinéraire*, which has received a good deal of favourable attention recently; its ensemble had not been to Britain before. We heard music by 13 composers in the ensemble's concert, the recital by the flautist Pierre-Yves Artaud (who is also connected with the group), and an illustrated talk; about five of the 13—including Michaël Levinas and Tristan Murail, who jointly gave the talk—are, I believe, closely associated with *L'Itinéraire*. Unfortunately, the group's 'aesthetic and theoretical researches into the nature of sound and its relationship to musical language' did not seem to produce much good music as far as I was concerned. It was a particular pity that Gérard Grisey, to my mind the most talented composer in *L'Itinéraire*, was represented only by an extract from an orchestral work on tape during the talk, and a silly piece of phallic

symbolism involving a clarinet and a trombone called *Solo pour deux*, which came in a lunchtime recital by other players after the weekend jamboree.¹⁰

The music-theatre theme was represented most usefully by Northern Music Theatre's performance of Kagel's *Pas de cinq* and by a zany but thought-provoking performance by the theatre group IOU called *The Sleep of Reason*. Of the world and British premières in the festival I thought most highly of James Dillon's brand-new String Quartet: it had boundless rhythmic energy, some of it surprisingly bouncy, but seemed structurally rather intractable on one hearing. (Dillon, by the way, was a prizewinner in the first YAA Composers' Competition to be held at Huddersfield, in 1978; the circumstances, involving a performance of his piece at about half speed, seem to have been rather curious.) Simon Bainbridge and Robert Saxton were also featured, together constituting a kind of 'younger British composers' theme, and acted as the judges for this year's composers' competition. The winning pieces were *Abstract (no.3)* for cello by John Kefala (played by Alexander Baillie) and *The Dreams of Fallen Gods; Sad Vales and Streams* for wind quintet by Nicholas Redfern (played by the Vega Quintet); I found both competent but dull.

Huddersfield 1984 promises, in the words of a paragraph in the programme book for the 1983 festival, to 'emphasise contemporary British music, multimedia [*sic*] and music theatre'. The brochure for 1984 offers 'an astonishing feast of music-theatre', extending the modest start made in that field last time. In part this is owing to the choice of featured composers: both Peter Maxwell Davies (does he really need this kind of highlighting?) and Mauricio Kagel (he certainly does) have contributed a good deal, in very different ways, to the area; again, the contrast should be instructive. I am particularly glad to see that Le Cercle—Trio de Percussion from France and the music-theatre group MW-2 from Poland are to appear; I have enjoyed enormously the performances by them I have seen on the Continent, and neither has made what the brochure calls a 'major appearance' in Britain before.

Maxwell Davies's work with children takes the festival, via the 'music-theatre' theme, in a new direction for bridge-building with the local community—that of performance by amateurs working directly with the composer. Indeed, while not forsaking the avant garde entirely, Huddersfield 1984 has some bias towards other kinds of music making, including 'taking more (though still insufficient) note of the multi-racial society in which it finds itself'. This is partly where the 'mixed-media' aspect of the festival comes in, though this also includes, of course, such things as Kagel's films. The representation of British music promises to be 'greater than that in any previous Festival', with 'over 60 compositions by 45 living British composers', including special prominence for the music of Nigel Osborne.

⁴ See, for example, the mention of the need for such a festival in 'The Contemporary Music Network: a Continuing Discussion', *Contact 18* (Winter 1977-8), pp.20-23. Interestingly, this discussion took place in September 1977, 13 months before the first Huddersfield Festival, and ten months before the first St Bartholomew's Festival in London.

⁵ The part of the Almeida Festival of 1982 devoted to John Cage was discussed by Kimiko Shimoda in 'Cage and Zen', *Contact 25* (Autumn 1982), pp.28-9.

⁶ Bracefield, *op. cit.*, p.33.

⁷ Nicholas Bannen reviewed Musica Nova 1979 in *Contact 21* (Autumn 1980), pp.28-30. *Contact 20* (Autumn 1979) responded to the rise of interest in Ferneyhough by including a group of articles examining the Ferneyhough phenomenon from different points of view (pp.4-14).

⁸ Bracefield, *op. cit.*, p.31.

⁹ Martin Dreyer, review of Huddersfield 1983 in *Musical Times*, vol.125 (1984), p.104.

¹⁰ For more on L'Itinéraire, see Christopher Fox's review of Darmstadt 1982 in *Contact 25* (Autumn 1982), pp.49-52.

¹ The 1978 festival was reviewed by John Shepherd in *Contact 20* (Autumn 1979), pp.46-50, the 1979 festival by Hilary Bracefield in *Contact 21* (Autumn 1980), pp.31-3.

² See, for example, Steinitz's two articles on the composer in this journal: 'The Music of George Crumb', *Contact 11* (Summer 1975), pp.14-22; and a review of five works in *Contact 15* (Winter 1976-7), pp.11-13.

³ The quotation is from the publicity leaflet for the 1978 festival. Shepherd, in repeating it in his review (p.49), added that the leaflet went on to say that this image had now been 'dispelled by the cleaning of numerous buildings'.