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

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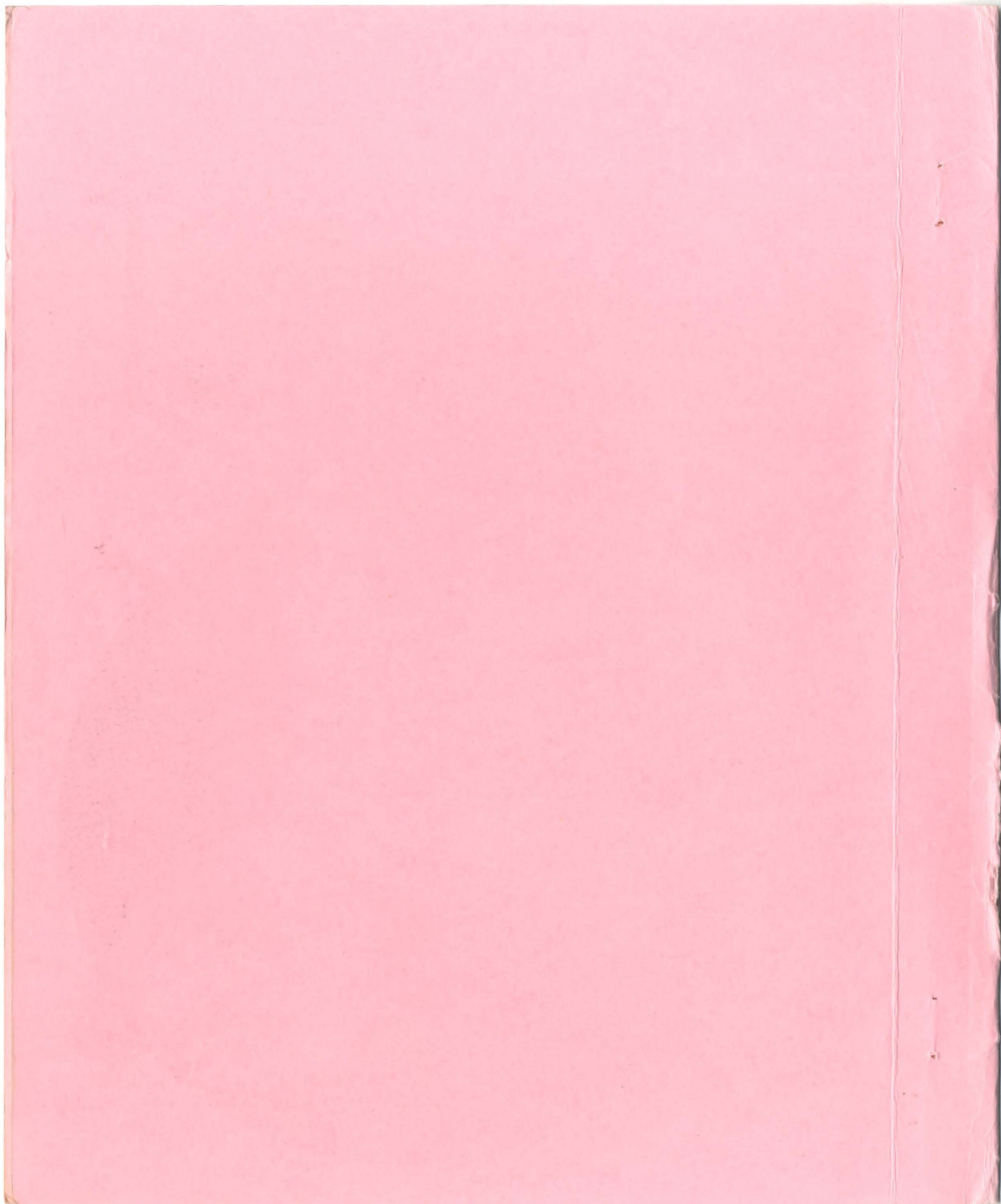
Citation

Potter, Keith, ed. 1974. *Contact*, 9. ISSN 0308-5066.

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today's
music

15p



contact 9

autumn 1974

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Great Britain: £0.60 for 3 issues

All other countries: £1.00 for 3 issues

These rates are for an annual subscription of 3 issues and include postage and packing. It is most convenient for overseas subscribers to pay in the form of a sterling draft, since this is normally cheaper than a cheque in foreign currency which is costly to convert. If any overseas subscriber is unable to send a sterling draft, rates in the appropriate currency are available on request. All overseas subscribers are guaranteed to receive their copies within one month of publication date.

EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC CATALOGUE

This issue concludes our survey of the fourth edition of the EMC. A new edition is at present in preparation and new works will be reviewed as they appear. A complete list of works in the catalogue and all scores may be obtained from: Experimental Music Catalogue 208 Ladbroke Grove London W10.

CONTACT 10

The next issue of CONTACT, available December/January, will include: Contemporary Australian Music by Alison Bauld; Kenakis and Chance by Jane and W.A.O.N. Waugh; The Vocal Techniques of Pierrot Lunaire by Martin Dreyer and an interview with Earle Brown.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS: CONTACT MAGAZINE 17 Turners Croft Heslington
YORK YO1 5EL ENGLAND

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Thanks are due to the Birmingham University Musical Society for its continued financial support.

Schoenberg today

THE VIEWS OF SOME CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS

Three years ago CONTACT began a series of articles on the music and ideas of Arnold Schoenberg. Though there was already a sizeable body of writing more or less easily available on the composer, it seemed to me then, as an undergraduate wishing to find out more about how the music worked, that there was very little published material in English that was sufficiently generalised to be intelligible to even the more than averagely interested music student and yet at the same time was sufficiently detailed to be of use. Writing which lay somewhere between the proliferating detail of the articles in PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC which, by their attitude of reverential awe (Schoenberg can do no wrong) and their frequent, apparent abstruseness, succeed in putting off nearly all but the already committed reader, and the vacantly unhelpful platitudes of H.E. Stuckenschmidt's early book.

In only three years this situation has improved, however, and shows every chance of improving much further in the future. Concerning the music, by far the best account to have appeared in book form seems to me to be Arnold Whittall's BBC Music Guide on the chamber music (London 1972) which, though very short, rises way above the superficiality of many of the other books in the series and manages to discuss important points that relate outside its immediate terms of reference. Leo Black's translation of Willi Reich's book under the title Schoenberg: a Critical Biography (1971) adds a good deal which is of largely biographical significance. For the future, the most important items would seem to be the vastly enlarged Style and Idea which Faber have been promising for a very long time and, I believe, the 'official' critical biography from Stuckenschmidt. There will, too, be a Master Musicians book on Schoenberg from Malcolm MacDonald - at long, long last.

In the field of articles, CONTACT's small contribution has consisted of a general account of Schoenberg's Expressionist period by Laurence Williamson (CONTACT 3), a discussion of the Third Act of Moses und Aron by John Drummond (CONTACT 5), an analysis of the Violin Fantasy from Arnold Whittall (CONTACT 6) and an article entitled 'Schoenberg as Rhythmic Innovator' by Richard Easley (CONTACT 8).

In this, the centenary year of Schoenberg's birth, I had to make a decision. How to make an interesting and significant contribution in a small journal

in so obvious an editors' field day? Was it worth adding to the welter of critical and analytical articles by established writers involved with the phenomenon of Schoenberg (for he is a unique phenomenon, though I have come to dislike applying the term to him)? Centenary articles (this had to be written in June) which will undoubtedly pour off the presses - or SHOULD do - in September and which, typically, PERSPECTIVES has been assiduously producing since 1972.

Eventually I hit upon something far more interesting - and which it's distinctly possible that others may have thought of, too. I decided to ask a number of composers of varying stylistic persuasions to write short articles (no more than 1,000 words) entirely about their personal reactions to Schoenberg's personality, ideas and music. I asked that it should not be a purely historical account and that it should certainly be by no means necessarily an objective one in any sense. To set them off I asked three generalised, but quite specifically and intentionally worded, questions, as follows:

1. What, in your view, is Schoenberg's position today?
2. What is the nature of his rôle in 20th century music in general?
3. What, if any, is Schoenberg's significance for you as a composer working today?

The rationale behind this decision was as follows:

Critics - though they are, we trust, ordinary human beings with ordinary human feelings, predilections and failings (or they shouldn't be critics) - write, or at least are expected to write, from an essentially unbiased viewpoint. At least they give the reader both sides of the argument fairly and, though the concept of a totally uncommitted critic is, in my view entirely spurious (and something which I hope to write about in a future issue of CONTACT), the critics do frequently leave him to judge for himself.

Composers, on the other hand, are, as Schoenberg himself said (see the review of the letters in this issue) "in the first instance fighters for their own musical ideas". Their writings are therefore the least 'reliable' objectively speaking - if it really is possible to speak objectively - since the composer's own inclinations towards certain forms of expression lead him to discard others as having no value for him. Thus, while as a musician he may be willing to accept the validity of forms and styles completely alien to his own, as a composer he is bound to experience a critical barrier which prevents him from always making a just criticism of music far removed from his own creative experience. Or even, perhaps, of music too close to that experience.

For this reason composers who are able to commit (the word is used intentionally) their ideas to paper are frequently more interesting than critics; anyway, they don't have to do it so often, so they don't get so jaded. More than this, though, composers who can use words have, to my mind, an enormous importance, particularly in an age of chronic uncertainty. What the composer lacks in conventional critical balance he makes up for in commitment to his art and his ability to see (we should say 'hear') the

music from the inside. If he is like Schoenberg he will be able to fight "for the life or death" of his ideas, yet at the same time be willing to change his opinions, "to learn something new, to accept the contrary and to digest it, the contrary of all I have believed in my whole life - if it is capable of convincing me" (see Letter 230 in the selected edition). Perhaps composers who are also known as writers on music (though not necessarily 'critics' in the newspaper journalism sense) are the most interesting of all to read. Perhaps not entirely by chance, we have at least three of these represented in the following six articles.

I had thought that, Rufer's collection of composers' notes on their use of twelve note technique apart, I may have been among the first to assemble a series of views of Schoenberg in this way. On doing a little research, however, I discovered that MUSIC AND LETTERS ran a not dissimilar series of 25 (not six!) articles in its October 1951 issue, immediately following Schoenberg's death and just a few months before the publication of Boulez' famous article 'Schönberg is Dead' (THE SCORE, May 1952). This very varied 23-year-old collection of views should be read as an interesting supplement to the present one. Only eleven of the 25 contributors are, to my knowledge, known as composers to any extent. The rest are writers, critics and broadcasters; only one (Sir Adrian Boult, no less!) is known exclusively as a performer. All but nine are still alive. On close examination, I have to admit that all 25 opinions, even the three I personally find the most obnoxious, are almost certainly still quite widely held today.

It would be foolhardy to generalise - even, perhaps especially, about composers' present opinions - from only six viewpoints, particularly since I have unfortunately been unable to get an article in time from any composer under 35 whose present work could be described as being either avantgarde or experimental. (Perhaps this is in itself significant. Readers may like to know that a total of 13 composers of varying ages and persuasions were asked to contribute.) But the idea, in both collections, was the gaining of individual opinions, so the generalisations don't really matter anyway.

But I have said enough. Here are the six views which I have received so far, presented in alphabetical order according to the composers' surnames. The author's copyright is in each case retained. Only one article - that by Virgil Thomson - was not written especially for CONTACT: this is taken from the NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE of 10 September 1944, the article also being republished in Virgil Thomson, The Art of Judging Music (New York 1969), pp. 185-187. Our thanks to Mr Thomson for his permission to republish this.

It is not planned to continue discussion of Schoenberg in the same format beyond this issue, but we will undertake to publish any correspondence which may arise out of these articles. It is hoped to include an article by Martin Dreyer on the use of language in Pierrot Lunaire in the next issue - after the centenary celebrations have died down. With that, our Schoenberg series may be considered to have ended.

SCHOENBERG'S NIGHT LIFE

First of all, let me say that I am writing as one who does not like - no, positively dislikes - most of Schoenberg's music, and devotees of it will probably find what I have to say subjective and irreverent, not to say misinformed. However, it is interesting to try and discover why one reacts to something so strongly, whether negatively or positively, and this I will try to do.

I suppose that most people would agree that, after Debussy, the father-figures of modern music are Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Bartók. Bartók's influence is probably the least widespread, although I think he was a far greater composer than Schoenberg. Stravinsky's influence was - is - very far-reaching, but rather than form a school, he seems to have inspired imitators; his musical personality is so strong that few composers seem to have been able to absorb his style and make it their own. Schoenberg certainly formed a school, most obviously in his pupils Webern and Berg but which is equally apparent in many of the composers who adopted serialism and still persist in writing in a Schoenberg/Webern idiom. Why is this? Why does the lesser composer have the greater following? I think the answer lies in one word - system.

Any composer trying to find himself at the turn of the century had problems, and would look to a variety of methods to solve them. Stravinsky had the innate, intuitive genius virtually to turn his back on the 19th century and produce, intuitively as he himself said, The Rite of Spring. Bartók was more obviously aware of his immediate musical past, but he too was able to create a fresh new language, partly by incorporating folk elements into his music. But Schoenberg seems to have been overwhelmed by his musical forbears. His early works show that at heart he was a late romantic, and as he became increasingly aware that romanticism was a cul-de-sac, he had to look for a way out. Not having the natural intuitive genius of Stravinsky or Bartók, what better method than a system? But it is interesting that two of his most successful and widely performed works, the Five Orchestral Pieces and Pierrot Lunaire, were written before the serial method was crystallised.

Seeing how these three men found themselves as composers throws up some interesting thoughts on the very nature of composition. If you believe, as I do, that all great art is intuitive and to do with the unconscious, dreams etc., then apply this thesis to these three composers. Stravinsky said that he didn't 'compose' The Rite, he was merely the 'vessel' through which The Rite passed; also the Octet came to him in a dream. Bartók's night music is not merely a romantic evocation of night-time noises, but shows him truly in touch with the 'other' world of the unconscious, dreams and sleep. When Schoenberg, on the other hand, writes a night piece it is, significantly, a night-mare piece - Pierrot Lunaire. Apart from the early Verklärte Nacht he didn't, as far as I know, write any other dream pieces; the system took over shortly after Pierrot, and dreams and systems don't have much in common.

I wonder if Schoenberg ever met Freud? They lived in the same city at the same time. It would be interesting to know how Schoenberg viewed psychoanalysis, and in what way it might have affected his work - and consequently the course of 20th century music.

(C) 1974 by GEOFFREY BURGON

ON SCHOENBERG

"...musical ideas must correspond to the laws of human logic; they are part of what man can apperceive, reason and express."(1)

'Schoenberg' is a pinnacle of musical complexity. It is not complexity for its own sake: to adapt his own image, complexity came to Schoenberg's nature almost as ineluctably as apples to an apple tree. What is the meaning of stretching the powers of pattern-comprehension of mankind in this way? Man has developed his pattern-comprehension, his algebra, to an extraordinary peak. This development has involved us in many losses on the spiritual side, yet the materialism and positivism and the current paradigm of objectivity - all that we have achieved - are not to be put aside as the gathering reaction against them would wish. We have become individuals, separated from each other and the universe by reason. Having left the fold of spiritual group-consciousness to achieve this proud, rational independence, we are now in a position freely to make an act of reunion. It is by an act of choice, not by virtue of belonging that we are to rejoin the fold of spiritual unity where we belong. As with the prodigal son, the father will welcome us with a joy far in excess of any poured out to those who stayed at home. They didn't choose. Their acts of love were conditioned, not free. Until one is free from pressures - of family, church, state, tribe or instincts - one cannot claim to act freely. To be free from pressures, one must understand them in full consciousness; only the scrutiny of reason can liberate. Schoenberg reasoned, he was free. Unlike the Romantics, he achieved his spontaneity, his naturalness by way of a free choice from an independent standpoint. He embraced the recent achievements of intellectual man together with ancient traditions and innate knowledge of the spiritual life. The two joined within him in a new synthesis. Those who nowadays are tempted, in their disgust at our 'descent into matter' which has turned sourly into 'materialism', to reject the extraordinary precision that the measurement of the universe has put at our disposal, must face the charge that they are retrogressive. They would move back to the tribal soul; they have been shown, and learnt nothing. Schoenberg is a perpetual challenge to such attitudes. An awkward reminder who continues to dwarf nearly all other composers of our century. Some dismiss his serial works as pedantic. In the best of those works we are stretched to our full powers as 20th century man, equipped with minds which can measure and understand dense complexes

of relationships. The multiplicity of levels of meaning (purely musical ones) approaches or equals that of the great classical composers of the tonal system. That their apprehension is difficult is no criticism. And shining through this, permeating it with light, is the spirituality and love of a great artist, an integrative force uniting soul with soul, soul with God. As he said:

"...there is only one content, which all great men wish to express: the longing of mankind for its future form, for an immortal soul, for dissolution into the universe - the longing of this soul for its God. This alone, though reached by many different roads and detours and expressed by many different means, is the content of the works of the great;..."(2)

Schoenberg's road remains, even now, one of the newest and bravest.

(c) 1974 by JONATHAN HARVEY

Notes

(1) Arnold Schoenberg, 'Composition with Twelve Tones' (1941), Style and Idea (London 1951), p. 109.

(2) Arnold Schoenberg, 'Gustav Mahler', Style and Idea, p. 26.

SCHOENBERG: A PERSONAL VIEW

Anyone superficially acquainted with my musical style would not readily name Schoenberg as a major influence upon it. The only time that this has ever been done, to my knowledge, was in a review by Colin Mason of my Piano Concerto in which he referred to it as 'Schoenbergian' in texture. I think, however, he was mistaken: the work is not Schoenbergian at all, except in a special sense which I will come to later. Nor have I ever embraced serialism as a technique, except in a very limited and rudimentary way. The critic who praised the last movement of my String Trio for its twelve note fugue subject had simply miscounted: it consists of ten notes, and has clear tonal implications.

Yet I have always felt that Schoenberg mattered. In my early days as a university teacher I acquired the records of the Violin Concerto and the complete String Quartets from a friend in America long before they became available here. I acquired Style and Idea - still not available here(1) - at about the same time and from the same source. Whence then did my sense of his importance spring?

On reflection I think it stemmed more from his example than from his art.

The music itself I still find impenetrable and I suspect I always will. It is based on premises I cannot wholly accept, anomalies I cannot wholly resolve. It remains a perpetual challenge but also a perpetual enigma. Yet the single-minded devotion to his art, the commitment to traditional values, the sheer moral and intellectual stamina: these are heroic qualities which command respect and deserve emulation.

There is, of course, more than one Schoenberg. The Schoenberg of the early Expressionist period is the one most foreign to me. It is a world I cannot enter. I can admire the teeming instrumental invention of Pierrot Lunaire and Erwartung, but I admire from afar, uninvolved and unmoved. I am aware that this may well be a limitation in my own artistic make-up, but I am nevertheless convinced that Expressionism as an aesthetic has outlived its relevance. Limited and limiting, it is tied ineluctably to its time and place - the hot-house atmosphere of pre-1914 Vienna.

Then there is the Schoenberg of the philosophical and/or religious works. This is a Schoenberg I can identify with far more closely, though I recognise that the affinity is more a matter of subject than of musical style. Hearing Friede auf Erden for the first time only recently I realised through the medium of hindsight that this was exactly what I had been trying to do in my own Pro Pace motets of twenty years ago. The symbol of Jacob's Ladder is another unconscious link. Forty years after Die Jakobsleiter the story turns up again in the first part of my oratorio Urbs Beata, and, totally different though the musical treatments of the theme may be, its significance as an image is fundamental to both works. Moses und Aron, a noble attempt to express the ultimately inexpressible, is, like Die Jakobsleiter, doomed to honourable but perhaps inevitable failure. It is no accident that both works remain unfinished. Unfinished too, and no less tragically, are the Modern Psalms on which Schoenberg was working when he died. The texts for these, by Schoenberg himself, breathe the same spirit of ethical mysticism to be found in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's prose-poems, Stations on the Road to Freedom, which form the basis of a recent work of my own for unaccompanied chorus.

Finally there is the neo-classical Schoenberg - the Schoenberg of the Wind Quintet, the Third and Fourth String Quartets, the Variations for Orchestra and the concertos. This is also the serial Schoenberg; the Schoenberg for whom serialism has replaced tonality as a long-range structural principle. That serialism was somehow historically necessary is a received idea which urgently requires re-examination. But historical necessity or not, it was obviously a necessity for Schoenberg. Perhaps as an autodidact he wanted to beat the academics at their own game. He has certainly provided researchers with a happy hunting-ground since twelve-note analysis has achieved an academic respectability secondary only to musicology itself. The hermetic quality of serialism is perhaps part of its attraction: the oft-quoted remark by Schoenberg to Rufer about a mysterious new discovery which would "ensure the future supremacy of German music" always strikes a rather chilling note, almost as though he had devised some sort of secret weapon...

That serialism could be combined with neo-classicism, however, is typical of the duality of Schoenberg's creative make-up. He is at the same time both a traditionalist and a revolutionary innovator. Boulez's jibe that Schoenberg seems to have invented serialism in order to re-compose the music of the past is, on the face of it, irrefutable. Yet Schoenberg is not the first composer whose development has followed a similar trajectory: both Schumann and Brahms evolved from an early 'romantic' period to one in which classical values are re-asserted and classical forms re-validated. Indeed neo-classicism was almost the dominant aesthetic movement of the inter-war years. But for most of the composers of this period, Stravinsky included, the spirit of classicism informed only the outward aspect of the music. To pseudo-baroque motor rhythms was added the sharpness of definition so typical of the age of Reason, while satire, parody and pastiche lent pungency to the new anti-romantic spirit. Schoenberg, however, was the first to make the very forms and processes of the 18th century his own. The fact that he had also evolved a way of denying tonality in order to compose in tonal forms implies a contradiction which I, for one, find an insurmountable barrier to the total acceptance of his music. But the intention behind his particular brand of neo-classicism - i.e. to get behind the superficialities to the very spirit which animates the form - that is something I feel I can share in and make common cause with. And if anybody again describes my music as 'Schoenbergian' - which is unlikely - that is in the sense in which I hope they will mean it.

(C) 1974 by JOHN JOUBERT

Note

- (1) To be published shortly in a revised and much expanded form by Faber (Ed.).

SCHOENBERG'S MUSIC

On September 13 Arnold Schoenberg, (1) the dean of the modernists, will be seventy years old. And yet his music for all its author's love of traditional sonorous materials and all the charm of late 19th century Vienna that envelops its expression, is still the modernest modern music that exists. No other Western music sounds so strange, so consistently different from the music of the immediately preceding centuries. And none, save that of Erik Satie, has proved so tough a nut for the public to crack. Only the early Verklärte Nacht has attained to currency in our concerts. The rest remains to this day musicians' music.

Musicians do not always know what they think of Schoenberg's music, but they

often like to listen to it. And they invariably respect it. Whether one likes it or not is, indeed, rather a foolish question to raise in face of its monumental logic. To share or to reject the sentiments that it expresses seems, somehow, a minor consideration compared with following the amplitude of the reasoning that underlies their exposition. As in much of modern philosophical writing, the conclusions reached are not the meat of the matter; it is the methods by which these are arrived at.

This preponderance of methodology over objective is what gives to Schoenberg's work, in fact, its irreducible modernity. It is the orientation that permits us to qualify it as, also, in the good sense of the word, academic. For it is a model of procedure. And if the consistency of the procedure seems often closer to the composer's mind than the expressive aim, that fact allows us further to describe the work as academic in an unfavorable sense. It means that the emotional nourishment in the music is not quite worth the trouble required to extract it. This is a legitimate and not uncommon layman's opinion. But if one admits, as I think one is obliged to do with regard to Schoenberg, that the vigor and thoroughness of the procedure are, in very fact, the music's chief objective, then no musician can deny that it presents a very high degree of musical interest.

This is not to say that Schoenberg's music is without feeling expressed. Quite to the contrary, it positively drips with emotivity. But still the approach is, in both senses of the word, academic. Emotions are examined rather than declared. As in the workings of his distinguished fellow citizen Dr. Sigmund Freud, though the subject matter is touching, even lurid, the author's detachment about it is complete. Sentiments are considered as case histories rather than as pretexts for personal poetry or subjects for showmanship. Die glückliche Hand, Gurre-Lieder, and Pierrot Lunaire, as well as the string sextet, Verklärte Nacht, have deeply sentimental subjects; but their treatment is always by detailed exposition, never by sermonizing. Pierrot's little feelings, therefore, though they seem enormous and are unquestionably fascinating when studied through the Schoenberg microscope for 45 minutes of concert time, often appear in retrospect as less interesting than the mechanism through which they have been viewed.

The designing and perfecting of this mechanism, rather than the creation of unique works, would seem to have been the guiding preoccupation of Schoenberg's career; certainly it is the chief source of his enormous prestige among musicians. The works themselves, charming as they are and frequently impressive, are never quite as fascinating when considered separately as they are when viewed as comments on a method of composition or as illustrations of its expressive possibilities. They are all secondary to a theory; they do not lead independent lives. The theory, however, leads an independent life. It is taught and practiced all over the world. It is the lingua franca of contemporary modernism. It is even used expertly by composers who have never heard any of the works by Schoenberg, by Webern, and by Alban Berg that constitute its major literature.

If that major literature is wholly Viennese by birth and its sentimental preoccupations largely Germanic, the syntax of its expression embodies also

both the strongest and the weakest elements of the German musical tradition. Its strong element is its simplification of tonal relations; its weak element is its chaotic rhythm. The apparent complexity of the whole literature and the certain obscurity of much of it are due, in the present writer's opinion, to the lack of a rhythmic organization comparable in comprehensiveness and in simplicity to the tonal one.

It is probably the insufficiencies of Schoenberg's own rhythmic theory that prevent his music from crystallizing into great, hard, beautiful, indissoluble works. Instrumentally they are delicious. Tonally they are the most exciting, the most original, the most modern-sounding music there is. What limits their intelligibility, hamstrings their expressive power, makes them often literally halt in their tracks, is the naive organization of their pulses, taps, and quantities. Until a rhythmic syntax comparable in sophistication to Schoenberg's tonal one shall have been added to this, his whole method of composition, for all the high intellection and sheer musical genius that have gone into its making, will probably remain a fecund but insupportable heresy, a strict counterpoint valuable to pedagogy but stiff, opaque, unmalleable, and inexpressive for free composition.

There is no satisfactory name for the thing Schoenberg has made. The twelve-tone technique, though its commonest denomination, does not cover all of it. But he has made a thing, a new thing, a thing to be used and to be improved. Its novelty in 1944 is still fresh; and that means it has strength, not merely charm. Its usage by composers of all nations means that it is no instrument of local or limited applicability. Such limitations as it has are due, I believe, to the fact that it is not yet a complete system. So far as it goes it is admirable; and it can go far, as the operas of Alban Berg show. It is to the highest credit of Schoenberg as a creator that his method of creation should be so valuable a thing as to merit still, even to require, the collaboration of those who shall come after him.

(c) 1944 by VIRGIL THOMSON

Note

- (1) I have taken the liberty of altering Mr. Thomson's 'Schönberg' to the now more familiar 'Schoenberg', which the composer asked should be used in English-speaking countries. (Ed.)

Schoenberg & Thomson in study score

Arnold Schoenberg

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Fourth String Quartet Op.37
Chamber Symphony No.1, Op.9B
(Version for full orchestra)
Suite for String Orchestra
Theme and Variations Op.43B
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QUESTION: What in my view is Schoenberg's position today?

ANSWER: Not central.

Q What is the nature of his rôle in 20th century music in general?

A What 20th century music? '20th century music in general' casts an impenetrable cloud over my reasoning faculties - Strauss, Debussy, Hindemith, Varèse, Stravinsky, Webern, Tippett, Britten, Tavener, modern jazz, and so on ad infinitum. No-one has a 'role' in anything; it merely serves as something for critics to talk about.

Q What is Schoenberg's significance for me as a composer working today?

A I believe Schoenberg spoke sense when he wrote:

"Personally it is on the word Composition that I place the emphasis. Unfortunately most would-be followers of this method do something removed from the idea of composing music."(1)

Also, I am very much in agreement with his remark:

"The belief in technique as a saving grace must be discouraged, and the striving after truthfulness encouraged."(2)

'Truthfulness' is a famous philosophical stumbling block - what can it mean? One definition could be: 'Truthfulness in art means never writing what has not passed completely through the sieve of the whole personality'. For example, a composer who is 'the victim of his own facility' must have written down much which has not had to withstand the criticism of his own integrated personality.

Some of the remarks of Schoenberg's followers, which are appended at the end of Rufer's book, make appalling reading - e.g. Humphrey Searle:

"...two series are used which are formed by taking every third and sixth note respectively of the basic series (leaving out the first)..."(3)

What banality! He then goes on to say that the work (Gold Coast Customs) is divided into "four movements (Allegro, Adagio, Scherzo and Finale) played without a break" and that the third movement is "often in jazz-rhythm". The use of jazz rhythms and a scheme of tempi in this way is completely at variance logically with the use of a series, which should generate its own rhythms and contrasts of tempi - as was later seen to be a necessary development of the method and a consequence of its initial employment. But this then makes clear that the whole concept of serialisation is completely sterile as a system - it leads inevitably, when rigorously applied, to complete mechanisation of 'composition', and to the exclusion of those irregularities of outline in which the whole of art resides - as has been seen to be so by many others more avantgarde than myself.

Of course it has remained possible to write meaningful and valuable music

employing the twelve note system in its less developed forms, but only by ignoring its implications, and thus invalidating its use.

(C) 1974 by STUART WARD

Notes

- (1) As quoted in Josef Rufer, Composition with Twelve Notes related only to one another, tr. Humphrey Searle (London 1954), p. 2.
- (2) Ibid, p. 4.
- (3) Ibid, p. 193.

QUESTION: What is the nature of Schoenberg's rôle in 20th century music in general?

ANSWER: 'Rôle' is cliché: either he was a good and great composer or he wasn't. That in the course of composing he changed the face of western music for good, should be as secondary a consideration for us as it obviously was for him. Schoenberg was a man of intense all-round creativity, of which his triple persona as musical theoretician, composer and teacher was only a part, though a central one: a combination of eminence so rare in musical history and consequently so hard to believe in, that each one of his reputations has somehow damaged the other two. With hindsight you can trace the process of historical inevitability which he himself at the end of his life described more simply as "falling into an ocean of boiling water". If you look at western music from Tristan onwards, you can see how completely so many of the problems thrown up by a rapidly evolving language were solved, and how many of its leading tendencies fulfilled, by Schoenberg's work - but these facts are, or should be, the merest commonplaces of a university history outline course. He was 'necessary' - like Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Marx, Einstein - to 'take the next step': this is obvious to us now, but possible to achieve at the time, as always in human history, only by an exceptionally gifted individual.

The use of scientists' names is not accidental: for the logic of the Method of Composing with Twelve Notes as a solution to a historical situation, its 'rightness', its essential simplicity, all give it the air of a scientific discovery. That its essentials are apparently easier to grasp than Schoenberg's music itself is to understand, caused the Theoretician to be more widely known and appreciated during his lifetime (and in a different, even more lamentable way, after his death) than the Composer: the last thing he would have wanted.

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The Method has been of such enormous importance, significance and usefulness to the whole musical world, attracting all kinds of different composers over the 50 years that have now passed since the Serenade Op. 24, that we cannot imagine the musical world without it. Yet in Schoenberg's creative life it was only one factor among many other preoccupations, explorations, discoveries, achievements. Let us remember that 22 opus numbers - nearly half his output - precede the serial works. Even better: let us not distinguish between 'before and after Op. 23', but listen to his whole output as music. For in the end it is the individual pieces of music that a great genius has created and which contribute to our artistic heritage which matter, and nothing else.

The difficulties which the honest listener still experiences in listening to Schoenberg spring from causes far more complex - and interestingly musical - than either simply atonality, or twelve note technique. One is the speed at which Schoenberg's mind worked, and the consequent compression of his creative thought. Another is the dual nature - not at all peculiar to him - of being both conservative and revolutionary at the same time: for he was particularly aware of the tension between past and future in which his art existed. We can regard him today as the final, consummating figure of three centuries of a certain type of music-making - for it is now easy to hear in his music what is traditional. But his contemporaries would have found such a view incomprehensible and ridiculous: for they could hear only what was new and unheard-of: for them, therefore, his music could only belong to the remote future. Both interpretations are still correct, and the German joke about Zukunftsmusik still has a certain wry force.

Q What in my view is Schoenberg's position today?

A Schoenberg's proud epigram: "The second half of this century will spoil by over-estimation whatever the first half by under-estimation left unspoilt" still remains a piece of optimism about posterity. But the present situation is rich in paradox. His music has not broken through as repertoire into the great world of concert-giving: every performance of a major Schoenberg work, except Pierrot Lunaire, is still something of a special event. The general public, no longer an educated one as were their 19th century predecessors, continues to find his music difficult. At the same time his influence has been diffused over the whole musical world, and is most marked amongst those who react against it. Our older contemporaries are sometimes to be found glancing nervously over their shoulders in a jokily defensive manner - when, for instance, they insert gratuitously a row-motto in their otherwise tonal-thematic work.

For the young, he is in eclipse. Serialism itself has long since ceased to be an issue: but the rigour its use implies is now despised, and Schoenberg's counterbalancing consciousness of tradition is largely incomprehensible to the badly educated and to the wilfully ignorant. With Webern now in similar eclipse, there is a declining interest even in distinguishing between pitch levels: Messiaen and Varèse remain as

father-figures, but other preoccupations of a sensational, a trivially decorative, or a spuriously mystical nature hold the centre of the stage. In the days of the global village and of the total instant availability of all archaic and exotic music cultures, Arnold Schoenberg, the one-time revolutionary, seems strangely circumscribed in his Austrian garden, still plucking the last fruits of the Viennese symphonic tradition: an Art Nouveau pedant who taught people Bach chorales and wrote Kokoschkasierte Brahms.

Is it perhaps necessary to emphasise how completely nonsensical such a view is? Besides anything else, Schoenberg was a daring, prolific and wide-ranging speculative thinker, and many of the apparent innovations of the New Music since the war were in fact anticipated by him long ago. But, more generally, the whole situation in which we all live and work could never have come about without his existence. All the things which living composers take for granted were once fought for by Schoenberg. What was for him a leap into the unknown, a step which took up years of his life to dare to accomplish, has now become just a stage in growing up for a bright music student. Just as adolescents can never bear to hear what their fathers did during the war, so this generation is reluctant to recognise how much they owe to Schoenberg. Yet all revolts against his influence are in essence revolts of the son against the father who gave him life. As for the really silly squad, the pseuds on the fringe who in their smart ignorance shit on Schoenberg's memory, they need only to be reminded of the story of the Monkey and Buddha: for they could fly to the end of the world and still only find themselves within the palm of his hand.

Q What is Schoenberg's significance for me as a composer working today?

A Simply - I cannot imagine a world in which he had not existed. I came to his music rather late, in my mid-twenties, and since then have been constantly aware of his presence in my work, and have never wished it to diminish. Saying this does not make me lay claim to any special understanding of his work, for there are many things in it that I do not understand; nor to exceptional knowledge of it, for I am no Schoenberg scholar; nor, in particular, to a commitment to strict serial technique, a subject about which I know very little - I have never from this point of view analysed even a single piece by Schoenberg from beginning to end. But it does mean that I wish to express a deep love of and respect for his music - for the actual sounds it makes, its whole mode of expression, the spiritual world of high seriousness that it inhabits, the noble place that it occupies in tradition. I can imagine no greater privilege in life than to have been a member of his composition class, though I can't see myself for very long surviving the rigour of such a training not only in music-making but also in self-discovery. (If that Dummkopf Cage did, perhaps I could have managed to.) But since I lived too late for that, the next best thing is to make use of what he gave us through his works, and bear witness to it through my own works.

Charles Ives: a contemporary of Schoenberg

It is the shortcoming of much comment on Ives that it restricts itself to counting by how many years he was 'ahead of his time' in a particular innovation, without first seeking the context of his experiments. This error, which in Ivesian terms amounts to stressing 'manner' at the expense of 'substance', results in the composer being seen in a totally false light, as a mere 'fore-runner', and an eccentric one at that. We might profitably use the occasion of this centenary year to re-examine some of the radical ideas that find expression in Ives' music, their relationship to tradition and to subsequent developments. As a means of focusing the argument I propose to draw upon the views on Ives of another American composer, one who considers himself the heir to some of these ideas - John Cage.

Discussing the relative merits of Ives and jazz (at the expense of jazz) Cage has this to say:

"I could like a great deal of jazz if we had a great deal of it at one time. Say for instance that we had twelve machines here; we could put on twelve records and immediately get a situation reminiscent of Ives."⁽¹⁾

This suggestion that Ives presents the listener with random multi-layered confusion is hardly borne out by the music. In the first place, pieces like Central Park in the Dark and The Housatonic at Stockbridge (the third of the Three Places in New England) are based on a precise and memorable opposition between two conflicting musical characters, the one expressive of the world of humanity (band music, or a hymn), the other representing the non-human, but also non-ephemeral, presence of Nature and the environment. Even in the more extravagant examples of multiple layers traditional continuity and harmonic relationship can usually be detected. Take the following passage from Putnam's Camp (see Ex. 1). Four distinct thematic entities are combined, but the striking thing is that they are carefully 'matched'. As soon as a combination ceases to be tenable harmonically it is abandoned: thus in the fourth bar C joins A, while B joins the regular bass-line.

Ex. 1

Handwritten musical score for five instruments: Flute, Oboe, Violins, Horns/Tuba, and Basses. The score is in 2/4 time and marked "Allegro". It features five staves with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Handwritten annotations include a box around the first measure of the flute staff, and letters A, B, C, and D marking specific sections of the music across the staves.

- A = The Country Band March; B = Sousa's Semper Fidelis;
C = 'Down in de cornfield' phrase from Stephen Foster's
Massa's in de cold, cold ground;
D = Marching through Georgia

Nor is this example unrepresentative: Ives often writes a conventional texture in which subordinate elements are filled-out and given a degree of independence by compatible quotes. If we add to this the convincing evidence that the quotes tend themselves to be provoked by motivic correspondences, (2) and therefore contribute to wider thematic processes, we are left with a formidable case for the cogency of the music. It is revealing that the composer of HPSCHD sees Ives in this light, but misleading nevertheless.

Another so-called 'prophetic' aspect of Ives is his free approach to form, and the freedom he is prepared to grant the performer. Thus he wrote to John Kirkpatrick, with regard to the performance of the Concord Sonata:

"Do whatever seems natural or best to you, though not necessarily the same way each time." (3)

We may safely say that this stems from his overriding concern for the vitality of the music. In this respect a 'perfect', neat, predictable form was potentially more of a threat than anything else - because it denied Life. Hence the way Ives frequently courts 'incompleteness', notably in his all-embracing final project of a Universe Symphony.

The important thing was not the degree of attainment (this, indeed, became almost an objection per se), but the epic challenge of the task attempted.

In Cage too one finds a stress on freedom to the performer, also 'incompleteness'. Here, however, the motivation is very different, being a kind of ironic/Oriental devotion to the non-intentional. A characteristic device is the insistence on starting a 'performance' before the audience is allowed in, a form of incompleteness that suggests boundlessness. Given consideration it becomes obvious that the conviction behind Ives' 'freedom' is inimical to the world of Cage: it represents an intensification of the intentional, 'wilful' quality of performance, not a diminishing of it. This may be demonstrated when we examine the one instance in which Ives might be thought to show an interest in the unintended - namely his fascination for the mistakes that crop up in the uninhibited playing of a town band. Why was he prepared to prefer them to the 'real' notes? Because (there is no link with the Portsmouth Sinfonia here) they were more in earnest, more 'vital', than a scrupulously faithful delivery of the letter of the score.

We may summarise these various tendencies in the music of Ives as some sort of blurring of the distinction between Art and Life. That this is the way Cage sees it is illustrated by the importance he clearly attaches to the following passage from Ives' Postface to the 114 Songs:

"The instinctive and progressive interest of every man in art...will go on and on, ever fulfilling hopes, ever building new ones, ever opening new horizons, until the day will come when every man while digging his potatoes will breathe his own epics, his own symphonies...; and as he sits of an evening in his backyard...(he) will hear the transcendental strains of the day's symphony resounding in their many choirs, and in all their perfection, through the west wind and the tree tops!"(4)

Cage identifies this as "to all intents and purposes the goal of music... that art and our involvement in it will somehow introduce us to the very life that we are living...to listen to the sounds which surround us and hear them as music".(5) Our first reaction is that Cage has interpreted Ives both perceptively and memorably. Still, there is a crucial distinction to be drawn. In Ives we are dealing, certainly, with a conviction that Art should take its values from Life, but also that it should be a sort of 'preparation', a process of 'mind-stretching', a raising of awareness which, were it ever to approach completion, would enable Life to override Art. His 'incompleteness' (now understood as an ecstatic preservation of the possibilities for further growth) is closely related to nineteenth-century 'Romantic' aspiration, with its worship of the Future. In Cage, on the other hand, we are offered a way of dealing with the Present: if we listen to the sounds which surround us 'and hear them as music' in Cage's sense we are being asked essentially to feel involved with something into which no human 'meaning' has been allowed to creep (the chance procedures, statistical figures in a telephone directory, the I Ching): the meaning of our involvement hangs on our not finding ourselves reflected in the sounds. The difference is little short

of, on the one hand, an intensification of the Will, on the other, a dissolution of it. Ives may mean something to Cage, but he also meant something to Elliott Carter.

How do we clinch the point? The single composer whom Ives unquestionably held in the highest reverence was Beethoven, the Beethoven who, in Cage's estimation, was 'wrong'. Maybe in this joint centenary year we will come to see Ives as closer even to Schoenberg than to John Cage.

CHRIS ROOKE

Notes

- (1) Ed. Richard Kostelanetz, John Cage (London 1971), p. 164.
- (2) See especially Sydney Robinson Charles, 'The use of borrowed material in Ives' Second Symphony', MUSIC REVIEW 1967, and Dennis Marshall, 'Charles Ives' quotations: Manner or Substance?', PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC 1968.
- (3) Ed. John Kirkpatrick, Charles E. Ives. Memos (London 1973), pp. 200-201.
- (4) Charles Ives, Essays Before a Sonata (London 1969), pp. 128-129.
- (5) John Cage, A Year from Monday (London 1968), p. 42.

(Music example quoted by kind permission of Mercury Music Inc.)

Saving the Captain from himself

Quite why Captain Beefheart got his name will probably remain shrouded by the mists of time, but it seems to have been concocted ten years or so ago by the Captain himself and Frank Zappa, an old school-mate - some school that must have been! The Captain was to have featured in one of Zappa's movies - like most of his film projects never realized - with the tantalizing title of Captain Beefheart Meets the Grunt People. Whoever the Grunt People might have been, we may be sure that the encounter would not have been dull!

Once upon a time, previous to his re-christening, the Captain went by the name of Don Van Vliet; even now he has aberrant moments when his former identity comes to the surface. After, all, there were times when the forceful character of Mr Hyde lapsed back into his old persona, the colourless Dr Jekyll. Likewise it seems obvious to me that Mr Van Vliet is a timid conformist, lacking in security, who still resides in some dark recess of the Captain's soul; it is also obvious that it is this, the Van Vliet-ish half of the symbiosis, which has asserted itself on the recent album Unconditionally Guaranteed, which fraudulently purports to be a work of the Captain's.

This seems to be the only possible conclusion from the evidence available - can anybody seriously believe that this bland and plausible record could be a product of the man whom many of us see as the most lively and original figure in rock music? The singer with the most versatile and perfect instrument at work in the medium, with nigh unbelievable pitch and dynamic ranges, and a seemingly limitless gamut of vocal timbres? The composer of music which eschews clichés and conformity, abandoning regular time signatures, conventional modes, and regular forms, replacing them with a freely flowing spring of totally fresh ideas? The author of lyrics abounding in rich metaphor and word-play, fearlessly overriding conventional notions of meaning? The player of gritty mouth-harp, of anarchic saxophone? Surely not! Why should Captain Beefheart have restricted himself to such an arid corner of his talents as that which is displayed on this latest album? Who can doubt that it is in fact Van Vliet who is responsible?

Of course, the Captain's career has been - almost of necessity, considering the nature of the man - a chequered affair, encompassing a string of record labels, managers, producers, and personnel of the protean Magic Band, his collection of accomplices.

The excellent first album, Safe As Milk, (1965), re-issued as Dropout Boogie, has its roots in Delta blues, having a boogie-ish feel, with clear cut harmonies and clean-limbed slide-guitar. By contrast the second, Strictly Personal (1968), has few redeeming features: poor material, loose ensemble, and appalling production - the music is rendered almost unintelligible with an inundation of phasing. Also from about this time, but issued several years later, is Mirror Man, taken from a rehearsal tape, having all the rough edges showing, and comprising four rambling jams relying heavily upon vamped bottleneck-guitar figures.

The collaboration with Zappa on Trout Mask Replica (1969) was a mixed blessing. Zappa's Straight label gave Beefheart the opportunity to record the unprecedentedly obscure and seemingly unsaleable music that he had now begun to write, with production by Zappa himself. The resulting double album is, for my money, the most original of all time. It has, however, its failings. The liberty of a double album was a temptation into a lack of discrimination between good and indifferent. And Zappa's hand in production is as damaging as it is evident, falsifying Beefheart's conception. The two men, despite their shared background, are opposite poles. This may be seen in their humour - an important element in the work of each: whereas that of Beefheart is candid and playful, exultant in its love of puns and unexpected juxtapositions of words, Zappa's is hard-edged, satirical and subversive. Their separate humours often give rise to a similar end - the bizarre. But Zappa's self-conscious cultivation of the bizarre, the abnormal, and the socially unacceptable (and here remember the other artists whom he recorded on Straight: the GTO's, Alice Cooper, Wild Man Fischer) is part of a political stance, as is his precept of making ugly music for an ugly (American) society with the intention of undermining it. All this is contrary to the directness and comparative innocence of Beefheart. Zappa's veristic recording technique, with its studio noise, unevenness of sound quality, mistakes, ad libs and asides, is intended to make the album as much a vehicle of shock as are those records of Zappa's own Mothers which use similar techniques, e.g. Absolutely Free, We're Only In It For The Money, and to discomfit the listener by presenting Beefheart as a freak, in much the same way as the GTO's, etc. were promoted.

These days we hear the word 'progressive', used as a term of approbation, rather less than formerly, and the idea of originality as a virtue in rock has been somewhat discredited. This is probably justified, since those elements labelled 'progressive' were and are usually the most superficial and facile. The chief transgression in this respect is the use of electronic sounds in the manner of cosmetic surgery to prettify songs with banal lyrics and hackneyed chord-progressions. It has always been the case in an art so much subject to fashion that, in order to maintain a semblance of newness, surface features will receive the most attention, while the underlying musical idiom remains static. What Beefheart does on Trout Mask Replica is to revise completely the musical language, and the genuine progress away from rock's mannerist formulae is entirely laudable.

The precise effect has, of course, to be heard to be appreciated, but the means, for the most part are these: at the heart of the sound are the two guitars (often played with bottleneck, and in various tunings) and electric bass (frequently used as a chord instrument) weaving intricate patterns, and exploring bitonal and polytonal oppositions. The Captain's vocals are not usually integrated with the instrumental music, but laid on top of it as it were. It takes a certain amount of faith for the casual listener to believe that the guitar and bass parts are precisely composed and not a haphazard jam (I do not pretend that any of this music makes easy listening), but this is the case. The vocals, though, are more or less improvisations on set lyrics, indulging the fantasy of the moment, giving the record a pervasive spontaneity and vivaciousness.

The extent of Zappa's influence upon Trout Mask Replica becomes clear when we compare it with Lick My Decals Off Baby (1970) which was produced by Beefheart himself. Gone are the distractions of the previous album, replaced by an altogether cleaner sound. His new idiom is continued and consolidated, and despite his use for the first time of one guitar rather than two the textures and bitonal effects remain coherent. The percussion, which was not always convincing on Trout Mask Replica (the lack of a credit on the sleeve makes one suspect that it was over-dubbed), is now thoroughly a part of the music and exploited resourcefully. A happy feature is the use of the marimba, the energetic, edgy sound of which works so well that it is surprising that the instrument is not more frequently used in rock. Its use on the tracks Petrified Forest and The Big Dig evokes a vision of a clanking dinosaur skeleton in a lumbering dance. The 'dinosaur' in both these songs seems to be a metaphor for the industrial society; the subject of a large proportion of the Captain's songs is that of conservation, even though frequently disguised by elaborate metaphor.

Spotlight Kid (1972) provided another somewhat surprising change of direction - back toward a more orthodox tonal basis. Disappointing though the loss of an idiom so rich in possibilities is, the numbers on the album amply justify themselves; in none of them is there evidence of the failing towards which Beefheart tends - cramming too much into a song, with the result that it is too dense in meaning or texture, or else overlong. Here, each is favourably proportioned, with a well-timed ending. Especially impressive are Click Clack with its rhythmically ingenious accompaniment depicting a railway engine gathering momentum, and When It Blows Its Stacks, which must be about the heaviest number ever, based on a riff which becomes gradually simpler and more powerful beneath Beefheart's earthy delivery of the obliquely threatening lyrics.

Clear Spot (1973) showed every sign that the simplification which had taken place on Spotlight Kid was leading to an abundance of riches and that Beefheart's style had at last settled down. What could be more simple or effective than the stark and dramatic juxtaposition of sound and silence in Circumstances? The one track which failed to fit any of one's ideas about the Captain was Too Much Time: brass, female backing group, slick session guitarist, a song which bent over backwards to sound conventional,

and Beefheart's vocal, sung in the middle of his voice with none of the whoops, growls, falsetto notes, etc, etc, which are familiar devices in his compendium of expressive effects - what explanation?

When Unconditionally Guaranteed arrived we had our explanation: this is the new Captain Beefheart - or, rather, Van Vliet taking over. Really the two could hardly be more dissimilar. Gone is the sense of fun, gone the adventurousness, gone nearly everything valuable in his work; what remains is sentimental and trite.

Now, it may be said that I have overplayed the Beefheart/Van Vliet metaphor. But I think there is more to it than that. In each of us there is a Beefheart-ish part, a locked-up source of unruly and anarchical creativity. Beefheart has the ability to release this creativity and his work is as perfect an expression of its purely ungovernable nature as I can imagine. It will brook a limited degree of control only: Van Vliet steps in to try to manipulate it and it slips like mist through his fingers.

It is saddening that the first reaction to a hearing of Beefheart's music is so frequently one of revulsion, and I do not think the cause is merely the unfamiliarity of the sound, but rather the listener's mistaking this wild and pure spirit of playfulness for the distorted and the grotesque. Saddening because if he cannot recognise it in Beefheart, then in all likelihood that part of himself is unknown to him.

From all unwarranted solemnity, Good Lord deliver us. (And the Captain from himself.)

DAVID LL. ROBERTS

As a supplement to this article, here is a review of Captain Beefheart's concert at Leeds University on 1 June by STEVE INGHAM.

As I left the Leeds Union on the night of 1 June with my head singing, an important truth crystallised - namely, never to write of the work of a performing musician solely on the basis of his recordings. Obvious? Apparently not, to judge by the reception given to the Captain's new album, which seems unconditionally guaranteed to throw even his most ardent and devoted followers into a state of confusion, uttering censorial pronouncements - all rather reminiscent of Dylan's Self Portrait album a year or two ago. And the criticism is wholly understandable. Let's face it, much of Unconditionally Guaranteed has as much spontaneity and excitement as a plate of wet cabbage, especially when compared with, say, Spotlight Kid. The songs seem dull and repetitive and the band playing very often sounds as though it were being done by bored session men rather than the colourful and individual characters to which we have grown accustomed in the past.

But the 1,500-strong audience at Leeds that night, who dutifully paid up their £1.10's for the privilege of straining their necks on the balconies or wearing out their backsides on the hard floor, were in no doubt about the Captain and his new Magic Band. Appreciative and enthusiastic, they generated the warmth on which all good bands thrive, and indeed, depend to make their full impact.

The warm-up band, Henry Cow - consisting of self-styled 'weirdos' and Royal Academy dropout types - played the by now familiar set of slick guaranteed-to-impress-by-their-complexity riffs coupled with meandering improvisations of a highly self-indulgent nature. One longed for some good old honest, unpretentious boogie - and when the Magic Band arrive and start belting it out, a cathartic surge runs through the crowd (who have been very patient). The Captain strolls on and off the stage, mouth-harp cupped in his hand, clad in baggy corduroys and a teeshirt bearing his own image. He sports an air of geniality very different from the scowling, aggressive leather-jacket-and-sweatband image of a year ago. The benign pachuco stands relaxed and at home in front of the sea of waving, cheering fans.

The band is different, too. Gone are Rockette Morton, Zoot Horn Rollo (about whom the Captain once said "If he leaves the band, I'll follow him"), Alex St. Clair, and Ed Marimba. Yet the new band sounds uncannily familiar - it retains its unmistakable flavour. The new guitarist lacks Zoot Horn's knife-edged neuroticism but compensates with a technique that is never flashily obtrusive and a fine sense of phrasing. Admittedly, the keyboards man and drummer seemed little more than competent on a first hearing (who could compete with Ed Marimba?), but the bass player has some of Rockette's enthusiasm and can copy his playing with great accuracy.

The numbers are, of course, drawn mainly from Unconditionally Guaranteed, but such old favourites as Abba Zaba and - somewhat surprisingly - Crazy Little Thing are included, as well as a sprinkling of new material. When the new reedsman Del Simmons produces a clarinet and the band play Sweet Georgia Brown at breakneck tempo, the crowd is hysterical. They repeat it immediately. Clowning routines, always part of the act, figure strongly this time, and the mood is happy and relaxed, contrasting with the performance here a year ago, where the atmosphere was heavy, tense, and charged with sexual aggression, the music drawn mainly from Spotlight Kid.

There are the usual attempts from the floor to goad the Captain to utter some pearl of wisdom but he would rather get on with the music. The set is rounded off by an overlong version of Peaches, and the inevitable encore is, strangely, a twelve-bar plod - something he surely would not have countenanced the year before. But it is no longer possible to doubt the sincerity of what he is doing. A song like This is the day, despite its simplicity and operatic appeals to the balconies, nevertheless convinces in a way the recorded version never will.

Whatever he may be singing now, the achievements of Trout Mask Replica and Decals are not negated. Instead of complaining about timid conformity, we should rejoice that the Captain is now earning a living and giving a great

deal of pleasure to many people. We have no right to insist that he goes on turning out the music we expect of him. I, for one, on the strength of this concert, would rate him as interesting as ever before, and I suspect there will be many more peaches to come before he plays himself to a standstill.

STEVE INGHAM

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RHYTHMIC ANTHOLOGY: SCRATCH ANTHOLOGY OF COMPOSITIONS

The publication of music in anthologies has a great number of advantages to both composers and customers alike. In certain cases, however, the material contained in a collection such as the Rhythmic Anthology will be severely limited. This is not inevitable, of course, as is shown by Gavin Bryars' The Squirrel and the Ricketty-Racketty Bridge, for two guitars (one performer). Although spoilt somewhat by the excessively long and complex instructions, and in spite of the difficulty of 'hearing' the notation, which is in number groups, indicating strings and frets, it appears to be the most musical piece in the collection. The technique required to play two guitars simultaneously is not too considerable: all one needs is a sure finger technique with both hands.

The attraction of the other pieces in the anthology is beginning to lose its novelty. They are really only variations on a theme and one feels that an audience would not benefit from more than a single hearing of each, after which the repetitive processes involved become somewhat uninteresting. Variety from piece to piece is, somewhat inevitably, minimal (mainly one of instrumentation), and the detailed exploration of unending combinations of similar rhythmic materials by measured intervals remains the same.

Hugh Shrapnel's Bella utilises a space-time notation and a limited gamut of "pitched metal percussion instruments capable of playing the scale of C major (in any octave)". The effect of the piece relies heavily on the sonorous nature of the percussion instruments, and the mesmeric (or boring?) effect is aided by the restriction that each instrument plays one eight-note figure over and over throughout the performance. In Raindrops (from the Scratch Anthology) Shrapnel presents the same five notes - A, B, D, E, G - 535 times in different combinations (it is not necessary to play all the groups!).

Michael Parsons' Rhythm Studies for Two Pianos and Rhythm Studies for Four Drummers explore gradually changing textures over extended periods of time. In the Scratch Anthology, Phil Gebbett's Piece for Pianos, Howard Skempton's May Pole for orchestra and Alvin Curran's Processional are similar in content.

Exercise for Percussionists by Christopher Hobbs is well-engineered, and should work well in performance, provided that the lengths of each section (there are three) can be kept short. The effect of the score is cumulative, gradually adding more percussion from the beginning of each section. The number of players (and therefore much of the effect of the piece) is variable. Parts

are provided for subsidiary players.

The Scratch Anthology contains one piece by Howard Skempton which crystalises much of the content of the Rhythmic Anthology, Drum No. 1:

Any number of drums
Introduction of pulse
Continuation of pulse
Deviation through emphasis, decoration, contradiction.

The content of many of the Scratch pieces lives up to the humorous reputation which they have attained. Jokes and games in musical, and often non-musical, form are frequent: The Balkan Sobranie Smoking Mixture (Greg Bright), Drinking and Hooting Machine (John White), Purposeless Work 1 (Philip Dadson). The individualistic bias of much Scratch music - as Cardew mentions in the book called Scratch Music (London 1972) - "Doing your own thing in a public entertainment context, and the resulting alienation" - defines it as a personal reaction to one's own environment; it cannot become a collective audience experience because of the essential privacy of the content of so many of the pieces. Consider Howard Skempton's For Strings:

Waves
Shingle
Seagulls

or Chris Robbins' Pocket Music II:

Empty the contents of your pockets onto a drum. Rearrange these contents into various shapes and patterns. Replace objects in pockets.

Aptly enough, grouped together at the end of the anthology are Michael von Biel's World 2, Rzewski's Les Moutons de Panurge and Cardew's Schooltime Special, the last of which I would chose as the best piece in the collection. These three pieces reflect their composers' interest in working with untrained musicians and also a kind of 'conditional' music-making; the performer must overcome one hurdle before proceeding to the next. Schooltime Special is the most thought-provoking: it has four sections, each of which consists of a number of questions and possible answers. Cardew clearly and logically induces all but the most stubborn of performers to make a sound (section A), to alter that sound in response to itself (section B), to relate the sound to his physical and emotional self (section C) and finally, having become one with the sound, to integrate with the social environment which the piece has created. In short, a lesson in how to get on with other people.

MELVYN POORE

reviews:

records

ELECTRONIC MUSIC FROM YORK

Three Record Set, Nos. YES 2-4

(Price £5, from Richard Orton, Department of Music, University of York)

The task of reviewing a set of records devoted to electronic music is not an easy prospect, for one is faced with a system of artistic communication which requires an appreciation not only of the composition processes involved but also the effects of the use of technology in achieving the sonological result. It is particularly important to appreciate that the rôle of the latter is not entirely passive, except perhaps where the selected processes transform a set of musical procedures directly into an acoustic form. Invariably the characteristics of the studio devices themselves and the technical procedures adopted in their use influence the workings of the composer, and account for the occurrence of certain similarities between works of a group of composers working at the same electronic music studio. An appraisal of the set of three records of electronic music issued by the University of York Electronic Music Studio thus involves some general observations as well as specific references to the works of individual composers.

One technical point is common to the whole set. In the review copy all the records are prone not only to varying degrees of surface noise from time to time, but also give the impression that a consistent slight filtering out of the treble response has been applied throughout with a resultant dampening effect on the range and character of the timbres produced.

Another feature which is applicable to several of the works is a more musical one: the need to achieve a meaningful relationship between texture and structure in order that the whole composition is shaped by a coherent form. It is not sufficient merely to create textures of an instantaneous sonological interest, for events must be coherently related both to the preceding and succeeding material. This not only involves the simpler relationships effected by transformation and repetition, but also the need for an overriding structure or group of structures concerned with harmonic and rhythmic areas. In electronic music the problems of regulating the time scale of events is particularly acute, and it is no easy task to construct pieces which occupy only a small time span. Several of the works in the York collection are relatively brief, and some do not succeed completely in overcoming this problem. Moan by Andrew Bentley, for example, makes economical use of feedback principles applied to narrow band filters employed to generate an area of subtle, gently twisting timbres. The result, however,

is not so much a piece but more an extract suitable, perhaps, as material for a larger scale work. Dionysus by John Cardale also gives a similar impression of being slightly unbalanced. The piece is concerned with the use of superimposed patterns created from electronic oscillators which are treated to processes of transformation and montage. The restricted time span, however, results in what would seem to be a move from area 'A' to an area 'B', rather than a balanced overall structure.

Compression Ices '72 by Martin Gellhorn which, as the title suggests, was first heard at the International Carnival of Experimental Sound in London in 1972, is altogether more successful. The source material, created from synthesized sounds which have been subjected to tape feedback loops, is highly suitable for a faster-moving event/time scale, and the piece succeeds in the space of only 4'10" in establishing and manipulating several areas of sound in a manner slightly reminiscent of Hymnen by Stockhausen, and at one point Poème Electronique by Varèse, with the carefully controlled use of distorted sounds. Light Black by Richard Pickett is based on a structure of gently shifting harmonies, creating a variety of interweaving textures which achieve a high degree of coherence within its short span.

The three pieces by Richard Orton, Kiss, For the Time Being and Clock Farm, display the maturity of a composer who has been fortunate to have enjoyed close contact with the use of electronics for many years. Kiss dates from the early period of the York Studio when only a modest range of equipment was available. The use of the human lips and breath as sound sources captured with the aid of contact and air microphones is remarkable for the variety of textures which are effected through transformation, ranging from light bubbling effects not unlike those to be found in Pousseur's Scambi to labyrinthed, slowly changing tone complexes suspended in the middle distance. The contrast of depth here with 'foreground' effects highlights a curious reluctance by some of the other composers to explore the possibilities of subharmonics and other lower frequency textures in their works. For the Time Being employs sounds generated from selected items of domestic equipment encapsulated by a 'frame' of electronic sounds. The relationship developed between electronic and naturally generated sounds in this arch-form creates a unified structure within which elements grow and unite in a seemingly timeless sphere. Clock Farm is a fascinating exploitation of the regular patterns of ticking clocks subjected to simple treatments such as filtering, change of speed and the judicious use of reverberation, subsequently collaged to produce interactive patterns. Again the use of depth as well as separation as a major parameter enhances the use of events in space, and the perhaps inevitable use of a clock alarm elevates a cliché to an acceptable final 'downbeat'. The piece was originally conceived as an audio-visual work employing three slide projectors as well as a tape.

Media Music by Martin Wesley-Smith is a more substantial work created around sounds which are otherwise unwanted by-products of everyday communication, such as telephone bells, mechanical noises from tape recorders and carrier whistles from television sets. The wide variety of sound material is structured into areas of sound complexes interrelated through their inbuilt associations with the process of existence within a technological society.

Machine by Trevor Wishart is a veritable 'tour de force', stretching to three complete sides of the record set. In the composer's own words the work "is a first attempt to integrate musical, documentary and radiophonic approaches to the organisation of sound on tape" centred around facets of the world of automation, including not only sounds of machines themselves but also spoken observations on the subject of machines. The intention is to present not so much a piece but a conception built up from a structure of sound blocks each containing aspects of another, thus providing a system of interrelationships. The result, however, is unsettlingly static, for the various textures oscillate around a central area with no clear sense of movement to or from complementary or contrasting perspectives. The lack of distinctive 'downbeats' (except perhaps halfway through the second side where a continuous noise texture gives way to rhythmic imitations of machines by a group of singers) generates a through-composition which is rather repetitive. It is true to say that repetition is the primary feature of mechanical operations; this aspect, however, requires careful handling if it is to form the basis of a musical composition (compare the simple and effective structures of Orton's Clock Farm), and the Wishart piece through its inward looking structure is not entirely successful. Mention should also be made of the considerable distortion associated with many of the spoken quotations, particularly when this involves a group of participants. This form of treatment is one which requires careful handling, for as it is used here the effect is to deaden the information content of the source material.

The York collection at its best presents a fascinating insight into facets of modern electronic composition and makes a valuable contribution to the language of electronic music. The occasional difficulties in communication serve, however, as a reminder to all that, even after 25 years or so, musicians and technologists still have much to discover about the effective use of the medium.

PETER MANNING

books

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG: LETTERS, selected and edited by Erwin Stein,
translated from the original German by Ethna Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser

FABER AND FABER, paperback edition, 1974 (£2.95)

This is a very welcome paperback edition, presumably issued for Schoenberg's centenary year, of a book that has been available for ten years; the original German edition was published in 1958. It has therefore been well worked over in the traditional way by reviewers, Donald Mitchell's supervising eye (which would seem to have been responsible for some significant improvements in the English edition - in particular, the inclusion of four letters to Mahler) has presumably been duly noted and the book has been a valuable source for a wide variety of people ranging from eminent musicologists down to undergraduates writing B.Mus. dissertations (myself included in the latter category); all this despite the fact that the amount of detailed comment on actual music is not great - and why should we expect it to be when the composer spent so much valuable time which might have been used for composition on the writing of theoretical books and articles?

In short, then, another ordinary review would be almost superfluous. So I should like to use this one to draw attention to something to which I have already alluded earlier in this issue - namely, Schoenberg's attitude to writing about music and who is the better equipped to do it, the composer or the critic. This debate has not diminished in importance since composers first felt the need to discuss music in public - either their own or that of others. In our own time, Stockhausen has expressed the idea, by no means new, that composers always make the best critics; should we take this to mean that he thinks that all non-composing music critics should be pensioned off (or worse) and that only composers should be allowed to criticise their fellows (foes or only friends?) in the national press and on radio and television?

Schoenberg was a patient righter of wrongs and wrong-doers. I don't imagine that he was an inveterate writer to the press, correcting all the factual errors and what he considered to be the misinformed opinions in everything he read over the breakfast table, but there are a number of instances in these letters of just this sort of thing. In November 1958 he wrote to Olin Downes, music critic of the New York Times, pointing out that his Variations for Orchestra had been erroneously described by Mr. Downes as

'Variations upon the theme B-A-C-H' and justifying his use of the B-A-C-H motive in the piece (see Letter 179). And ten years later we find him writing a further letter to Downes defending Mahler from that critic's diatribes against the composer in a review of a performance of the Seventh Symphony by Mitropolous (Letter 230), plus a reply (Letter 231) to Downes' letter to him - this last being unpublished in this edition: surely one of several annoying places where relevant linking material, if only in summary form, could have been profitably and not too clutteringly included?

What Downes had in fact done was to publish Schoenberg's first letter - without his permission - together with his reply to it in the New York Times. The critic's letter must have been interesting, since it provoked some very interesting responses from Schoenberg. Among which we find the following:

"Now finally to your question whether I believe composers are as a rule fair or unbiased critics of other composers; I think they are in the first instance fighters for their own musical ideas. The ideas of other composers are their enemies. You can not restrict a fighter. His blows are correct when they hit hard, and only then is he fair. Thus I do not resent what Schumann said about Wagner, or Hugo Wolf about Brahms. But I resent what Hanslick said against Wagner and Bruckner. Wagner, Wolf, Mahler and Strauss fought for life or death of their ideas. "But you fight only for principles, or rather for the application of principles."

I think it is clear from this that Schoenberg would not have agreed wholeheartedly with Stockhausen about composers being always the best critics. Far from being a composer's best friend, his fellow composer acting in a critical capacity would only be right when he considered the other wrong. Whether this would invariably be so, or whether it could not more often be a case of the composer/critic's own music acting as a barrier to any truly helpful and just estimation of that of another may be debated. I can give what I consider to be examples of both cases from my own personal experience. And the absence of disagreement among composers can lead to a far less healthy situation - the coterie and clique. Whatever we may decide, the view on this subject of one of the most important music theorists of all time, if not one of the greatest composers, should be taken into consideration.

Let us hope, finally, for the eventual removal of all those tantalising bracketed dots in these letters. Though most of them may only indicate the prudent omission of boring detail best consigned to oblivion, their presence is a continuing reminder to the researcher concerned with the music and ideas of the Second Viennese School that there are still many personal barriers between him and certain aspects of the truth. Surely they can ultimately do nothing but harm to the music of the composers they aim to protect?

KEITH POTTER

THE MUSIC OF WILLIAM WALTON, by Frank Howes

OUP, second edition, 1974 (£3.00)

In this revised edition Frank Howes has kept largely to the 1965 text, with the addition of a chapter on the eight works written since then, some minor biographical points, a list of works (replacing the outdated discography) and some new illustrations. Howes' sympathetic account, written in a vigorous prose style, presents individual pieces of critical analysis, laid out in the usual manner - orchestral works, concertos, chamber music and songs, operas and the like. In his introduction Howes mentions his debt to some fairly recent analytical methods, especially those of Reti and Walker, and has attempted to blend this sort of analysis with some discursive commentary in the classic Tertian manner.

In trying, to his credit, to be as objective, open minded and sympathetic as possible, Howes has laid little stress on critical assessment or on portraying a complete picture of the essence of Walton's musical style. The final chapter, entitled 'Style', bears witness to this. It is efficient and perceptive only on a superficial level. For any judgements on Howes' part, one has to look for implications in the character of his prose style. For instance he does not directly say that the First Symphony is a far greater achievement than the Second. Yet comparing the fugal finales especially, Howes' commentary, while in both instances analytically sound, is shot through in the section on the First Symphony with a certain metaphorical flair lacking in the rather routine analysis of the finale of the Second. One can see similar situations in the chapter on the choral music (Belshazzar's Feast as compared to the Gloria for instance) and in the chapter on the concertos (the organic unities of the Violin Concerto as compared to the more contrived unity in the Cello Concerto). Without actually mentioning the so called 'falling off' in much of Walton's later music, Howes, through his prose style, has implied its existence. Among the later works only the Hindemith Variations receives the same sort of treatment as the early masterpieces.

Howes underplays the questions of influences and approach to composition, both of which are of vital importance to a complete understanding of Walton's music. Although he mentions the debt to Sibelius and Roussel in the First and Second Symphonies respectively, Howes does not draw any conclusions in depth as to Walton's musical character and the nature of the influences that affected his style. No mention is made of his early studies of Stravinsky (especially Petrushka) the concertos of Prokofiev and the music of Elgar, Debussy and Ravel. Being far from fluent and reaching public attention at a comparatively early age must have been a daunting experience for the young composer, especially as he had had little experience in handling the large forms that his commissions required. There is evidence in each of his large scale works that he was using a conscious model to overcome any lack of self confidence. His love of parody also meant that he could easily draw on other composers' music and assimilate it into his own style - and not in the parody pieces alone. The concertos are formally and thematically closely linked with Prokofiev's early concertos (the first

three for piano and the second for violin especially) and Elgar's two essays in that form. The debt to Petrushka is noticeable in the opening of the Sinfonia Concertante, written originally as a ballet for Diaghilev using forces similar to that of the Stravinsky piece; Beethoven's Ninth is the model for Walton's First Symphony, rather than Sibelius' Fifth, to which superficial reference is made in the first movement only; Puccini and Verdi are in the background of the opera Troilus and Cressida. Whether these conclusions are correct is of little importance. It is more important to say that Howes does not attempt to draw any conclusions of this nature at all.

On page 237 Howes makes the following statement, which in my opinion is very wide of the mark:

"Of his originality it is enough to observe how difficult it is to trace any affiliations in his music. There are occasional traces of other men's music - an echo of Elgar, a flavour of Sibelius, a rhythmic hint from Stravinsky, a near-quotation from Rimsky-Korsakoff (or Rossini), but these incidentals signify nothing since they are only superficial traces not hereditary features."

No attempt is made to place Walton in the historical perspective of 20th century music. Neither does Howes go into detail about Walton's compositional motivations. Since the first version was published new material has been unearthed on this subject, especially by Walton himself, that would make a fascinating addition to the stylistic analysis.

The new chapter itself is somewhat disappointing. As it stands it is rather unbalanced, too much space being given to the Capriccio Burlesque at the expense of the major orchestral work of the period, the Improvisations on an Impromptu of Benjamin Britten. No analysis of this work is given. Howes resorts to a page of padding. No mention is made of the superb Battle of Britain music, and only a sentence is given on the Sonata for Strings. It would have been interesting to have a comparison between the Sonata and its original, the String Quartet in A minor. My opinion is that this chapter was added for the sake of completeness rather than out of any real conviction. A more successful way of discussing the later works would have been to incorporate them into the existing chapters. Apart from this chapter the book achieves its aim as an analytical introduction to Walton's music. Perhaps, however, its aims were not set high enough. The opportunity of producing something new and more all-embracing for the revised version was not taken up. Obviously there is still a great deal of scope for a second book on Walton(1).

PAUL HINDMARSH

Note

- (1) Gillian Widdicombe is at present engaged in preparing the 'official' critical biography of Walton (Ed.).

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Virgil Thomson Born in Kansas City in 1896. After graduating from Harvard he became one of the first of a stream of American composers who went to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. He lived in Paris from 1925 to 1940, became a member of the Gertrude Stein circle and met Erik Satie, by whom he was much influenced. An extremely prolific composer, his best known work is probably the first opera he wrote to a libretto by Gertrude Stein, Four Saints in Three Acts (1928). Other works include a second Gertrude Stein opera, The Mother of us All (1947), Five Songs from William Blake and A Solemn Music for wind band. He is also well known as a critic and writer on music. He was chief music critic of the New York Herald Tribune from 1940 to 1954 when he did much to make the music and ideas of John Cage known to the public. (Cage collaborated with Kathleen Hoover on a book about Virgil Thomson in 1959.) Much of his criticism is available in book form and his other books include an autobiography, Virgil Thomson (1966) and American Music since 1910 (1971). Published by Schirmer.

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