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

<http://contactjournal.gold.ac.uk>

## Citation

Potter, Keith, ed. 1972. *Contact*, 4. ISSN 0308-5066.







# CONTACT 4

## SPRING 1972

### EDITORIAL

This issue, the fourth of our magazine devoted to 20th century music, places the emphasis on pop and jazz for its main articles.

It is part of our policy that contemporary music of all kinds should receive consideration and we believe that serious assessment of its musical worth as well as its social significance can, and should, be attempted. As Richard Middleton pointed out in the first issue of "Contact" (see his article "The Musical Significance of Pop") a critical vocabulary for the evaluation of pop is only just emerging - which accounts for the frequent appearance of writers such as Tony Palmer in "Pseuds Corner" of the magazine "Private Eye"! This does not invalidate the attempts; rather, it makes the struggle all the more interesting and any achievements well worth while. Jazz has, of course, fared better in the recent past since it has had a longer history than pop - both of performance and serious criticism.

Thus in this issue we have an article on the recent work of Bob Dylan by David Mabey and the second of Kenneth Dommett's two articles on Louis Armstrong. In addition, there is the first of two articles on the music of Peter Maxwell Davies and a review of last autumn's festival of contemporary music in Athens.

It is hoped that the next issue will appear some time in July. It will contain an interview with the composer Cornelius Cardew and an article on the music of William Walton (perhaps an interesting juxtaposition of extremes!). The Schoenberg series started in the last issue will continue with a discussion of his opera "Moses and Aaron" by John Drummond and a selective list of bibliographical material available in English and German.

Special thanks to Jean Bourne who has been responsible for the typing of the whole of this issue. Also to Hilary Bracefield, my assistant editor, and Nigel Argust and Andrew Adamson. Cover design by Cathy Lacey.

Once again we extend our grateful thanks to Birmingham University Musical Society for their financial support to this venture.

KEITH POTTER.



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THE MUSIC OF PETER MAXWELL DAVIES

(The first of two articles)

In the mid-1950's a new desire for exploration and discovery was felt among young musicians in England. It was stimulated by the "opening-up" of Europe after the second World War which led to the discovery of much music that had never been heard before and more frequent and better-played performances of 20th century music in general, and in particular that of the 2nd Viennese School, which up to then had been little known here. Such institutions as the Bryanston (later Dartington) School of Music organised by William Glock, and the advent of the "Third Programme" (started in 1946 and to which Maxwell Davies has paid personal tribute for the wide range of artistic and intellectual pursuits which it fostered) were instrumental in promoting and encouraging this spirit, as, also, was the knowledge that vital new music was being created on the continent and, to some extent, the work of certain teachers in English music colleges.

The immediate problem was the assimilation of the styles and techniques of a great deal of 20th century music which had been denied to musicians in this country before 1945. There is the story of an excited group of young musicians at Bryanston (which included Davies) clustering round a tape recorder to hear Schoenberg's Variations Op. 31 for the first time. Such music had only previously been heard in this country in isolated and mostly inadequate performances, by players unversed in the idioms of the new music. The pioneer work of Walter Goehr in the late 40's led to a gradual rise in standards and frequency of performance and Michael Tippett at Morley College did much to encourage the performance of 16th and 17th century music as well as that of the 20th - a considerable broadening of scope. The outcome was a close study of, in particular, the "Viennese trinity" and Stravinsky and the music of immediate contemporaries on the continent and in America.

The result of this was that, around 1955, two groups of young musicians, including several composers, emerged from music colleges with a full assimilation of modern styles and techniques and particular promise that they would use this knowledge to good effect. One group had studied at the Royal Academy of Music and included Bennett, Cardew and the pianist Susan Bradshaw. The other came from the Royal Manchester College of Music and consisted of three composers, Alexander Goehr, Harrison Birtwistle and Peter Maxwell Davies, and the pianist John Ogdon. The composition teaching of Richard Hall and the piano teaching of Gordon Green must be mentioned as having helped to turn this talented group into fine musicians who were able to develop their potential into remarkably individual musical styles and personalities. The four came to London calling themselves "New Music Manchester" and gave performances of contemporary music - the three composers have ever since been called the "Manchester School" although they soon developed away from one another in style and personality and later collaborations or



associations have been only "biographical" or practical. At the time Alexander Goehr (son of Walter Goehr) seemed to be the most forceful personality, but going on the basis of their overall output to date, I would submit that Peter Maxwell Davies has emerged as the most talented and original of the three, and I would not be alone if I made higher claims for him than just that.

Peter Maxwell Davies was born in Manchester in 1934 and educated at Leigh Grammar School and then, not only at the Royal Manchester College of Music but also at Manchester University. He made a special study of Indian music in addition to his more normal curriculum studies and wrote a thesis on rhythmic systems in Indian music which undoubtedly influenced the complex rhythms of the first composition which he now recognises, the Sonata for trumpet and piano (1955). This early interest in a wide variety of music from many different periods and cultures is symptomatic, for Maxwell Davies has been influenced by an astonishingly wide range of different music throughout his career and drawn many apparently incompatible elements into his own compositions.

Both the Trumpet Sonata and the Five Pieces for piano Op. 2 (1956) already reveal an accomplished technique and an intensely musical creative personality. The piano pieces owe much to Schoenberg, particularly expressionist Schoenberg, as the composer has himself said. All Maxwell Davies' work is strongly influenced by serial procedures but, even in these early works, it does not always adhere strictly to "classical" serial technique. The piano pieces, in particular, are characterised by complex textures, density of thought, and a certain violence and extreme intensity. This intensity is not merely youthful exuberance but has remained a strong feature of Davies' music. It comes partly from his continued adherence to expressionism, but it is also a feature of his own personality, clear to all in his performing manner - the quick entrance and exit, his fiery, piercing look, his short, abrupt acknowledgment of applause, his conducting gestures - and also in his manner of speech. (It is characteristic that he will not drive a car or own a T.V. or a telephone because they would stop him from working. His pace of living is intense, not only has he produced a large body of work to date (some involving much musical and extra-musical research e.g. the forthcoming opera "Taverner") but he is a regular conductor of his own and other music and makes frequent lecture-tours all round the world. He will read German Expressionist poetry in the bath!)

There is another side to his music, as to his personality, however, which is present even in the early piano pieces. This is a sense of calm, almost of meditation, which increased as Davies was drawn more and more into one of his most lasting pre-occupations - his interest in medieval music.

"Alma Redemptoris Mater" (1957) for wind sextet is one of the most characteristic, although not perhaps the most successful, works of



Davies' purely "medieval period". The last of the Five Piano Pieces is a theme with four variations in the form of a complex isorhythmic structure, but here Davies goes one step further and bases his short three-movement sextet on a motet by Dunstable. It is the first obvious indication of medieval influence in Davies' music - both in mood and details. The medieval plainsong which gives the title to both Dunstable's and Davies' works is taken as the point of departure and the chant is integrated into the texture in ways similar to that of the cantus firmus technique of medieval polyphony. The technique of parody (basing a composition on pre-composed material) is itself a medieval idea, but Davies uses not only the plainsong that Dunstable used, but also Dunstable's motet itself to determine both the details and the basic shape of the piece. This involves the evolution of a complex technique which owes much to both medieval polyphonic structures and 20th century serial procedures. In general mood the piece possesses both something of a medieval fervour, the intensity which was mentioned earlier, and a contemplative, gentle melancholy and calm resignation which is characteristic of much other English music (e.g. Dowland, the English "Romantics") and is also a typical medieval quality - a religious fervour combined with a calm certainty that the medieval contemplative possessed. Intensity is here partly achieved by gradual crescendi on long notes which, even if they drop back to subito piano, do not release the tension they have built up. Personally, however, I find that many of these qualities are better expressed in later works (e.g. Ricercar and Doubles, O Magnum Mysterium); this may be partly due to the executant and ensemble problems that even top players under the composer's direction seem to experience.

In 1957 Maxwell Davies won an Italian Government Scholarship and went to Rome to study with Goffredo Petrassi. During this period he completed two of his most ambitious works, the St. Michael Sonata for 17 wind instruments and Prolation for orchestra which won the 1959 Olivetti Prize and was performed at the I.S.C.M. Festival that year. While some of Davies' earlier chamber and solo works have received performances in recent years, the larger works have not; thus I have never had the chance to hear either of these two works.

Prolation is wholly derived from one thematic cell and is concerned with the re-interpretation of medieval metrical proportions. The composer's note reads as follows: "Prolation governed the relative proportion of minim and semibreve in the medieval rhythmic modal system. In the present work prolation is extended to cover greater and smaller proportions - from periods covering hundreds of bars, to the smallest "irrational" groups - also self-evidently to super and juxtapositions of a more complex nature than simple duple and triple metres. It follows that all metronome indications are to be particularly faithfully observed". The work can, in common with some others by Davies and other English composers, thus be seen to explore the



possibilities inherent in the rationalisation and serialisation of parameters other than pitch which occupied many continental composers during the 50's. Davies' medieval leanings, however, give his works a wholly distinctive, original and sometimes, as we have noted, a very English quality: his medievalism results not in a mannered archaism but is an important contribution to the formation of a vital and modern musical personality. Like some other English artists he is concerned with the conflict which faced Gothic man - "the conflict between the known and the unknown, between the light and dark sides of man's nature, between potential and fulfilment" (Robert Henderson in Musical Times, October 1961). The St. Michael Sonata finds temporary resolution in the "remarkable stillness of the central Adagio" (Henderson). Prolation turns inward on itself - its pre-occupation with its own material leads the work to close completely self-absorbed with a phrase derived from the all-pervading opening thematic-cell.

Between 1959 and 1962 Peter Maxwell Davies was Director of Music at Cirencester Grammar School, in which capacity he had phenomenal success. The freshness of approach of his methods of teaching young people to make music produced such successful results that his services as a lecturer have been much in demand since that time. His interest in children and education have been retained up to the present - in 1968 he made a series of schools broadcasts for BBC television.

Besides working with his characteristic ardour and enthusiasm at classroom teaching and school concerts (one of which consisted of a large part of Monteverdi's "Vespers of 1610" edited and arranged by himself) he also wrote music for performance at the school. This posed a problem - how to write good music within the capabilities of school children while refusing to compromise his own already higher individual style? This undoubtedly influenced his whole thinking as a composer, which resulted, not in abandoning his techniques of composition, but in a process of simplification and perhaps a greater concern for immediate expression and communication rather than a continuation of his highly lyrical and sometimes "distant" contemplative music, which one occasionally feels is "far removed" from the immediacy of an audience's physical presence and its need for direct communication.

Be that as it may, he composed two works within the capabilities of children which were immediately successful in performance and widely heard. Adults were almost shamed into comprehending what children had responded to so readily. These two works were "O Magnum Mysterium" (1960) and "Te Lucis ante Terminum" (1961); both are cycles of carols with instrumental sonatas. Both are written almost entirely for performance by children, although the former, which is the much larger work, concludes with a virtuosic organ fantasia. The vocal sections are written in a



simple, direct harmonic language. The instrumental interludes are in a more fragmented style and the two sonatas make extensive use of improvisation, but within strictly controlled limits. The improvised sections are played against a harmonic background which gives structural direction to the music.

Harmony is an important element in Davies' work and one to which he pays particular attention. Although much of his music is linear in conception, the vertical aspect also receives due consideration and is as carefully organised as all the other parameters - particularly in terms of harmonic tension and relaxation. Basic material is sometimes harmonic (e.g. St. Michael Sonata) and harmonic potential is often the first to be explored in a piece (e.g. Prolation). The simplification of Davies' music which began with his works for children was partly achieved by a deeper concern for harmonic clarity which led the composer to find a new meaning in simple diatonic chords and their function in a dissonant harmonic language. That even the clearest and simplest of Maxwell Davies' work has been misunderstood is particularly well illustrated by some of the remarks (which the magazine Musical Times later printed) that greeted the music supplement for October 1961 - Davies' carol "Ave Maria, Hail Blessed Flower". While several eminent critics praised it, other people had very different views. One said "I consider myself one of the younger generation, appreciative of sensible modern trends.... It is high time someone made a firm stand against this unnecessarily unpleasant music which has little interest in its melodic lines and altogether creates a hideous dirge." Another called it "an affront to God". Its serial or non-serial writing was hotly disputed, while one writer thought that it was a "gentle little piece of polyphony in A minor" and another, that it was in A major (on which chord the piece ends.) Some choirmasters doubted that any choir could hear, let alone sing, "so many major seconds" but Maxwell Davies himself said: "It must be easy to do, because our kids got it on one rehearsal". Somebody asked "Is this a hoax by the Musical Times?"

An important and under-rated work from this period is the String Quartet (1961) which also uses controlled improvisation. Free melismas in one part weave through the strictly ordered counterpoint of the other parts, since the melodic shape of the melisma is given but the rhythmic shape is left to the performer whose part is governed only by the exact rhythmic proportions of the other parts. This new flexibility is another aspect of simplification and the composer's desire to move away from an intensely inward to a more direct and immediate form of expression. The march that closes the Quartet and the florid vocal lines of the Leopardi Fragments (1961) would have been impossible in earlier works.

In 1962, Davies' First Fantasia on an In Nomine of John Taverner, commissioned by the BBC, was first performed at a Promenade Concert,



Along with many other young composers, Maxwell Davies benefitted enormously from the support and wide hearing of contemporary music that William Glock gave through the radio in the early 60's. Several of his compositions received broadcasts and helped to establish his reputation, which by now was considerable. His second Promenade commission came in 1969 when several members of the audience (mainly young people) showed their displeasure by walking out during the piece, which, since most of them had come for Belshazzar's Feast and Elgar's Cello Concerto, they considered "grotesque". The piece, entitled "Worldes Blis", fits into Davies' purely medieval period, since he used this commission to finish, or at any rate continue, work on a piece which he had started in 1966. The composer says: "In this work, I was particularly interested in the articulation of very large structures over a long time-span, by the most spare means - in relating events placed a long time apart in such a way that not only is the relationship clear, but that a tension between events is evident. The music, though a double bar-line has been drawn at the end, is 'incomplete': the generating potentiality of the transformation processes employed leaves a good two-thirds of the possibilities unexplored which I may, or may not, eventually work out in more movements". "Worldes Blis" is a 13th century monody - it is not heard as such in Davies' piece, but is used as "main filter" (the composer's own words). The idea of an "unfinished" piece which does not make use of all the possibilities inherent in its basic material is also to be found in the works of other contemporary composers (e.g. Harrison Birtwistle's idea of "revising" a composition is sometimes just to add more to it.) "Worldes Blis" consists basically of one enormous dynamic arch ppp  $\curvearrowright$  fff  $\curvearrowleft$  ppp - it lasts nearly 40 minutes, much longer than the BBC or the audience expected! To me, it was a fine and intensely moving work; the long drawn-out diminuendo was essential after the long crescendo and the work combined Davies' medieval mysticism with a particularly strongly-conceived expressionism, which was aided by some strikingly original writing for heavy percussion (a very large orchestra is employed). This major orchestral work came as a surprise after Davies' pre-occupation with chamber music in recent years and his apparent abandonment of the contemplative, mystical side of his medievalism. It harks back to the earlier work of Prolation and the Taverner Fantasias, but its stark spare use of a large orchestra and its incredible clarity and luminosity betray his later pre-occupations. I believe it, admittedly on only one hearing, to be one of Maxwell Davies' best and most important works to date. This is the more surprising, since not only are many composers unwilling to write for a full symphony orchestra, but those who do quite often fail to produce a successful and characteristic work (e.g. Birtwistle's failure to do so in "Nomos" (1968) his Prom. commission). The reason for both of these facts is largely, of course, that the symphony orchestra in its present form came into existence to play a very different kind of music with completely different needs from that written today by, for instance,



Birtwistle. The formation of small, flexible chamber orchestras is fortunately meeting many composer's demands, but by manipulating the conventional symphony orchestra, especially by breaking it down into smaller components, the use of concerto-like textures and new groupings to produce clear textures, composers like Maxwell Davies still succeed in producing characteristic works that can be included in the symphonic repertoire. Such a work is "Worldes Blis" but there has been no second performance of it as far as I know. The composer is at present working on a new orchestral work for the New Philharmonia Orchestra which will be premiered in 1973.

In my second article I will discuss Davies' later music - in particular the Second Taverner Fantasia (1964) and the most recent music-theatre works. If possible, I shall also include the opera "Taverner" (based on the life of the 16th century English composer with whom Davies has had something of an obsession over the past ten years). This work, completed in 1968, but since re-written owing to a fire which destroyed the original manuscript, will be premiered at Covent Garden in July.

KEITH POTTER.

### LOUIS ARMSTRONG'S GREATEST YEARS

(The second of two articles)

Exactly why Armstrong chose to break with his old New Orleans background after December 1927 has never been satisfactorily explained. Personal problems may well have had something to do with it, and it may be that his colleagues as well as his wife, Lillian Harding Armstrong, felt that Louis was getting a bit above himself. That he was getting above them musically is clear enough from many of the records. It is noticeable that Dodds, a fluent and inventive clarinettist, often seems inhibited under Armstrong's leadership, while Ory, never the most inventive of musicians, is sometimes driven to a degree of ineptitude that seems only explicable if we regard him as being under severe nervous strain. That the entire group was capable of much better things, even though their musical horizons might be smaller, is demonstrated by the recordings made for Columbia in 1926 as the New Orleans Bootblacks and New Orleans Wanderers. For contractual reasons Armstrong had to be replaced in these sessions and they found in George Mitchell, Jelly-Roll Morton's great cornet player, someone whose conceptions closely reflected their own.



Not all the original Hot Five, certainly not the Hot Seven records, suggest this degree of strain. Dodds, for instance, was much more at ease with the added tuba and drums of the Seven's line-up though Ory was dropped and temporarily replaced by A.N. Other whose uncertain identity masks a trombonist of more than usual poverty of ideas. Nevertheless it was this group which produced one of the finest of all the early performances, Potato Head Blues, a performance outstanding for Armstrong's second solo, a breathtaking demonstration of the perfectability of judgement. In it Armstrong soars across the compass of the instrument and the confines of the bar-line with destructive ease. It is a tour de force, this solo, but it is the high point of the four sessions (May 10, 11, 13 and 14, 1927) on which it was recorded. The four titles which followed (the fifth, S.O.L. Blues, was not released until years later) show a sharp decline in preparation and concentration only partially restored in the last two titles, Gully Low Blues and That's When I'll Come Back To You. (9).

These and the other products of these recording years have been discussed in depth elsewhere, nowhere with greater sympathy and critical acumen than by Gunther Schuller (10), and there is little point in re-appraising them in detail here except perhaps to draw attention to Big Butter And Egg Man among the earliest efforts of the group, and the added stimulus of Lonnie Johnson on three of the last four sides, I'm Not Rough, Hotter Than That and the nostalgic Savoy Blues. The first two of these count among the short list of wholly successful, therefore classic, performances of these years.

With the exception of Earl Hines, the new pianist taken, like the rest of the group, from Carroll Dickerson's ranks, the members of the new Hot Five were ciphers. Previously the group had literally consisted of five players; now the Five became six with Armstrong no longer primus inter pares but undisputed leader and dominant personality. Hine's powerful and decorative keyboard style was the only outright gain since its empathy with Armstrong's thinking was well-nigh absolute. Neither Jimmy Strong nor Fred Robinson could match the individuality of Dodds and Ory, while Mancy Cara's banjo playing was no match for St.Cyr's. The added member was Zutty Singleton, a drummer greatly admired by Armstrong, whose contribution to these sides consists principally of demonstrations on choked cymbals that sound depressingly like teaspoons being wielded by an energetic busker.

Apart from Louis, now apparently free of inhibitions, only Hines continues to hold our interest. Technically many of the performances are flawed by flashy arrangement and indifferent rehearsal, the quest for effect being pursued, one feels, without proper concern for its appropriateness as in Basin Street Blues where Hines commits the solecism of exchanging the piano for a celeste with deflating results.



All this notwithstanding, it is clear that Armstrong felt an aesthetic necessity for such a change. Its justification, if any were needed, is to be found in West End Blues which has been described as Armstrong's crowning achievement. Curiously, it is the one side from its period which most nearly reverts to the earlier uncluttered style of Potato Head, though its introductory cadenza is far removed from any implication of naivete. Six months later, in December 1928, Armstrong almost equalled it with Beau Koo Jack; not, this time, in spite of his arranger but because of him. Alex Hill's contribution to the Armstrong saga is as far as I know confined to this single item which is a pity since it is one of the best arrangements Armstrong ever had and far superior to the majority of those Redman did for him.

The polarisation of the Armstrong-Hines association came the same day with their duo recording of King Oliver's Weather Bird which appears to have resulted from a chance decision to continue at the end of a day's recording. Bereft of the trappings provided by the rest of the band it is easier to judge the true quality of the two contestants in what amounts almost to a "cutting" contest. Each stimulates the other to greater flights of fancy; Hines to increasingly daring harmonic adventures, Armstrong to increasing freedom from the strictures of time and theme. Here then, if anywhere, is the summation of Armstrong's deliverance of jazz from the Egypt of its tradition.

But there was still one other great performance to come. Muggles is all Armstrong, in effect if not in fact, and the effect is concentrated into a few remarkable moments of pure drama as Armstrong picks up the last two notes of Strong's conventional chorus, shakes it into double time and bursts the shambling blues into shreds with explosive interjections before settling back into the original tempo to rebuild the fabric with one of the most beautiful and emotional blues choruses he ever recorded.

The very last record of all, Tight Like This, is total Armstrong, in fact as in essence. Except for a short introduction and chorus from Hines Armstrong dominates the performance from beginning to end. Dramatically introduced with two notes from the lowest register the solo coruscates like a Bellini aria, glittering darkly and passionately, no longer concerned with the external world, barely pausing even to take account of the murmured interjections of Redman whose verbal exchange with Armstrong at the beginning of the record are, by its end, reduced to awed admiration.

This marks the end of Armstrong's apprenticeship. What followed was a decade of untroubled virtuosity and increasing commercial success. Though it is, in general, not a period which continues to excite much curiosity it is not, at its outset at least, entirely devoid of



interest. In May 1926 under his own name Armstrong had recorded one number Chicago Breakdown with the Carroll Dickerson Orchestra; in July 1928 he appeared with them again, this time under Dickerson's imprimatur, in two exotically-titled numbers, Stomp and Blues con variaciones (11), better known as Symphonic Raps and Savoyagers' Stomp. All are typical of what Armstrong was to do for the next ten years, to be spot-lit against a background of sophisticated and anonymous jazz Muzak. Apart from a one-off sit-in with a group of Chicagoans including Jack Teagarden in March 1929 which produced the lumpy Knockin' A Jug, Armstrong remained with large orchestras until 1940.

With one of these, Luis Russell, he rediscovered some of the heady excitement of earlier days. Russell, recently associated with the declining King Oliver, had in his ranks several New Orleans men including Henry Allen, Albert Nicholas and Paul Barbarin. He also had a fiery trombonist in J.C. Higginbotham and in Pops Foster a bass player of sterling rhythmic qualities. In this congenial atmosphere Armstrong produced a number of excellent performances which if they no longer excite us by their audacity continue to impress us with their brilliance and ebullience. The first of these is Mahogany Hall Stomp (12) preceded by a warm account of I Can't Give You Anything But Love. These were followed in December 1929 by the first - and best - of Armstrong's many versions of Rockin' Chair with Hoagy Carmichael, and what is in my view the quintessence of the principle of reductio ad absolutem, St. Louis Blues.

Here we are presented with the exact opposite of the sort of thing Armstrong did with Weather Bird. After two powerful and florid choruses from Higginbotham against a thundered-out tangana rhythm by the band Armstrong enters and takes the tune out with four skeletal choruses of perfectly placed notes which become increasingly functional until by the third and fourth choruses they have been reduced virtually to "single note rhythm". It is a remarkable achievement and a unique one. Apart from the chains of high notes with which in 1933 he regaled his audiences in this country he never repeated this feat, and only here did he give it musical coherence.

One might perhaps suppose that he needed to purge himself of some of the excesses to which, paradoxically, he was about to address himself. Certainly with very few exceptions (I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music, Jubilee, Struttin' With Some Barbecue and Savoy Blues) the Thirties passed in seeming irrelevance. But if the music no longer was able to instruct the technique itself inspired a new generation of performers, Rex Stewart, Roy Eldridge and ultimately Dizzy Gillespie.

Briefly, on May 27, 1940, Armstrong joined forces again with Sidney Bechet, with whom he had not played since the days of the Red Onion



Jazz Babies in 1924. Prompted by a rhythm section consisting of Luis Russell, Bernard Addison, Wellman Braud and his old Hot Five companion Zutty Singleton, and with the assistance of Claude Jones, they produced four sides, Perdido Street Blues, 2.19 Blues, Down in Honky-Tonk Town and Coal Cart Blues (13) which mark Armstrong's return to the fold of small-group Traditional jazz. They show that, however much water had flowed under the bridge, 'King' Louis was still alive and kicking. And so in spirit he remains.

- (1) The Original Dixieland Jazz Band RCA RD-7919.
- (2) King Oliver's Jazz Band. Parlophone PMC7032; also The Immortal King Oliver. CBS Milestone 63806.
- (3) Louis Armstrong with King Oliver. London AL3504 (10") deleted.
- (4) Examples in (a) Fletcher Henderson: A Study in Frustration CBS62001 (deleted) and (b) The Immortal Fletcher Henderson CBS Milestone 63737.
- (4a) The Bessie Smith Story Vol. 1 CBS62377.
- (5) In Recording the Blues CBS52797.
- (6) In Jazz Vol. 4 - Jazz Singers. Folkways FJ2804 (? deleted).
- (7) In Jazz Sounds of the 20s Vol. 4. Parlophone PMC1177 (deleted)
- (8) In Story of the Blues Vol. 1 CBS66218.
- (9) Louis Armstrong - His Greatest Years - 4 volumes. Parlophone PMC1140, 1142, 1146 and 1150. These include all the Hot Five, Hot Seven and Savoy Ballroom Five recordings.
- (10) Gunther Schuller: Early Jazz. OUP 1968.
- (11) In Louis and the Big Bands 1928-1930. Parlophone PMC7074.
- (12) In Louis in Los Angeles 1930. Parlophone PMC7098.
- (12a) In Satchmo Style. Parlophone PMC7045.
- (13) In New Orleans Jazz. Ace of Hearts.

This discography is partly reprinted here from the last issue for the sake of completeness.

KENNETH DOMMETT

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A BROADENING OF THE SMILE

Back in 1970, on the LP C.J.Fish, the American group Country Joe and the Fish recorded a song called Hey Bobby. It was addressed to Bob Dylan, and was a curious mixture of nostalgia and resentment for his opting out of the American rock music scene, with its extreme pressures and political and cultural commitments.

"Hey Bobby, where you been?  
Missed you out on the street.  
Heard you've got yourself a brand new scene -  
It's called a retreat."

In many ways Dylan's most recent single release, Watch the River Flow, is his reply to Country Joe's song. Certainly, on first hearing, it could belong to 1966, to the powerful electric rock music of Rainy Day Women and Leopard Skin Pill-Box Hat. Dylan seems to have finished, temporarily at least, with the soupy violins and choirs that decorated much of his recent music, for in Watch the River Flow we are back with the rock beat, and boogie piano and the scorching guitar of Robbie Robertson. As well as this, Dylan has abandoned his new 'musical' voice in favour of the half-speaking, half-shouting that was so crucial to his early songs; the characteristic inflections and accents have returned, as Dylan moulds the syllables and phrases of the song almost out of recognition.

But if the music is reminiscent of 1966, the words of the song could only belong to Dylan in 1971. And they are something of a shock given Dylan's situation, apparently content and living with his wife on a farm outside New York. This new song seems to suggest that he is beginning to miss the activity and pace of life in the city. It's as if he is starting to feel complacent, even slightly bored with his own life at the moment, and wants to return to the heart of things, to the streets where he once belonged. But in the song, at least, it is little more than a hint, for in the end Dylan's mood is one of joyful resignation - to 'sit on a bank of sand, and watch the river flow'.

To see the true significance of this we must go back to 1966, and to Dylan's LP Blonde on Blonde. The crucial song on this LP is Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands. By any standards this is one of Dylan's major achievements; the music has a timelessness and simple majesty almost unequalled in his work, whilst the lyrics are some of the most expansive and poignant that pop has produced. Dylan's sad eyed lady is a woman, and yet she stands for all women. In the song she is cast as a nun, an image which can be both literal and symbolic. She is triumphant in her isolation, piously innocent, vulnerable and exploitable, and yet she is potentially indestructible. She can be a friend, girlish lover, mother and a god to man. At the same time, Dylan has cast her as the woman immortal, a woman not for men (one is reminded of Catherine in the film Jules et Jim). It is of this woman, or image of woman, that Dylan asks



"My warehouse eyes, my Arabian drums,  
Should I leave them by your gate,  
Or, sad eyed lady, should I wait?"

In the song, it is a question that Dylan leaves unanswered. But in retrospect one realises that the answer is contained in Dylan's next two LP's, John Wesley Harding and Nashville Skyline. One can see now that he did wait; however distant, Dylan's sad eyed lady is a human being, not a god fit only for gifts and adulation.

Given this interpretation of the song, it can be seen as the beginning of a long parable that includes John Wesley Harding and culminates in Nashville Skyline. However, the roots of this parable of Becoming may lie much further back. Dylan has come a long way from the turbulence of spirit that characterises his earlier songs. The youthful assertion of self as he sings defiantly

"No, no, no, it ain't me babe,  
It ain't me you're looking for, babe."

contrasts strongly with the prevailing tone of Nashville Skyline which is one of staying rather than leaving. However, the change is not an easy or a quick one. The religious conflicts and doubts laid bare in John Wesley Harding may take a lifetime to resolve, but now, at least, Dylan doesn't need to be alone to solve them.

In John Wesley Harding, with its collection of almost Bunyanesque allegories, Dylan is in a state of turmoil; doubt, guilt feelings and self-deception predominate. (The overall effect was described succinctly by the critic Paul Nelson as being rather like Jean Paul Sartre with a 5-string banjo.) But at the end of the LP one feels that Dylan has reached an important conclusion; he returns to humanity and to humanism as he sings Down Along the Cove:

"Down along the cove  
I see my true love coming my way;  
Lord have mercy,  
I'm so glad to see you coming today."

It is here that we realise that he has not 'waited' in vain. The last song on the LP, I'll Be Your Baby Tonight, allows Dylan to relax (something his audience would never allow) and to feel, perhaps for the first time, what it is like to have peace of mind. It has taken more than two years from the time he wrote Tombstone Blues (1966)

"I wish I could write you a melody so plain,  
To keep you, dear lady, from going insane.  
To ease you and cool you, and cease the pain,  
Of your useless and pointless knowledge."



to the eventual fulfilment of that wish in I'll Be Your Baby Tonight (1968). For those who had followed Dylan from the beginning, the initial effect was a mixture of disappointment and puzzlement; for Dylan was asking to be treated simply as a human being. He is no longer the Anguished Poet, but a man with a simple, but rare talent; the ability to say with honesty and simplicity what it is like to be happy. And Nashville Skyline is a broadening of the smile.

It's not difficult to relate these changes to Dylan's own life. Increasingly his songs have become celebrations, not only of himself, but of his lover - his wife - as well. By 1970 it had become apparent that he no longer wanted, or indeed needed, to communicate in the terms that he had done before. (In fact, at the Isle of Wight Festival in 1969 he showed this without doubt. One of the early songs that he sang was One Too Many Mornings. During this a mere gesture on Dylan's part seemed to completely sum up his attitude to himself as an artist. He raised his right hand high in the air, and shook it as he sang:

"Everything I'm saying  
You can say it just as good."

This expression of private grief had become a public statement about Dylan's own art.)

Since John Wesley Harding Dylan's songs have become plain statements, using simplified language and uncomplicated musical accompaniments. Yet what strikes one about Nashville Skyline, and particularly about songs like Lay Lady Lay, is that they are so complete; they have a glorious simplicity and confidence. Certainly there are times when one longs for the sumptuous poetry of Sad Eyed Lady and Visions of Joanna, but we must realise that, given Dylan's present situation, this sort of language is no longer relevant. An on the LP Self Portrait Dylan even allows himself to sing songs written by other people. This LP is Dylan's 'family favourites' - a collection of songs that he probably sings and listens to what he is at home.

Given the self-confidence and sure-footed insularity that these recent LP's reflect, it's rather surprising that Dylan should record a song like Watch the River Flow. Especially with its citified electric rock accompaniment and delivery it seems to suggest that Dylan may be getting 'itchy feet'. In fact, musically Dylan has almost come full circle since 1966, and it may well be that he will once again emerge to put some of the joyful honesty back into rock music.

DAVID MABEY.



ATHENS: THE 4th HELLENIC WEEK OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC.

The relaxed atmosphere of early autumn under sunny latin skies in the company of audiences not over exposed to the mixed pleasures of contemporary art is an invigorating environment in which to listen to "new music" and view mixed-media events. For Greeks, many of whose creative artists are resident abroad for economic reasons, have rarely the opportunity to come into contact with the latest developments in the arts and therefore an eager audience exists of all age groups. This was certainly seen during the "4th Hellenic Week" held in Athens during September - selected programmes of which were repeated in Thessaloniki and Volos.

With the possible exception of Skalkottas and Xenakis, relatively little is known here of the work of Greek composers outside the programmes of the English Bach Festival where the leading figures of the middle generation, Christou, Adamis and Ioannidis have been introduced. This is a pity for Greece has a number of important individual voices who write with considerable technical accomplishment in a language of new thought deserving of a correct evaluation by those with open and alert ears.

As in previous years the festival, given under a grant from the Ford Foundation, presented commissions and premieres from in fact all the leading Greek composers together with representatives from Europe and America. While the Greeks prefer aleatoric elements and graphic notation to extensive improvisation and prose texts, the degree of control preferred was relaxed in an early evening of improvisation for three VCS 3's, piano and audience in which the fun element produced a valid and relaxed experience. The composer's international concern with communication and his changing role in society was reflected in a number of works outside of social or spiritual commitment; problems arising from the use of elements from classical Greek drama to create a unified language valid within the terms of "our new musical resources" were evident in several pieces. Yannis Papaioannou's "4 Orpheus Hymns" for narrator and ensemble utilizes the dramatic style of Greek theatre where a more restrained vocal delivery would have been more appropriate in what is otherwise a work of beauty and integrated instrumental sonorities. In another festival commission, "Kratima", Michael Adamis continues a valid transformation of Byzantine source material through subtle use of chanter, instruments, and synthesized sound towards expressive regions in which experimentation becomes a filter by which we renew the past to become a mirror of the present in music that retains certain secrets to be revealed at a future hearing.

Nikos Mamangakis speaks with the voice of the European avant-garde and was represented by three works, each showing facets of his current preoccupation with articulation in the composer/performer



relationship. In "Parastasis", a solo flute builds on tightly concentrated segments set against an electronic tape of alienated speech to represent the social involvement of Prometheus in modern society culminating in a climax of staggering emotional impact. In direct contrast, "Penthima" is an attractive piece for guitar. More substantial was the cello work, "Askesis", in which a free and expansive approach allowed the player to express his inner personality within defined notational limits - control of the kind in which the music moves towards the 'gesture', the duration of variables motivated by an emotional response for player and listener.

A propelling force of a quite different order is to be found in the scores of Anestis Logothetis, whose 50th birthday together with that of Iannis Xenakis was celebrated by an exhibition of scores and documents. The graphic works of Logothetis, despite their often precise instructions, create formidable problems on occasions, in the presence of the composer who knows exactly how to realise his intentions. In the case of "Pyriflegthethon-Acheron-Kikkotos" (the three rivers of the classical Greek underworld) the result is a fascinating world of timbres, the sum total of which is a kaleidoscope of sound built from transformations of Greek folk song uttered by the University of Salonica Choir in ancient and modern Greek. In a more restrained yet equally impressive use of voice and instruments Dimitri Terzakis', "X" - symbol of the unknown - uses in imaginative terms a total microtonal language centred around cellular units of minor thirds in a logical progression from equal temperament.

The shadow of two lamented artists pervaded the festival, those of Jani Christou, who died in a car crash the preceding January, and George Seferis whose passing darkened the second day of the festival. A programme by the Nicoloudi Dance Company included a version of Christou's mixed-media "Epicycle" - a continuum of events represented by the confined movements of dancers in casual dress together with a solo actor were superimposed on a tape prepared by the composer for a projected gramophone record and complete except for the final seconds; it is a tape of remarkable originality which to a certain degree conditions the stage action by the use of ritual sound elements of voices and electronics whose clearly defined multi-track structure acts as a force towards a positive and creative unleashing of forces latent in the primordial subconscious. The performances failed through the failure of the restrained stylised choreography to realise the composer's intentions.

"Epicycle" was one of the two most subtle and impressive works of art given during the week. The other was performed in an incomplete version - without stage action - in the same programme. This was Stephanos Vassiliadis's "The Secret Songs of Silence" which explores man's inner quest for reality through dream states of awakening consciousness. A tape of multi-track sources revealed the work of an extremely sensitive mind in command of electronic media treated in an entirely new direction.



Within the context of a festival almost exclusively devoted to new work from the under-fifties, the most recent creation from John Cage emerged with an almost classical puritanism of figurative elements distributed in space. "Mesostics" for solo performer is a syllabic word-mix of Letraset type faces rendered into unintelligibility but simultaneously having a life force of their own. At least this was the result in the capable hands of the Greek baritone Spyros Sakkas whose mastery of sound and gesture transfers the viewer into regions of visual and psychic imagery of a world beyond sound theatre. The dancer Jannine Byatt reacted to each of Sakkas' mesostics on another plane of activity.

Though impressive new compositions appeared from Aperghis, Antoniou, Becker, Halffter, Heider, Ioannidis and Sfetsas, direct communication through instrumental sound gestures were most successfully achieved in "Askesis" by the American composer Joseph Castaldo. An instrumental ensemble doubling on sound-producing instruments combine to produce humour with elegance in a highly imaginative and exciting work of rhythmic drive and spontaneity where 'sonic' elements are used with care and precision to provide an enjoyable musical experience. In "Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death", with his customary craftsmanship George Crumb uses amplified instruments in a highly expressive manner for a sound world in which understatement of a textural situation leads directly to an invocation of the poetic images of Lorca.

Throughout the festival the members of the Hellenic Group for Contemporary Music provided authoritative performances of complex scores under the inspired direction of Theodore Antoniou. Under a condition of the Ford Foundation grant only Greek performing musicians participated and even with the demands attendant on 14 programmes in Athens alone this ensemble is certainly among the important groups specializing in contemporary music.

( DAVID JONES.

#### RECORD REVIEWS .

Kevin Ayers: Whatevershbringswesing (EMI)

Another, I think, successful album from Kevin Ayers. He is treading on safer ground than in his last LP 'Shooting at the Moon', of which half of side one was taken up with free improvisation. In fact, in the first track 'There is Loving' he seems to be following Pink Floyd's footsteps, the song being more than reminiscent, in its arrangement (strings and brass alternating with drums and guitars) and in instrumental melody line, of 'Atom Heart Mother'. The arrangement on this is by David Bedford, and a short work of his, 'Among Us', is inserted in it.

In complete contrast with the heavy orchestration of the first track is 'Margaret', the second song. A very delicate ballad with



attractive lyrics:

'And just like everybody sings when the sunshine makes them high  
I sing this grateful love-song from a flower to a butterfly'.

'Oh My' is a more robust song, and has a jazzy backing of trombones and clarinets. 'Song from the Bottom of a Well' is dark and mysterious, harking back to such tracks as 'Stop This Train' and 'The Lady Rachel' on 'Joy of a Toy', Ayers' first solo album. The screeching chords and monotonous rhythm, with such lyrics as:

'I've learnt some information way down here  
That might fill your heart and soul with fear,  
But don't you worry and don't be afraid  
I'm not in the magical mystery trade.'

produce a somewhat unnerving effect.

The title track is a very beautiful song with backing vocals from Robert Wyatt and slow, tuneful guitar solo from Mike Oldfield. The single 'Stranger in Blue Suede Shoes' comes next in which Kevin Ayers' low voice is used to marvellous effect in a kind of talking blues:

'Well I walked into this bar  
And the man refused (note of surprise)  
He said "We don't serve strangers in Blue Suede Shoes"'.  
The last track is an instrumental

'Champagne Cowboy Blues' is a slow cowboy-type song (with clapping sounds and violin) in which the intrusion of 'Joy of a Toy' from his first album adds to the nostalgia. The last track is an instrumental 'Lullaby' for flute, with waterfall backing. A satisfying album with some nice songs.

David Bowie: Hunky Dory (RCA)

'Nice' would not be an adequate description of David Bowie's songs - the melodies are attractive, but the lyrics contain untold depths that could easily trap the unwary listener. 'Changes', for instance, the first track, which has also been released as a single, and looks like being a hit, is about the passage of time, and as such is relevant to everybody. At the other extreme, a song about happiness, is not by Bowie at all, but Biff Rose - 'Fill Your Heart with Love'. This is the simplest song on the album. Almost as simple is 'Kooks' written for his new-born son, Zowie. But the rest of the album consists of such throat-grIPPING, mind-distending creations as 'Quicksands', 'Life on Mars', 'Queen Bitch' and 'Oh You Pretty Things'. The latter, strangely enough, was put out as a single by Peter Noone; it tells of children



growing up and reflects Bowie's interest in the 'Superman' - 'Homo Superior' into which he believes, human beings will some day evolve. Bowie is also interested in Tibetan Buddhism, and this is explored in 'Quicksands':

'If I don't explain what you ought to know  
You can tell me all about it on the next Bardo'

and:

'Knowledge comes with Death's Release'.

This is a very emotional song suggesting nostalgia at man's once elevated state, and the hope that we shall again reach it. In other songs he is much more down to earth, and conscious of contemporary problems, which he is content just to observe, not to solve. Such a song is 'Queen Bitch' which is about male prostitution, and 'Life on Mars':

'It's on America's tortured brow  
That Mickey Mouse has grown up a cow  
Now the workers have struck for fame  
'Cause Lennon's on sale again  
See the mice in their million hoards  
From Ibiza to the Norfolk broads'.

The very heavy arrangement on this, and other tracks, is by Mick Ronson who also plays guitar on the album. There are also a couple of very appropriate songs for Bob Dylan and Andy Warhol.

This must be David Bowie's fourth album and a fifth is already in preparation. It has been hailed by critics as very important, a sure success; and it is certainly very original. I think he deserves to make it.

GRAHAM BUCK.



## R E V I E W S

November 18th and December 2nd: Town Hall, Birmingham.

Humphrey Searle's 'Labyrinth' and Peter Dickinson's Organ Concerto played by the CBSO.

On November 18th, under its principal conductor Louis Fremaux, the CBSO gave the first performance of Humphrey Searle's "Labyrinth". Subtitled "Symphony No. 6" (it was first conceived as a symphony) the work gave no clue as to the precise meaning of its title beyond the composer's association of the recurring opening theme with the idea of a maze - connected in some way with the painter Michael Ayrton's obsession with the myth of Daedalus the Maze Maker. (Maze obsessions are becoming quite common these days.....Tippett's opera "The Knot Garden" is a good example). Ayrton's well-known Berlioz obsession may be compared with Searle's Liszt obsession - another example of the link between these two artists, both of an essentially romantic turn of mind - of the somewhat 50's-ish cinematic variety. The piece is dedicated to Ayrton, jointly with the CBSO.

Considered simply as a piece of "pure" music, the work rather hung fire. It was extremely fragmentary, and few of the many short sections had time to build up any inner momentum before being cast aside. The overall structure and development of the work suffered accordingly, since the "maze music" did not prove strong enough to bind the contrasting sections together. A big climax near the middle of the work, however, did seem to provide the focus that composer (and audience) needed, and formal cohesion was more evident from then on. The orchestration was conventional enough - Searle is not afraid to use lush string textures for appropriately romantic themes. There was considerable ingenuity in the percussion writing - Searle used quite a battery and treated it somewhat in the manner of Roberto Gerhard, who was a master in this field.

The other recently-composed work in the CBSO's programmes this autumn was a second performance of Peter Dickinson's Organ Concerto, first performed at the Three Choirs Festival in August with Simon Preston. The soloist on this occasion was Christopher Robinson. To me this work, like Searle's "Labyrinth", suffered from an over-sectionalised approach - particularly at the beginning, where three very long sections of highly differentiated material succeeded each other without any immediately apparent sense of inner logic. Study of the score reveals closer motivic and structural connections that do not reveal themselves at a single hearing - a good indication that several hearings would prove the work finer than I first thought.



There was, however, plenty that could be apprehended at once, such as the very high writing for organ (2 ft. stops) against pitched percussion in the third section, and the glissandi for the two timpanists which followed. The blues elements derived from the use of a chord progression from Ravel's "Valse Nobles et Sentimentales" (which Dickinson had also used in his bluesish setting of Byron's "So we'll go no more a-roving") seemed less successful, but the work continually casts meaningful glances in the direction of tonality, which culminate in the emergence (three times during the course of the piece) of an unembellished triad played softly on the organ.

KEITH POTTER.

November 19th: Barber Institute of Fine Arts (University of Birmingham)

"Bell Piece '71" by Anna Lockwood and David Jones.

A man in a pink shirt and stockinged feet tip-toes delicately across the stage, pinging together a pair of tiny Indian cymbals. This is David Jones.

From the opposite side of the stage emerges a young woman who glides slowly but effortlessly across, pinging together a second pair of Indian cymbals. This is Anna Lockwood.

At the centre of the stage, both halt facing one another and, taking deliberate aim, ping their cymbals vigorously against one another's.

Thus began the performance of Bell Piece '71 by Anna Lockwood and David Jones at the Barber Institute on November 19th.

In each corner of the stage stood a coat rack with the largest collection of small bells I have ever seen. The performance consisted of random small single sounds made on the bells. The performers would spend long periods of time playing on one small group of bells, and then at a certain moment, for no apparent reason, walk to another coat rack. At times they would leave the stage entirely and move into the audience to ping bells behind the heads of unsuspecting people who had fallen asleep. Assorted auxiliary effects were provided by members of Embarkation, using a collection of percussion instruments including the well tried crash on a gong hidden in the corridors of the Institute. Some effective tape recordings of church and other large bells which accompanied the piece were spoilt by occasional loud electronic hum which sounded like a fault in the amplifier system.



I was disappointed by this event for it seemed to me mannered, and precious in the extreme, and lacked any overall cohesion, a surprising fact considering the reputation Anna Lockwood has gained in London. I felt there was an attempt to create a mood of quietness and contemplation, but that this totally misfired and produced instead a feeling of sheer drowsiness. Several members of the audience around me fell asleep and the sound of their deep regular breathing combined well with the music - an interesting variant on audience participation.

JOLYON LAYCOCK

January 4th: Purcell Room, London

Concert of contemporary works by  
Mouth of Hermes

As their publicity material says, "Mouth of Hermes is a group of musicians whose common purpose is to play contemporary music." The group is large enough, flexible enough and technically competent enough to present a large variety of different sorts of new music.

In this concert, Stravinsky's Septet was balanced by two works receiving their first London performances, an improvisation, and a work by a member of the group, several of whom are composers.

The Septet was neatly played with some style, but suffered from an imbalance in the parts - the horn and bassoon were often almost inaudible, even in solo passages.

Music for Seven by Jenny McLeod, a New Zealand composer, has been performed several times in Europe. It is a difficult and intricate score for flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano and vibraphone and marimba. There are thirteen sections in an order which can be played completely reversed; the organisation is of five short movements and their 'reflections' flanking three longer middle movements which contain in fuller form the ideas presented in the shorter sections. One hearing was not enough to grasp the musical working-out of this formal balance, but the impression left was certainly one of coherence, and of a piece of music, which, while long and densely-textured, was always interesting and often exciting. The composer explored the textures of various combinations of the eight instruments in solos, duets, and ensemble work, and while allowing the players at times some freedom to improvise their parts rhythmically or melodically, never allowed them to stray far from the piece's organisation.



Songs for Instruments by Geoffrey Grey, the group's violinist, is written for another interesting combination of instruments - piano, cello, horn, flute and piccolo, trumpet and harpsichord. As the title suggests, the piece exists mainly to provide the players with 'songs' to play, and was organised in sections with accompanied solo lyrical passages alternating with faster tutti passages. Possibly Geoffrey Grey wrote the piece with the Hermes group in mind - Christopher Taylor's beautiful flute solos in particular seemed just right for him. Perhaps to emphasise that this was particularly a piece for enjoyment, the fast passages were written in a jerky, dissonantly-diatonic manner recalling Stravinsky's neo-classic period - a difficult style to use successfully, and which aroused associations which rather unfortunately often dispelled the musical interest of the lyrical sections.

After an improvisation for flutes by Christopher Taylor and Stan Sulzman, which displayed their ability on their instrument, but settled around middle C too often, the concert ended with Enriques Raxach's Scatter Time written for Mouth of Hermes' recent tour of Holland. This was for piano, organ, violin and lute, flute, clarinets and bells. The composition, which, like the McLeod, needed another hearing, seemed to use more free improvisation by the group, and relied rather a lot on the organ which permeated the texture throughout, sometimes disturbingly, sometimes interestingly, and controlled the climaxes, the largest of which ended with sudden shouts and the dropping of an instrument on the floor. Most instruments had solo passages, and there was more exploration of less conventional uses of each than in the other works heard on the night.

The final impression of the concert was one of interest from beginning to end. The group not only played the works well, but worked together well, and showed their own enjoyment of them, which is always pleasant to see.

HILARY BRACEFIELD.

January 17th: The Roundhouse, London

BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Pierre Boulez.

Boulez began a season of lecture-concerts on January 17th for the BBC - a venture clearly intended to "educate" people to contemporary works, where they would, otherwise, listen perhaps uncomprehendingly, applying their various preconceptions concerning Music and Art etc. etc. Before each piece, Boulez, like a didactic big-Daddy, informed the audience of the scoring, what method of conducting was required, and gave a sample of background, in a manner which everyone must have found eminently unsatisfactory - to Boulez's obvious credit. I feel that Covent Garden deserves a similar lesson on how to listen to "Pelleas" or



"Parsifal". But whatever one's misgivings about the necessity of the Artist to explain his creation, the concert was advertised as being accompanied by discussion, so the audience was, obviously, going to be receptive to such treatment, and was even supplied with a sheet of paper on which to write questions for Daddy to answer after the concert.

The works handled and discussed were all British premieres, commencing with Bruno Maderna's "Juilliard Serenade", then Justin Connolly's "Tetramorph" for 20 strings and recorded pyrotechnics, whilst the showpiece was Stockhausen's "Mixtur". Maderna, (an associate of Stockhausen some years ago) confounded us shaggy, barbaric Britons with a sophisticated, complex, gimmick-less instrumental piece written (and consequently conducted) in three different ways: in conventional notation, improvisatory parts around supplied material, and the handling, by instrumentalists, of certain parts intended for other players - the last two procedures intended to demonstrate characteristic and uncharacteristic sounds from each instrument. There was much internal repetition, as one would expect from variational writing, but, on first hearing, as even Daddy conceded, the work would not bring great rewards.

The main feature of "Tetramorph" (and we have the conductor's word for it) was the increasing homogeneity in the string writing, together with growing heterogeneity in the simultaneous scoring for electronically produced sounds. The work explained itself well, in contrast to the Maderna, although its substance was questionable. The amplified sounds were not interesting on their own, and coupled with the almost consistently rhythmic string-scoring, they prompted the remark, from a member of the audience during the discussion, that the piece "sounded like listening to Tippett in a thunderstorm". Much to the undoubted chagrin of that outspoken wag, Mr. Connolly (who was present) was immensely flattered. True enough, the two media did not blend successfully, but with the benediction of Boulez we may hear more of this promising composer.

If the performance (by recruited members of the BBCSO) was less than immaculate in the first half, "Mixtur" definitely suffered from flabby playing. Several Stockhausen-fingerprints were either ignored or bungled by lateness or lack of enthusiasm. Boulez's problem was that of holding together four separated orchestras - groups of vastly contrasting timbres - woodwind against brass and two string sections employing different techniques. The use of a ring modulator, whatever it did to enhance the existing sounds, ultimately made the result muddy, especially in the ensemble passages which dominate the work.

The final discussion - Boulez (now like Little Malcolm fighting the intellectual Eunuchs) requested questions specific to the given works. These questions were bound to be peripheral, as were the answers,



particularly when Daddy, when asked to discuss the serialism of the Maderna piece, replied "I don't know. I haven't analysed the piece to that extent".

Shut up, you ignoramuses! Go to college and learn the stuff for yourself instead of bothering me.

HOWARD C. FRIEND.

January 20th: BBC Pebble Mill Studio

BBC Invitation Concert

This concert juxtaposed John Cage's Sonatas and Interludes for prepared piano, the movements of which were inspired by the "permanent emotions" of Indian tradition with classical Indian music. The pianist John Tilbury was giving the Cage work its second Birmingham performance in a matter of weeks, the first having been given by Richard Bernas in the Barber Institute on November 10th, 1971. Tilbury's performance of what must surely be one of the pinnacles of 20th century keyboard music was very different from the delicate crystalline account given by Bernas. The former seemed more aware of the earthly emotional side of the work and consequently gave a darker, more restless performance.

The darker side was matched by the beautiful raga chosen as the second of the two late evening ragas which completed the programme. Technique and artistry of the calibre exhibited by Ramnarayan (sarangi) and his young tabla partner Suresh Talwalkar is beyond my power to criticise. Western musicians could learn much from the sheer joy in spontaneous musical creation radiated by these players, not least through their facial expressions.

But how much longer are we going to let the strait-jacket of the formal concert atmosphere form a barrier between these players and their audience when, as explained in the introductory remarks, the success of their improvisation leans so heavily on intimate contact between them? The BBC's feeble gesture in this direction was the provision of a few joss-sticks when what was really needed was, say, provision of cushions on the floor so that the audience could relax and maybe lose its inhibitions. It was nice to hear the bowed sarangi instead of the perennial sitar.

ANTHONY CARVER.



January 29th: Birmingham and Midland Institute

The Chasm: Judith Jones (soprano)  
Simon Desorgher (flute) Peter Lawson (piano)

The programme for this concert by three talented young musicians showed that there were to be eleven items of a variety that suggested a very fragmentary kind of listening experience. For me this was not so, as I became fascinated by the way each piece dealt with its own formal problems, and the success of the concert was in a large way due to the success of the composers in giving a satisfactory formal basis to their ideas, however far away these seemed to get from conventionality.

In listening to music one has not heard before, one always wonders if the performers are playing what is written. I was able, rather meanly, to check on Peter Lawson and Simon Desorgher in their playing of Boulez's Sonatine by following the score and was filled with admiration for their account of that incredible piece. Judith Jones showed that she has considerable technique in her virtuoso performance of Cathy Berberian's Stripsody, a voice piece using strip-cartoon pictures and noises which the performer must interpret and build up into 'stories' that convey their meaning to the audience. None of the music chosen, however, gave her much of a chance to show off her actual voice.

S.T. Coleridge once said that poetry often made "events which appear to go in a straight line assume a circular motion - the snake with its tail in its mouth". It was of this that I thought as I listened to most of the music. Philip Lane's Colloquy 1, Varese's Density 21.5, Anthony Gilbert's Incredible Flute Music, Simon Desorgher's taped Film Score, and even the simple Cage piece Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs - all returned in the end to their beginnings, however far they had gone from them. The Philip Lane, written for Lawson and Desorgher and being given its first performance, was an attractive piece with a feeling of coherence, the freer improvisatory sections always fitting in well with the refrains. The two pieces which did not have a snake structure were Peter Lawson's own piano piece Momenta 94 and the Boulez. The virtuoso piano piece is built up to 94 three-bar 'moments', all generated from one initial motif in a logical manner. While this would presumably only be obvious from an examination of the score, one still felt the building up of different sets of 'moments' and their return and development, and, perhaps through Peter Lawson's playing, the whole piece made a powerful impression.

An improvisation by the group, and Judith Jones's performance of Christian Wolff's Song, highlighted one problem in contemporary music - the method of improvising with the voice. In the Wolff, and the Berberian, partly determined or previously worked out, the vocals and consonants used were satisfactory. In the improvisation, the singer



seemed happiest, and sounded most convincing when she abandoned word-type structures at all, and presented direct emotions. Perhaps something could be learned from jazz singers on this point.

The two taped pieces presented another problem - just what to do with the boundless possibilities of electronic sound. Simon Desorgher's tape worked for me because we had been told that it had been written to accompany a film on Stonehenge. I was therefore prepared to relate the altered organ sounds to my impression of Stonehenge and enjoyed it for that reason - especially the "celestial music of the spheres" section. But without the pictorial spur I wonder how I would have listened. The Varese tape Poeme Electronique related very much to known sounds and for that reason I found it irritating - is this all that can be done with such exciting possibilities?

HILARY BRACEFIELD.

February 6th: Birmingham Arts Laboratory

A Day in the Life of the Arts Lab or A Performer's eye-view of a Cardew sound workshop.

I think perhaps the most impressive feature of the sound-workshop was its sense of freedom of expression, and yet unity of purpose. Never before had I participated with such a mixed bunch (about 20) of musicians and non-musicians, skilled and unskilled, playing a wide range of brass, woodwind, stringed and percussion instruments - even a piano-accordion. But everyone there was ready and willing to contribute.

No-one knew what to expect, except that we were going to produce sound. (The term music is not used so as not to offend the conventional-minded reader). Cornelius Cardew began the workshop with a short discussion, suggesting and collecting ideas for what to do. In this way he was able to form the outlines of a concert and put forward the principles on which he would like to base that concert. The programme which finally emerged was:

Georgina Cries	David Jackman
Triple Concerto	Keith Potter
Paragraph 7 of <u>The Great Learning</u>	Cornelius Cardew
Micro-macro	Jolyon Laycock's Arts Lab Workshop.



Georgina Cries may be described as an ice-breaker in terms of both the workshop and the concert. It requires no great musical skill (just a large lung capacity), and for this reason was the first piece rehearsed in the afternoon. Everyone is required to sit in a semi-circle with a drum and a pair of sticks, joining in turn with a piercing yell and giving a drum-flam when one's breath runs out. This is a highly dramatic and emotive piece, beginning and ending with a solo singer and one drum-flam from everyone, with a complex period in the middle when everyone is yelling and following each person's breath-end with a flam! A member of the audience told me that though he soon realised what was happening, he never ceased to be surprised at each verbal entry.

Triple Concerto, the next item on the programme, usually performs successfully. I found this performance particularly exhilarating. The work falls into three sections, slow-fast-slow, with a different soloist for each section. Instructions are handed out indicating speed, dynamics or musical ideas, and whether one is a soloist or accompanist. No one knows who the soloists are until each one declares himself by opening his section. Cardew himself was particularly impressive at the piano.

One of Cardew's major musical principles is the need for audience participation. This was certainly met in the first part of the next piece performed, a vocal composition, paragraph 7 of The Great Learning, a Chinese poem set by Cardew. The performers mingled with the audience and instructed them in what to do. Each line of the text is sung a prescribed number of times, only changing note when moving to a new line. One starts on a predetermined note and moves to any note which can be heard when each change is made. Thus notes with strong harmonics and notes from prominent voices tend to dominate, making the chord less complex towards the middle of the piece, but because some people inevitably sing out of tune, the chord complexity usually increases towards the end. All this however formed only the accompaniment for a long solo song (again a Chinese poem) from Cardew. When each performer finished singing they took up their instrument(s) and continued the accompaniment with 'Scratch' music. 'Scratch' music is essentially something personal. Each participant composes a simple musical (or non-musical) idea for himself to play at regular, or irregular, time intervals. Of necessity the idea should be interesting to play, as it is usually played for a long time (in our case about three-quarters of an hour). The performer should not however play regardless of what is going on around him, but should be aware of his fellows and aim to make a valid contribution (a comment on the ideal Society, maybe?). 'Scratch' music is not, in practice as easy, or disorganised as it sounds. Cardew says that experience is the only requirement for its success. Obviously most people at the workshop had little or no experience in this field, and though it was very satisfying to play, one felt that the whole was somehow lacking.



The final piece of the evening was Micro-macro by Jolyon Laycock's Arts Lab group, a rhythmically conceived idea, based on rondo construction. The 5 letters A-E each represent different sounds (determined independently by each performer) which are used in a rhythmic pattern which everyone should have played exactly together, but lack of practice made our interpretation a little ragged. Nevertheless, the audience got the point, and it was quite fun to do.

On the whole I would judge the day as a great success. The social climate was extremely pleasant, and I feel much of the credit for this must go to Cardew himself, who remained throughout completely relaxed and always helpful. Certainly I enjoyed myself very much and only hope that a similar occasion may occur in the not too distant future.

A.J. ADAMSON

February 12th: Carr's Lane Church Centre

The New Music Chamber Orchestra conducted  
by Paul Venn.

I've never come across this group before and, judging from the ensemble playing, neither had too many of its constituent members. One full rehearsal is no basis for a concert comprising two such rhythmically demanding scores as Milhaud's 'Le Boeuf sur le toit' or Copland's 'Appalachian Spring'.

Milhaud's own brand of bi-tonality did not help in making the 'cinema-symphony' wholly convincing in this performance. Neither was the conductor assured enough in the many changes of tempo and mood to carry the orchestra through without 'event'; you cannot afford to have half a dozen ways of conducting one-in-a-bar with one rehearsal behind you. Some of Mr. Venn's speeds in the Milhaud, particularly the finale, would have had all but the greatest orchestras of the world struggling, while a speed, however slow, would have been preferable in the Copland which, in parts, was so unrecognisable that the composer himself would have had difficulty determining his own work. It was as if the listener was being led through some blinding haze of cacophony, able only to grasp the occasional resemblance to the actual music; at other times, the effect was strangely Cubist, with various parts of the orchestra giving different views of the same material - ensemble having departed altogether by that time.



Mr. Venn's own 'Music for Orchestra' was not without its glut of missed entries either. The composer obviously knows his Webern orchestral pieces, but without having grasped any structural devices, whether Webernian or Vennian.

The highlight of the evening was without doubt Alan Davis's performance of the Mozart clarinet concerto. The soloist's tone was on the whole good, save for some unfortunate squeaks here and there, while the orchestra played a little more assuredly since it was probably the only piece in the concert that they had played before.

As something of a promoter of concerts myself, I cannot but commend Mr. Venn's choice of programme, much of which was so demanding for the players. Often it is good to play at least one work that is slightly beyond the capabilities of the performers so as to raise the other works to a standard higher than might have been otherwise expected. But it is not fair on the players (for whom I have both admiration and sympathy) to expect any result worthy of charging a public to hear, on such a flimsy rehearsal schedule. Professionalism is a much maligned word nowadays, but if it safeguards the public (and prospective conductors) from such embarrassing evenings as this, then let it be our eternal watchword.

PHILIP LANE.







