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# Contact

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**no. 30**

Christopher Fox Music as Social Process:  
Some Aspects of the Work of Christian Wolff

Michael Parsons Howard Skempton: Chorales,  
Landscapes and Melodies

Roger Heaton The Performer's Point of View

Richard Barrett The Notation of Time: a Reply

Hilary Bracefield Cold Blue Records

Stephen Reeve ISCM Festival 1985

Mark Ingleby Pacific Ring Festival

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# Contact

A journal of contemporary music **no.30 Spring 1987**

Edited by Keith Potter, Hilary Bracefield, Celia Duffy,  
Christopher Fox, Roger Heaton, and Peter Owens

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## Editorial

The editors of *Contact* welcome the submission of articles and reports to be considered for publication in the magazine; they are also glad to discuss proposals for such items. All material (including quoted matter and notes) should be typed double spaced with margins of at least 2.5cm (1"); top copy should be submitted. Contributions and material for review should be sent to Keith Potter, Department of Music, University of London Goldsmiths' College, New Cross, London SE14 6NW.

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## An Editorial

It will hardly have escaped the notice of our regular readers that the gap between the publication of this issue of *Contact* and the last one has been much longer than usual. In view of this, but also for other and perhaps better reasons too, it seemed the right moment to offer a statement from the editorial side. *Contact* has not, at least recently, cultivated the sort of image that leads its readers to expect regular reflective comment of this kind from its editors. It is not at present the intention to make a habit of it.

The delay in publishing the present issue has been caused by a combination of problems – mostly practical, also in part financial. In essence, they arise from the basic circumstances in which the journal has always been published in the sixteen years of its existence, a little of which is explained below. We do, of course, regret this long hiatus, for which we would like to apologise to all our subscribers and other regular readers. We would also like to explain that we were unable to inform subscribers of what was happening not only because we were ourselves uncertain for some time as to when the next issue would be ready, but also because the cost of doing so is prohibitive for a low-budget operation such as ours.

As a result of our recent experiences, however, we have now expanded our editorial board to six; their names appear on page 3. This is intended in the first instance to bring about a return to regular publication: two issues a year, one in the spring, the other in the autumn. But it is also envisaged that *Contact* should continue to evolve and to change where necessary, while retaining its original aim: the provision of information and comment on a wide range of contemporary music to whoever is interested, whether professionally involved or not.

No-one, we hope, would expect such changes overnight. It seems, in any case, that it is likely to be more a question of the rejuvenation of original aims than a radical search after new ones. More specifically, it is likely that *Contact* will continue to steer its sometimes faltering course between the Scylla of the 'academic journal', written by academics but read by no-one, and the Charybdis of the 'popular magazine', responding only to current fashion and the 'promotional machines' and producing nothing of any substantial musical worth.

It is no doubt wise for *Contact* to continue, for the most part, to preserve a certain decorum regarding its practical problems: aside from anything else, readers presumably want to read the results of our labours, not a catalogue of those labours themselves. The following may, however, put right at least some of the misunderstandings that others, perhaps quite understandably, have about us.

*Contact* is published with the aid of an Arts Council 'guarantee against loss' which essentially

pays for our typesetting and printing. Revenue from subscriptions, sales, advertising, etc. has to cover all our other costs. Neither editors nor contributors are paid for their services, apart from a small honorarium to those doing sub-editing and proofreading which is far from the 'going rate' for this extremely time-consuming and thankless task. *Contact* is therefore not run as a commercial operation in any normal sense. All those involved on the editorial side have full-time jobs and/or busy freelance careers in music.

It may dismay those who think the editors of *Contact* make a handsome profit at their subscribers' and the taxpayer's expense to learn that the journal is produced in such a fashion. It is, though, important to stress that many journals and magazines, particularly academic journals, are produced in this way: some very reputable journals have been sub-edited by an unpaid academic and proof-read by his wife. Most academic journals, though, have some assistance – sometimes extensive assistance – from a publisher. We do not. On the other hand, we value the independence that comes from being 'non-aligned'.

Finally, a word about future plans. Editors will from now on be working in pairs, planning an issue and seeing it 'through the press' themselves, rather than with the assistance of a separate sub-editor. Reviews will be dealt with by Hilary Bracefield, though since it has been an important part of our policy in recent years to allow the borderline between 'article' and 'review' to be crossed when appropriate, this will not be an entirely separate matter. We do hope, though, to be able to review more material than we have managed in the recent past. (Material for review should continue to be sent to the Goldsmiths' College address on page 3 for the moment.)

Despite the problems involved, we intend to continue the policy of devoting an issue to a particular subject area or even an individual composer when appropriate. (We have tried very hard in the last few years to publish issues devoted to, among others, Cornelius Cardew after his tragic early death and Christian Wolff on his 50th birthday; some idea of how hard this is to achieve can be gauged by, among other things, the appearance in the present issue of just a single, though we hope useful, article on the latter.) Plans for the future include an issue dealing with aspects of music in West Germany; articles on music in Brazil and China and some attention to Danish and Yugoslav music; several articles on younger British composers; and a detailed examination of aspects of repetitive music, particularly that of Steve Reich.

**Keith Potter**

## Brigitte Schiffer

14 July 1909 – 21 January 1986

This is the first opportunity we have had to pay tribute to the music critic Brigitte Schiffer, a former contributor to *Contact*, who died over a year ago after a long period of poor health.

In the 1960s and 70s, Brigitte was a familiar figure to anyone who went at all regularly to concerts of contemporary music in London. She was, indeed, a tirelessly inveterate concert-goer at this time, keeping abreast of everything and everyone on the metropolitan new-music scene in her own extraordinary way. She was passionately committed to the contemporary cause and yet also capable of a reasoned detachment, her views being conveyed more often in private conversation with her own special brand of wry humour and sometimes barbed wit than in her published writings which, in those written in English at least, were frequently designed more to report than to 'criticise'.

Officially she was known as the London critic for the German music magazine *Melos* for much of this period, and she was certainly important in providing both *Melos* and a large number of other German-language magazines, newspapers and radio stations with a regular insight into the fast-developing British contemporary-music scene. Her writing must surely have done a great deal to dispel any lingering doubts in her German, Austrian and Swiss readers' minds about the new compositional vitality of what used to be called 'das Land ohne Musik'.

Yet Brigitte was much more than just a music critic. In London, which she made her home for over 20 years, she was known as a friend to composers and to anyone at all interested in new music. She was a vigorous supporter of many people and many causes: not least of *Contact*, for whom she voluntarily provided a flood of concert reviews after *Melos* ceased publication – more copy than our infrequent publication could possibly find space for, as is probably fairly evident to anyone looking through issues 20, 21 and 22,

those in which we drew most extensively on her services. Though having more reason than most to be impatient with our erratic ways, she was actually among *Contact's* staunchest and most understanding supporters, offering advice on matters promotional as well as editorial both in conversation and in a steady stream of letters and postcards.

Most of us who knew her were aware that Brigitte had had several other 'lives' before settling in England and taking up writing about new music. Details were hard to come by, since she was much less forthcoming about herself than in voicing her opinions about the state of new music. We gathered, though, that she had studied in her native Berlin with Hindemith, among others; that she had gained a doctorate in ethnomusicology; and that she had spent long periods in Egypt, where I think she was involved in music education.

Yet even those who were much closer to her than I was were surprised to discover just how intimate she seems to have been with practically all the composers of the post-war avant garde. Xenakis was a familiar favourite concern of hers, yet she seems also to have been familiar with Boulez and Stockhausen from the earliest days, before they established their current reputations here; I also recall how tenderly Cage treated her in the course of a conversation in Peter Greenaway's Channel 4 documentary about him, recently reshowed.

If Brigitte's filing system for unpublished materials relating to her wide range of friends in new music was anything like as extensive and thorough as that for her enviable collection of published materials, it ought to be possible to celebrate and commemorate in some way what must have been a richly varied and rewarding life in music. Brigitte gave so unstintingly of herself for so long; we surely owe her something in return, in order that her contribution is not entirely forgotten.

**Keith Potter**

# Christopher Fox

## Music as Social Process: some aspects of the work of Christian Wolff

There is . . . an inevitable natural complexity in things . . . ; and it cannot finally be precisely indicated or controlled or isolated. To insist on determining it totally is to make a dead object. The spatial element is unpredictably flexible (though one may decide to calculate particular segments) and comes to life only when activated by outside (indeterminable) interferences. The complete control of a work, were it possible at all, would render it utterly impenetrable, put an end to its existence.<sup>1</sup>

. . . a situation occurred when I had to produce quickly – for a concert by Frederic Rzewski and myself in 1956. I'd been writing extremely complicated pieces, and it was clear I wouldn't be able to finish in time. What we did was a kind of improvisation – the score dealt only with spaces of time and groups of notes from which we could select – and then I started doing other pieces like this. They'd have time-lengths and what was to happen within these, and they'd usually state the number of notes to be played. There might or might not be more details, and I'd give a wide range of instructions, from playing two particular notes within an eighth of a second to playing five notes from a wide selection within a minute – from nearly fixed to nearly free.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of *Duo II for Pianists*, structure, the division of the whole into parts, is indeterminate. (No provision is given by the composer for ending the performance.) Method, the note-to-note procedure, is also indeterminate. All the characteristics of the materials (frequency, amplitude, timbre, duration) are indeterminate within gamut limitations provided by the composer. The form, the morphology of the continuity, is unpredictable. One of the pianists begins the performance: the other, noticing a particular sound or silence which is one of a gamut of cues, responds with an action of his own determination from among given possibilities within a given time bracket. Following this beginning, each pianist [sic] responds to cues provided by the other, letting no silence fall between responses, though these responses themselves include silences. Certain time brackets are in zero time. There is no score, no fixed relation of the parts. *Duo II for Pianists* is evidently not a time-object, but rather a process the beginning and ending of which are irrelevant to its nature. The ending, and the beginning, will be determined in performance, not by exigencies interior to the action but by circumstances of the concert occasion. If the other pieces on the program take forty-five minutes of time and fifteen minutes more are required to bring the program to a proper length, *Duo II for Pianists* may be fifteen minutes long. Where only five minutes are available, it will be five minutes long.

The function of each performer in the case of *Duo II for Pianists* is comparable to that of a traveler who must constantly be catching trains the departures of which have not been announced but which are in the process of being announced. He must be continually ready to go, alert to the situation, and responsible. If he notices no cue, that fact itself is a cue calling for responses indeterminate within gamut limitations and time brackets. Thus he notices (or notices that he does not notice) a cue, adds time bracket to time bracket, determines his response to come (meanwhile also giving a response), and, as the second hand of a

chronometer approaches the end of one bracket and the beginning of the next, he prepares himself for the action to come (meanwhile still making an action), and, precisely as the second hand of a chronometer begins the next time bracket, he makes the suitable action (meanwhile noticing or noticing that he does not notice the next cue), and so on.<sup>3</sup>

If the history of the avant garde since 1945 can be seen as a succession of minor revolutions, reactions and revisions, then Christian Wolff's revolution was to introduce the social interaction of performers in performance as a significant compositional element. Although the nature and extent of this interaction has varied in Wolff's music over the period since he and Rzewski first performed *Duo for Pianists I* – probably in 1957, actually<sup>4</sup> – a recurrent characteristic of his work has been the creation of ensemble performance situations in which individual players must listen to one another's playing for information as to how to proceed. In this article I shall examine Wolff's development of this characteristic in his work, concentrating on the music he wrote between the late 1950s and the late 1960s, a period which begins with *Duo for Pianists I* and ends with the *Prose Collection*.

### The late 1950s

In 1955 John Cage had written that

. . . since duration is the only characteristic of sound that is measurable in terms of silence, therefore any valid structure involving sounds and silences should be based, not as accidentally traditional, on frequency, but rightly on duration . . .<sup>5</sup>

Like Cage, who had in fact first made this observation many years earlier, Wolff regarded duration as the fundamental musical parameter. Just as Cage, in a piece like the First String Quartet (1950), deliberately invited the listener to focus his attention on the length of musical events by tightly restricting their variety, so Wolff – in works like *Trio I* for flute, trumpet and cello (1951), with its four different pitches, and *For Piano I* (1952), with its nine widely-scattered notes (Example 1) – used pitch and timbral restriction to clarify and emphasise the organisation of duration and reiteration. As he said later,

Around 1951-2 my pieces had very few pitches, resulting from exercises Cage had set me . . . what interested me was not so much the notes as their overlappings and combinations.<sup>6</sup>

At first sight, a comparison between *For Piano I* and *Duo for Pianists I* and *II* would suggest that it is this aspect of Wolff's music that the radical change in notation has most severely compromised. However, in his slightly later article 'On Form'<sup>7</sup> the composer demonstrates that the precompositional planning of works using the new notation was

Example 1 *For Piano I*, bars 44-8

Example 2 *Duo for Pianists II*, second piano part (extract)

every bit as complex as that for the traditionally notated pieces, requiring a labyrinthine series of operations on a matrix to produce the instructions for the performers. The beauty of the new method, and the reason it was first used (as the second quotation above, from the 1969 article/interview 'Taking Chances', makes clear), was that it removed the necessity for Wolff to realise these instructions once and for all. Where the matrix operations might produce a five-second musical event consisting of four sounds to be selected from pitch collection (e) (Example 2), in earlier pieces he would have had further work deciding which four sounds to use and where to place them within the five seconds. In the new notation it is enough to write '5:4e'.

At the same time as initiating a quick new way of composing and playing (nothing in Cage's, Morton Feldman's or Earle Brown's 'indeterminacy' is quite like this, as I shall demonstrate later), Wolff's experiment in his new notation seems to be a (tacit) acknowledgement of a truth about much of the new music of the first half of the 1950s. Put bluntly, the complexity of the compositional strategies employed, whether by Pierre Boulez or Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen or Wolff, yielded music the appeal of which is based not so much on any Webernesque sophistication of note-to-note movement resulting from the use of these strategies as on the general qualities of performance activity involved in playing the pieces: scientific precision (Boulez' *Structures*, Book I), Zen and the Art of Keyboard Mastery (Cage's *Music of Changes*), manic activity

(Stockhausen's *Klavierstück I*), stasis (Wolff's *For Piano I*). To observe this discrepancy between ends and means is not to criticise the music that resulted; what is interesting, and characteristic of each of these composers, are the different ways in which each subsequently achieved far greater resolution of creative intention and realisation. For Wolff the new notation did not involve a change in the sound of his music: the same delicate balance of single attacks, occasionally occurring in groups of near-simultaneities, and silence is maintained. It did, though, allow him to focus specifically on the notion of composition as the definition of performer activity and of the location of that activity in time. That he was relatively uninterested in which notes he used, finding their relationships more interesting, has already been indicated.

In 'How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run', Cage recounts the following anecdote:

One day when the windows were open, Christian Wolff played one of his pieces at the piano. Sounds of traffic, boat horns, were heard not only during the silences in the music, but, being louder, were more easily heard than the piano sounds themselves. Afterward, someone asked Christian Wolff to play the piece again with the windows closed. Christian Wolff said he'd be glad to, but that it wasn't really necessary, since the sounds of the environment were in no sense an interruption of those of the music.<sup>8</sup>

This indicates that Wolff also doubted whether music should have an importance greater than that of any other sounds for the listener, thus questioning the whole concept of the inviolable completeness of the composition. In an intellectual

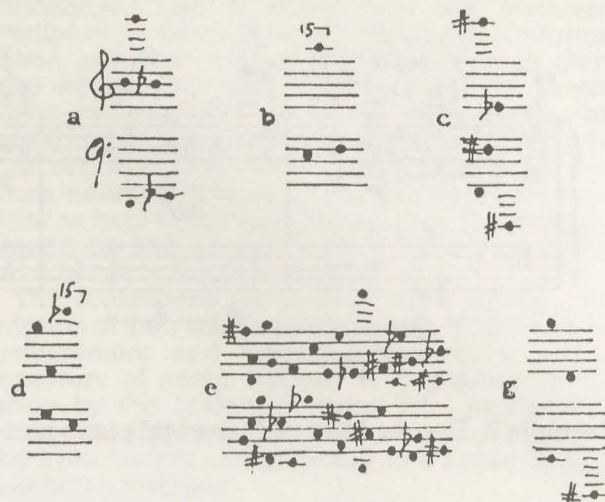
climate dominated by the ideas of the composer of 4'33" (1952), this is not surprising, until one considers that Wolff's position is significantly different from Cage's. Cage in 4'33" is throwing blanket musical status over all the sounds which occur in that time and indicating this by avoiding all 'musical' sound-making of his own; Wolff is adding his music to the existing soundscape, but without claiming any special dispensation for his sounds.

In the two *Duo* pieces (both of which, by the way, are for two pianos; *Duo for Pianists II* dates from 1958), Wolff instructs that 'the performers may decide on a length (say 15 minutes) at the end of which they should finish whatever section they are in and then stop'.<sup>9</sup> He is thus explicitly discarding the assumption that the notation of a piece is a means by which performers can achieve uniform reproductions of a predetermined series of musical images. Not only does he allow for performances which do not use all the notations which he provides in the score, he also creates – through the cueing device whereby particular types of event in one part act as triggers for new events to begin in the other part – a situation fraught with possibilities of performer misinterpretation or even error. As Wolff writes in 'On Form', 'the form of a piece is reduced to a score, instructions for performers . . . what should go on for how long . . . boundaries before an event'.<sup>10</sup>

Crucially, Wolff is shifting attention from composition to performance. In the new music of the early 1950s composers often seem to have imagined performance as quite transparent, an activity only of interest in that it allowed the products of the composer's mind to be heard, realised in sound. (Hence, of course, the attraction of electronic music – in theory if not in practice – for composers of the period.) At the same time they imagined these socially neutral performances to be happening against the background of absolute silence. The latter assumption Cage exploded in 4'33"; the former assumption Wolff was probably the first to refute by creating, for *Duo for Pianists I*, a score which, since it is no more than 'instructions for performers', has no significance until it is used to activate them. For Wolff after 1956, performance is no longer a precise recreation of an already-finished work. To quote 'On Form' again, 'a piece is not played to exhibit its composed structure';<sup>11</sup> instead it is a dynamic social activity whose consequence is the creation of music.

The shift in attention generated by the change of notational, and therefore performance, practice initiated a gradual change in Wolff's compositional methods. To a limited extent change is already evident when one compares *Duo for Pianists I* with preceding works. In earlier compositions Wolff restricted his pitch material to single gamuts heard throughout the whole or part of a work. In *Duo for Pianists I* and subsequent pieces, however, not only does the superimposition of different gamuts make it virtually impossible for these to establish their individual identities for the listener, but Wolff often also instructs that only a few pitches of the gamut be sounded. In *For Pianist* (1959), for example, the gamuts used are as in Example 3:

Example 3 *For Pianist*, pitch sources (there is no pitch source (f)!)



Gamut (e) has the most pitches, many of them duplicated in other gamuts (only the high B flat distinguishes (d) from (e), for example) so that, even if gamuts were used independently in their entirety, it would be difficult for the listener to distinguish where (e) ended and any other gamut began. But to confuse matters further, Wolff uses a range of notations which require pitches to be sounded a semitone, an octave, or an octave and a semitone higher or lower, as well as providing that 'where no [gamut] letter is given, any pitch(es) may be chosen'.<sup>12</sup> Clearly the use of these gamuts has become a private affair between composer and performer rather than an audibly distinguishable feature of the music.

Yet, as was stated earlier, the change in notational practice from *For Piano* to *Duo for Pianists I* was not accompanied by wholesale change in the sound-world of Wolff's music. Although the extension of available pitches beyond the prescribed gamuts leads to a blurring of the identity of these gamuts beyond the point at which they might still be recognised, the sounds produced are still widely separated in time, with no metrical organisation apparent to the ear. Indeed, the move to a less aurally distinct system of pitch organisation allows Wolff to take further the philosophy, stated in 'On Form', that 'no distinction is made between the sounds of a "work" and sounds in general'.<sup>13</sup> In the conventionally-notated pieces, where pitch gamuts can be identified by ear, there is a profound contrast between the proliferation of 'sounds in general' and the delineation of sounds in Wolff's work; the sounds of the pieces after 1956 are much more haphazard, much more like those of nature. This in turn has the consequence that the listener, unable to perceive any schematic organisation behind what he hears, will tend to concentrate more on the intrinsic qualities of individual sounds or groups of sounds than on their significance as parts of an overall formal structure. The result is that, as in the music of Cage and Feldman, sounds are allowed to be themselves in a way that is rare, if not unknown, in any other composed western music. As Cage says in *For the Birds*,

All I was able to identify was the arrival of a few sounds from time to time. I was transported to natural experiences, to my daily life when I am not listening to music, when sounds simply happen.<sup>14</sup>

## Duos and duets

Clearly, use of the new notation required no sacrifice for Wolff, only gains, both aesthetic and practical; and in the compositions that follow its introduction one can see a gradual refinement of its possibilities and, in particular, a reduction of its complexities to those which directly serve the music's intentions. This is immediately apparent in a comparison between the two *Duo* pieces of 1957 and 1958 and the two *Duet* pieces of 1960 and 1961. (*Duet I* is for piano, four hands; *Duet II* is for horn and piano.)

In the *Duo* pieces emphasis is placed on the internal continuity of each player's part, with the overall continuity resulting from the simultaneous performance of these parts being left to chance. Wolff only prescribes that each player should begin a particular section of his part in response to the cue designated for that section. But in performing the *Duo* pieces, the composer says,

I noticed right at the beginning of the experiment with Rzewski, that the thing that interested me most was in what way the choice of one performer was influenced by what the other one did. For example, one has ten seconds and one can choose three notes out of seven. So one has a little time to think what to do. Perhaps one has already thought of something beforehand; but ten seconds is a little time, and one is just about to do something when the other one plays something and one says, perhaps it would be better if I played *this* as a reply. So a reciprocal improvisation occurs, a controlled reciprocal reaction, a co-ordination created at that moment.<sup>15</sup>

In the *Duet* pieces Wolff develops notations which exploit this co-ordination more specifically. In the example from *Duet II* for horn and piano (Example 4), one of the six sections that make up the piece is shown. The six sections may, like those of the *Duos*, be played in any order, repeated or omitted. The sequence of sections is not to be determined beforehand; instead players must respond to one another's cues in performance. (The section shown is the only one that both players may start; the other sections are all cued by either horn or piano.) In the example, the pianist plays five sounds from pitch source (a), two of them attacked simultaneously; the dash through the 5 means '1) that the tones must be unequal (aperiodic) in some respect (e.g. duration or loudness) and 2) that the event as a whole . . . must be varied at each repetition of the section in which they occur'.<sup>16</sup> At the same time the horn, muted by one of 'two different kinds of mutes or muting', plays two notes, legato, the first either loud or soft or with a loud attack on an otherwise soft note, the second moderately quiet. Then the pianist plays a single note which is held until the horn plays a slightly flat low concert D. The next event is co-ordinated 'as closely as possible . . . without any intentional signals'.

The pianist next plays two notes of 'any duration from the shortest to medium (about one second)', releasing the second note as the horn enters, muted with the other mute, with a note from pitch source (b). As soon as the horn stops, the pianist plays another shortish note at the end of which the horn plays again, followed again by the pianist. The rest of the section continues, obeying the same rules, ending with an especially unpredictable event in which the last two horn sounds – one of any duration as high as possible, the other a shortish note a semitone above or below any note in pitch source (b) – are played immediately after a

note of 'any duration from very long to medium' and the last of a group of three shortish notes, respectively.

Besides this much greater emphasis in the *Duets* on reactive playing, on listening and co-ordinating as carefully as possible, there is also a change from the *Duo* pieces in the use made of the pitch sources. In the *Duo* pieces the majority of notes use pitches from the sources, whereas in the *Duet* pieces notes using pitches from the sources are the exception (and in *Duet II*, where a pitch source is specified, the pitch chosen is in most cases to be modified by semitone or octave transposition). While it is just conceivable that the pitch sources in *For Pianist* and the *Duos* might make some subliminal impression on the listener, in the *Duets* this has become a statistical impossibility: their use has become utterly private and, in a notation where details of succession, dynamic, timbre and duration are now generally given note-by-note or group-by-group, to have pitch sources scattered across the page is graphically both cumbersome and anomalous.

## The early 1960s

In the compositions after the *Duets* the pitch sources therefore disappear. They are replaced – in, for example, *In Between Pieces* for three players using any sound sources (1963) – by clefless staves, mostly with one or two pitches, positioned immediately beside the note to which they refer. Examination of the pitches used, coupled with the realisation that they may be read in either treble or bass clef or, where neither falls within an instrument's range, transposed by at least two octaves, reveals that they have been given in this apparently more precise way not to impose any audible sense of pitch organisation on the music but rather to prevent the three players involved from keeping to too few pitches. In a situation where a player's attention is focused on fulfilling the co-ordinative demands of the notation, as well as effecting the timbral changes that *In Between Pieces* also demands, there is a danger that pitches may recur too regularly, a danger that Wolff thus counteracts. Interestingly, having established the type of pitch distribution he wants for the work by using staves on the first three pages of the score, Wolff then feels able to abandon them for the remaining one-and-a-half pages of the piece's first part.

Other innovations of *In Between Pieces* can be seen to be the fruit of work on the performance of compositions using the interactive notation of the *Duets*. For example, on page 2 Player III begins with two sounds; these are followed immediately by two sounds from Player I, followed by one sound from Player II; Player III has to play another sound simultaneously with either the second or third sound he hears after his initial two sounds. Ten seconds after Player II's note, Player III plays four notes; seventeen seconds after Player II's note, Player I plays one note; Player II plays two notes directly after either the third, fourth or fifth note he hears. So while two players are involved in realising one type of notational instruction, the third player is waiting for a rather less predictable cue which will be the product of their activities.

The potential for error in a composition like *Duet II*, where each player must be prepared either to cue or be cued at the end of each section, is also recognised and exploited in the second part of *In Between Pieces*. Here the notations for each player

Example 4 *Duet II*, extract (horn at concert pitch)

Handwritten musical notation for Example 4, *Duet II*, extract. The notation is for Horn and Piano. The Horn part includes dynamic markings like *mf*, *f*, *pp*, and notes with various accidentals. The Piano part includes dynamic markings like *p*, *f*, and notes with various accidentals. There are also handwritten annotations like "high asp.", "mute(1)", and "1x prepared".

Example 5 *Pairs*, opening phrase (parts 1 and 2)

Handwritten musical notation for Example 5, *Pairs*, opening phrase. The notation is for two parts, 1 and 2. The notation includes dynamic markings like *f*, *pp*, *p*, and notes with various accidentals. There are also handwritten annotations like "1x prepared" and "mute(1)".

indicate that sounds are to be co-ordinated in the ways used earlier in the work with sounds made by the other players: simultaneously; directly after; after a stated period; after a stated number of sounds. They do not, however, specify which player: Wolff instructs that

notes should be read in sequence by each player, but the co-ordinations are with whatever sound each player hears next . . . This means that sometimes one player must proceed to another section so that another player still playing in the current one can finish.<sup>17</sup>

All these devices can be seen as further variants and sophistications of the two procedural methods central to performance practice in all Wolff's work after 1956: players are playing either independently of one another or in co-ordination with one another. Around these constants the composer can then introduce whatever other features he wishes in order to make a particular piece unique: the use of muting in *Duet II*, of timbral alteration in *In Between Pieces*, and so on. At the same time there is a general tendency towards a simpler notation, or rather towards a notation that is more readily readable in performance. The awkwardness of the graphic presentation of pitch sources at some distance from notations which refer to them has already been mentioned, but Wolff's representation of durational variations also undergoes modification. In the *Duos*, duration is entirely at the

players' discretion, provided the given number of attacks occurs in the time available. In the *Duets*, three different note lengths are used (black notes are short to medium, square white notes are long, and round white notes are of any length); in *Pairs* for any two, four, six or eight players (1968) Wolff also uses semiquavers and quavers to indicate 'rapid' notes and notes 'about half as fast' as the 'rapid' notes (Example 5).

These modifications achieve the same sort of result in durational terms as was achieved by the innovations in pitch notation to be found in *In Between Pieces*. In both cases the more specific new indications are intended to counteract any tendency to sameness: to durations which are fairly short or long, to pitches in the mid-ranges of the instruments used. In so doing they allow the players more time in which to concentrate on co-ordination with one another and on the timbral and pitch inflections that the composer requires, without doing any violence to the overall qualities of Wolff's sound-world. Perhaps as importantly, they make the scores look more like 'normal' music and therefore more attractive to players beyond the inner circle of avant-garde players such as Cornelius Cardew, Rzewski, Kurt Schwertsik, David Tudor et al., who were Wolff's principal interpreters at this time.

## Prose compositions

It was with the *Prose Collection* (initially 1968-9), however, that Wolff made his most determined effort to involve a new pool of players in his music. In interview with Martin Daske, Wolff says of *For 1, 2 or 3 People* for any sound-producing means (1964) that it

was not easy to perform, but it was really accessible to all those who seriously wanted to do it. And through this piece another idea came into my music: that I too wanted to make music for non-professionals, not only for virtuosi, but for lay people and people who had perhaps never played a musical instrument.<sup>18</sup>

Such an opportunity arose through the creation of the Scratch Orchestra in London in 1969, although Wolff had already begun the *Prose Collection* before Cardew produced the Scratch's Draft Constitution.

In the pieces that make up the *Prose Collection* no use is made of musical notations: instead, as the title suggests, these are all text pieces. In a sense this extreme restriction of means – no note-by-note instructions for co-ordinations, no prescription of pitch, duration or timbre – may seem a denial of every development that had gone before in Wolff's music. But Michael Nyman suggests that, instead, this restriction 'can be viewed as a tribute to the English musicians Wolff worked with during a stay in England in 1968'<sup>19</sup> and in particular to Cardew and John Tilbury: a tribute, because by leaving out all but the essential elements necessary to distinguish each piece in the collection, Wolff was acknowledging the commitment to, and understanding of, his music that could be expected both of these two musicians and of any others, professional or amateur, whom they might involve in performing the pieces.

As with *For 1, 2 or 3 People*, the pieces of the *Prose Collection* are 'not easy to perform, but accessible to all those who seriously want to do them'. 'Play' (Example 6), in particular, is in many ways just as demanding as *Pairs* yet, since it makes no specific instrumental demands, it is open to a much wider range of musicians or, as became available in the Scratch Orchestra, musically-orientated non-musicians.

Indeed, 'Play' can be taken as paradigmatic of all Wolff's work after 1956 for, like all those pieces, it too revolves around the twin performance possibilities of independent activity and activity co-ordinated with another player. There are, however, two compositions written in the period under review which involve exceptions to this rule: the already mentioned *For Pianist* and *Septet* for any seven players plus conductor (1964).

### 'For Pianist' and 'Septet'

Since *For Pianist* is a solo piece, it must inevitably forego any possibility of interaction between performers; yet Wolff manages to substitute a similar sort of indeterminacy to that produced when one player in an ensemble is waiting for another to provide a cue by creating situations in which a specified action may have a number of different results. Example 7 shows three different events, of which only one is performed. The decision as to which event is chosen depends on the outcome of a 'hard as possible' pizzicato: the notation for each event is preceded by a description of one of the three possible results of the attempt on this. For Wolff this was

### Example 6 'Play' (from *Prose Collection*) (extract)

Play, make sounds, in short bursts, clear in outline for the most part; quiet; two or three times move towards as loud as possible, but as soon as you cannot hear yourself or another player stop directly. Allow various spaces between playing (2, 5 seconds, indefinite); sometimes overlap events. One, two, three, four or five times play a long sound or complex or sequence of sounds.. Sometimes play independently, sometimes by co-ordinating: with other players (when they start or stop or while they play or when they move) or a player should play (start or, with long sounds, start and stop or just stop) at a signal (or within 2 or five seconds of a signal) over which he has not control (does not know when it will come). At some point or throughout use electricity.

partly a reaction to Tudor, who would always work out a piece fully beforehand . . . for each possibility I prescribed a different continuation, so that he could not know in advance what he'd find himself doing.<sup>20</sup>

*Septet* is exceptional in that it is Wolff's only work to date to require a conductor. Given the interdependence of players in much of the composer's output, the introduction of a director would obviously be at odds with the ensemble democracy established by the notations; so in *Septet*, as Wolff says,

the conductor . . . made signs, signals for the players, which either fitted or they didn't. If a performer was waiting for a signal, and the conductor happened to make a sign just then, he would react to the sign. But equally well it could be that he conducted something which at that moment had no meaning for the players, it was simply a theatrical gesture. It is really almost the only theatrical thing that occurs in my music, [the only thing] which is purely visual and which creates no sound.<sup>21</sup>

### Comparisons

Yet even when Wolff introduces an apparently uncharacteristic element such as the 'theatrical' conducting of *Septet*, this is still rooted in musical practice. What is striking about all Wolff's work, especially the indeterminate pieces of the 1950s and 1960s, is its basis in sound and in the ways that musicians work together to make sounds. Earlier it was demonstrated that Wolff first introduced indeterminate elements in his work for practical reasons – to speed up the composition process – and then developed these elements in response to the success of this fortuitous experiment. In contrast, the indeterminacy of composers like Boulez or Brown was inspired as much by the visual or literary arts as by musical considerations. For Brown, one of Wolff's colleagues in the early years, indeterminacy or aleatoricism meant that music was 'finally catching up with . . . the "open reading" of *Le Livre* of Mallarmé . . . the endless contextual, pre-ordained but unforeseeable mobility of elements of a Calder'.<sup>22</sup> The weakness of drawing analogies between music and other arts, but especially between music and one of the sculptor Alexander Calder's mobiles, is that we perceive the two in such radically different ways. Although there is a superficial resemblance – both change

## Example 7 For Pianist, page 4 (extract)

IF NEIGHBORING STAINING, OF ANOTHER PITCH, HIT (USUALLY INVOLVES FINGER'S SLIPPING)

MUTE (1)  $\frac{1}{10} : 2a$   $\frac{5}{8} : 0$

TP KEYS d (IN/OUT)

AS LOUD AS POSSIBLE (BY TAP) (BY KEY) (MINIMUM ATTACKS: 9)

IF NEIGHBORING STAINING, OF SAME PITCH, HIT

$\frac{2}{5} : 0$   $2 : \frac{pp}{f}$   $\frac{1}{2} : 0$   $4\frac{1}{2} : 3$  TP<sup>N</sup>(1) TP DAMPER(1)

CONTINUE PAGE 7

IF SOUND IS CLEAR

$\frac{1}{5} : 2b$   $7\frac{1}{2} : 0$

$13\frac{1}{2} : 7$  ff  $c\frac{1}{2}$  TEN(1)

22 $\frac{1}{5}$

over time – the constituent parts of a Calder mobile are all present all the time, but those of a Brown sound mobile can only be heard in sequence, and the totality assessed, 'viewed' in the mind's ear, only after its performance is complete.

Nor does Wolff ever confront his performer with graphic or verbal riddles. His notational developments were conceived practically and then refined in the light of performance experience so that, although his scores may bear superficial resemblances to the graphic fantasies of composers like Sylvano Bussotti, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati and Cardew, they are not an attempt to develop the score as an abstract art, as *Augenmusik*, but an attempt to produce something that provides coherent guidance to musicians in performance. Compare, for example, Cardew's *Octet '61* with Wolff's exactly contemporary *Duet II*: both scores have symbols which are derived from those of conventional music notation (note-heads, clefs) as well as those of other symbolic languages (letters, arrows, numbers), but whereas the Wolff score can be 'read', the Cardew must be 'interpreted'. Whereas Wolff gives detailed explanations as to how these symbols relate to musical activity, Cardew's instructions are of a more general and philosophical nature, summed up in the remark that

when performed, the piece may be judged as a musical experience (sounds brought together by human agency) and thrown down the drain. No one is to blame. This piece is not gilt-edged.

Cardew, like a number of his contemporaries, seemed to be attempting to avoid the tyranny of the score (and therefore the composer) over the

performer by rendering his notation ambiguous, enigmatic. Even in *Edges* for any number of players (1968) – Wolff's most graphically enigmatic score, consisting of a page of unconnected symbols – there is a second page, giving a meaning for each symbol and a short text explaining, among other things, that

the signs on the score are not primarily what a player plays. They mark out a space or spaces . . . a player should play in relation to, in and around the space thus partly marked out.

Just as Wolff's graphic practice is distinct from that of his fellow composers, so too is there a distinction between his text pieces and those of his contemporaries. The compositional path from detailed and precisely-notated scores, through scores allowing areas of choice, to text scores giving only generalised instructions was one taken by many of the avant garde in the period between the early 1950s and late 1960s. Cage went from *Music of Changes* to *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* to the *Variations* series, Stockhausen from *Kontra-Punkte* to *Refrain* to *Aus den sieben Tagen*, Cardew from *Three Winter Potatoes* to *Octet '61* to *The Tiger's Mind*, Wolff from *For Piano* to the *Duos* to the *Prose Collection*: all of them moving from a position in which the performer was a mere executant, through one in which he was expected to exercise his judgement and discretion in controlling the continuity of the music, to one in which he became a collaborator in every area of compositional decision-making, except that of initiation. What is remarkable about the *Prose Collection* is the degree of control Wolff retains over the final result. Whereas Stockhausen has felt

it necessary to produce official versions of the *Aus den sieben Tagen* pieces, to create an approved performing tradition for the work, the pieces of the *Prose Collection* will inevitably sound like music by Christian Wolff, as long as his instructions are observed conscientiously.

As with the works of this type by Stockhausen and Cardew, Wolff's text pieces represent a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of his compositional concerns. Indeed although, like them, he produced further pieces such as *Toss* for eight or more players (1968), which carry on the methods of earlier pieces (*Spiral* (1966) and *Schooltime Compositions* (1968) are equivalents in the outputs of Stockhausen and Cardew respectively), the *Prose Collection* nevertheless marks the end of an era in Wolff's career. As he said later,

My feeling in the fifties was that . . . everything was being done from square one . . . Every few months practically you would hear somebody doing something that had never been done before. It seemed inevitable that the situation, as it involves just sound, would exhaust itself – and I think it has. Practically everything's been done now . . . there's a desire now to come back and get reconnected to what most people have been trained for.<sup>23</sup>

This desire expressed itself at around the same time in the work of many composers – Cardew wrote *The Great Learning*, Stockhausen wrote *Mantra*, and Wolff wrote *Burdocks* – and for many of these composers the new element rediscovered was melody. In 'How to Kick, Pass, Fall and Run' Cage recounts a conversation with Wolff in the 1950s when Wolff said 'No matter what we do it ends by being melodic';<sup>24</sup> but, paradoxically, the very qualities of Wolff's indeterminate music – its aperiodicity, its sudden bursts of activity, its hesitancy – make it curiously unmelodic. Consequently, to introduce melody in *Burdocks* Wolff has to introduce some major notational changes and, to a certain extent, abandon the practices characteristic of its predecessors in favour of more conventional notation, especially for duration. The result, to quote Cage again, is a music in which 'the sounds . . . are rather often . . . in little rhythmic and/or melodic groups, which appear quite clearly as "musical" in the sense of musical conventions of the past.'<sup>25</sup>

## The 1970s

Everything Wolff has produced since *Burdocks*, written for any instruments in 1970-1, uses much more conventional notations. While this does not invalidate the earlier music, it is the result of a shift in his aesthetic: from one which regarded musical performance as an activity in which the social interaction of musicians produced sounds, to one which intends that the sounds produced should also have an expressive content over and above their intrinsic quality as sounds themselves. The more recent music, although no longer concerned with creating situations in which sounds are produced exclusively for their own sake, has, however, retained the notion of musical performance as a dynamic, social activity. This is perhaps most notably so in *Exercises 1-14* for any number of instruments (1973-4), in which 'rhythm and speed, articulation, amplitude, color, and modes of playing are all flexible'.<sup>26</sup> Since all the players are attempting to play the same line in unison,

any player may try to establish what the point of reference for unison is at any point in the course of

playing. If, however, a movement by a player, say, in the direction of faster is not generally picked up by the rest, he must return to the prevailing speed.

In *Braverman Music I and II* for chamber ensemble (1978) a different type of ensemble democracy is required: Wolff suggests that the players should decide who

will play any given note or phrase . . . so that a minimum version representing all the written pitches . . . is predetermined . . . the other instruments . . . are then free to double . . . any of these notes. In other words, these other instruments are free to provide a further orchestration.<sup>27</sup>

It is in these pieces written since 1972 that Wolff has to some extent parted company with the composer to whom he was perhaps closest, John Cage. In a footnote to his remarks on Wolff in *For the Birds* Cage says,

I admire the recent music too but not its concern with power, with political subject matter.<sup>28</sup>

Yet it could be argued that the recent music's attempts at the expression of political ideas does no more than externalise the internal 'democracy' of the earlier music. In this, Wolff's music has always been at odds with that of Cage, for although both composers shared the aim of letting sounds be themselves, of giving 'musical' sounds no more, no less significance than 'natural' sounds, performance practice in their music is quite different. Cage's instruction in the score of *Variations II* that notations should 'refer to what is to be done, not what is to be heard' is Wolff-like, but nowhere in Cage's indeterminate music are players required by these notations to co-operate with one another. In Cage, the performer is bound by the clock or, in *Concert* and *Atlas eclipticalis*, by a conductor impersonating a clock; his experience is essentially an isolated one without even the severely circumscribed ensemble sense of traditional orchestral playing. It is this, surely, which has led to the outbreaks of 'foolishness' in Cage's large ensemble pieces. When Cage says of the disastrous 1958 Cologne performance of *Concert* that he 'must find a way to let people be free without their becoming foolish'<sup>29</sup> he misses the point: the sounds may have been freed but, for the players producing these sounds, what freedom the piece offers is for them the freedom of solitary confinement rather than that of liberation. In Wolff's music each performer has to be alert to his colleagues at all times, in order to fulfil the composer's instructions, always ready to respond to their playing. To draw comparisons with traditional western ensemble music-making, the experience of playing Cage could be seen as an impoverished version of orchestral playing, that of playing Wolff as an enhanced version of chamber music playing.

## Indeterminacy in retrospect

The music I have focused on in this article is now perhaps Wolff's least well-known music, perhaps because of the very demands of co-operation that it makes, demands which may seem to require a commitment of players' time and energy out of proportion to the size of the pieces. Certainly Wolff's more recent work, with its more conventional notation, is more regularly played in Europe than the earlier pieces. At the turn of the decade, as the freedoms of the 1960s gave way to the more straitlaced manners of the 1970s, as graphic scores, proportional notation, verbal scores and intuitive

music gave way to a resurgence of conventional staff notation, it was hard to conceive of the relationship between the newest music and that which it succeeded as being anything other than reaction. But in retrospect it is clear that Wolff's revolution and its clear demonstration of the social dimension of music performance has not been without its consequences. To take an example from a music apparently quite removed from all this, Brian Ferneyhough's view of the function of his notations in the performance of *Cassandra's Dream Song* is in reality surprisingly close to that of Wolff. 'The notation,' he writes, 'does not represent the result required: it is the attempt to realise the written specifications in practice which is designed to produce the desired (but unnotatable) sound quality'.<sup>30</sup> 'Indeterminacy,' Wolff said at very much the same time, 'was a way of producing sounds I could see no other way of producing'.<sup>31</sup> What he has demonstrated is that it is simplistic for composers and musicians to regard the score as an absolute picture of the music intended: until these 'instructions for performers' are in use, providing stimulation for players and listeners, they are worthless. Wolff's creative idea, as expressed in 1982, is no bad one for a composer today:

To turn the making of music into a collaborative and transforming activity (performer into composer into listener into composer into performer, etc.), the co-operative character of the activity to be the exact source of the music. To stir up, through the production of the music, a sense of the political conditions in which we live and of how these might be changed, in the direction of democratic socialism.<sup>32</sup>

Christian Wolff, 'Movement', *Die Reihe*, no.2 (2nd, revised, English edition, 1959), p.63. (This article was originally written in English, but first published in the original German edition of *Die Reihe*, no.2 in 1955.)

<sup>2</sup> Wolff, with Victor Schonfield, 'Taking Chances', *Music and Musicians*, vol.XVII, no.9 (May 1969), p.40.

<sup>3</sup> John Cage, 'Composition as Process, II. Indeterminacy', *Silence* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961; Cambridge, Mass. and London: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), pp.38-9.

<sup>4</sup> The exact date of this performance is a little hard to determine, as indeed is the work's date of composition. In an interview with Martin Daske in *MusikTexte*, no.4 (April 1984) pp.40-45, Wolff gives the year of the first performance as 1954; in the 1969 *Music and Musicians* article/interview with Victor Schonfield (see footnote 2 above) he gives 1956, as quoted near the beginning of the present article. To confuse matters still further, the composer's 'official' worklist in the version published in *MusikTexte*, no.4 dates the composition of *Duo for Pianists I* as 1957 and its premiere as being in the spring of that year; this seems the most likely. This piece is not, of course, to be confused with *Duo for Pianists II*, as the 'official' worklist calls it, which is the subject of discussion in the Cage quotation referenced in footnote 3. All titles of works in this article conform to those given in Wolff's own typewritten worklist compiled originally in 1977.

<sup>5</sup> Cage, 'Experimental Music: Doctrine', *Silence*, op.cit., p.13.

<sup>6</sup> Wolff, with Schonfield, 'Taking Chances', op.cit., p.39.

<sup>7</sup> Wolff, 'On Form', *Die Reihe*, no.7 (English edition, 1965), pp.26-31. (Like Wolff's earlier article for the journal (see footnote 1), this was originally written in English but first published in the German edition, *Die Reihe*, no.7 (1960).)

<sup>8</sup> Cage, 'How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run', *A Year from Monday* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1967), p.133.

<sup>9</sup> Wolff, *Duo for Pianists I*, instruction sheet.

<sup>10</sup> Wolff, 'On Form', op.cit., p.10.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>12</sup> Wolff, *For Pianist*, instruction sheet.

<sup>13</sup> Wolff, 'On Form', p.26.

<sup>14</sup> Cage, *For the Birds* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1976), p.201.

<sup>15</sup> Wolff in interview with Martin Daske, 'eine welt, die anders orientiert wäre', *MusikTexte*, no.4, op.cit., p.40. (This and the two later quotations from this interview have been translated for the present article by Barbara Fox.)

<sup>16</sup> Wolff, *Duet II*, instruction sheet. The following four quotations are also taken from this source.

<sup>17</sup> Wolff, *In Between Pieces*, instruction sheet.

<sup>18</sup> Wolff in interview with Daske, op.cit., p.41.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and beyond* (London: Studio Vista, 1974), p.97.

<sup>20</sup> Wolff, with Schonfield, 'Taking Chances', op.cit., p.40.

<sup>21</sup> Wolff in interview with Daske, op.cit., p.41.

<sup>22</sup> Earle Brown, 'Serial Music Today' (1966); reprinted in *Breaking the Sound Barrier*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981), p.101.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Keith Potter, 'Christian Wolff in Manchester', *Music and Musicians*, vol.XXIII, no.4 (December 1974), p.8.

<sup>24</sup> Cage, *A Year from Monday*, op.cit., p.135.

<sup>25</sup> Cage, *For the Birds*, op.cit., p.199.

<sup>26</sup> This and the following quotation are taken from Wolff's instruction sheet for *Exercises 1-14*.

<sup>27</sup> Wolff, *Braverman Music*, instruction sheet.

<sup>28</sup> Cage, *For the Birds*, op.cit., p.199.

<sup>29</sup> Cage, *A Year from Monday*, op.cit., p.136.

<sup>30</sup> Brian Ferneyhough, *Cassandra's Dream Song* for solo flute (1970), instruction sheet.

<sup>31</sup> Wolff, with Schonfield, 'Taking Chances', op.cit., p.40.

<sup>32</sup> Wolff, in *Contemporary Music Catalogue* (New York: Edition Peters, 1982), p.89.

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# CHRISTIAN WOLFF

## *Braverman Music*

Four or more players  
Variable instrumentation  
P-66822

## *Cello Song Variations*

'Hallelujah, I'm a Bum'  
Cello solo  
P-66824

## *Hay una mujer desaparecida*

Piano solo  
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Michael Parsons

## Howard Skempton: Chorales, Landscapes and Melodies

Since the appearance of my previous article on Howard Skempton<sup>1</sup> there has been a steadily increasing interest in this composer's music, both in this country and abroad, which has resulted in a growing number of performances and commissions, as well as recent invitations to appear as composer and performer in Cologne (May 1983 and October 1985) and Vienna (May 1985). A major achievement has been *Chorales* for orchestra, written in 1980 in response to a commission from the Merseyside Youth Orchestra, which gave the first performance in 1982.<sup>2</sup>

With this growth of interest there are also new dangers. Skempton feels that creative energy may be dissipated if expended in too many directions; commissions may sometimes prove to be a distraction, especially if a composer is tempted to write for a variety of new media with insufficient time available for more than a cursory understanding of their possibilities. He is well aware of the risks of over-diversification, preferring, on the whole, to clarify and extend his knowledge of a limited number of media, in particular the solo piano and solo accordion, to both of which he has a long-standing commitment. This slow exploration in depth, over a long period, provides an intimate understanding of an instrument's resources which goes far beyond purely technical acquaintance. Self-discipline, restraint and economy of means have continued to be the prime characteristics of Skempton's music, which offers an exemplary illustration of Stravinsky's dictum that 'Music thus gains strength in the measure that it does not succumb to the seductions of variety'.<sup>3</sup>

A further danger, that of misrepresentation, may arise from increased exposure to performers and listeners who may not be familiar with Skempton's experimental background, and whose expectations have been formed by the mainstream of classical and avant-garde music, the habitual modes of performance associated with it, and the type of critical and interpretative writing which surrounds it. Discussion of much of today's music still presumes a close analogy with language. Even when the music is not overtly narrative or illustrative, it is tacitly assumed that a composer is 'saying something', putting forward an 'argument' which will evolve in a linear way. Drama and momentum are considered indispensable to such an evolution, whether it is seen in terms of developing a thematic discourse, as in the classical tradition, or of setting in motion and following through more abstract processes of transformation and interaction, as with Boulez, Carter or Ferneyhough.

Skempton's work is, in contrast and like most experimental music, essentially non-discursive. It is more akin to the spatial arts and especially to sculpture, where the object, while affected by variations of light, surroundings and the changing experience of the viewer, itself remains constant. It can suggest, paradoxically, an 'outside-time' experience which is reflective and contemplative,

but not hypnotic. The emphasis on the presence, quality and structure of sound, rather than on expression or argument (discourse), invites and requires a type of concentrated and attentive listening in which expectation of change is suspended and time is subjectively slowed down.

This type of listening is clearly distinct from the regressive, trance-like mode which can be induced by multiple repetition. With Skempton's music there is no loss of awareness; through association with intelligibility and clarity of structure, the contemplative mode is revalidated as a conscious form of understanding.

Walter Zimmermann, in a recently published article called 'Stillgehaltene Musik' (not yet available in English),<sup>4</sup> has described this quality in an illuminating way. The title-word 'stillgehaltene' (literally 'held-still') and the phrase 'bewegende Nicht-Bewegung' (moving non-movement) are both used to suggest the sense of a possible movement – restrained but not entirely suppressed, a hovering between stability and mobility – which is one of the central features of Skempton's music. The slow melodic oscillation around a still centre in *Campanella* 3 (Example 1) and the mobile-like, chance-determined sequence and recurrence of a few carefully chosen chords in *Eirenicon* 3 (Example 2) could well serve as illustrations for another phrase of Zimmermann's, 'der sich drehende Moment' (the moment turning back on itself). They also illustrate his statement that 'Just as Wittgenstein made recognisable the boundaries of language, so Skempton attempts to give us the experience of music, as an art of time, at its threshold of standstill' (my italics).<sup>5</sup>

The following dialogue with the composer is selected and adapted from several conversations which took place during August and September 1985.

### Chorales for orchestra

MICHAEL PARSONS: Can we begin by discussing *Chorales*? The form of the single movement is very clear: the three chorale sections for full orchestra, like pillars supporting a double-arch structure; and between them two melodies, a scherzo and three short interludes with translucent chamber scoring. What impresses me, looking at the score, is the lucidity of the instrumental writing, the subtle balance of individual sonorities. Every sound is carefully considered, and nothing is lost. There is an implicit exhortation to each player to listen attentively, as in the music of Cardew and Wolff, giving the work a quality which is often conspicuously absent from the current 'neo-expressionist' type of orchestral writing, which calls for a display of extreme technical virtuosity. One is never overwhelmed by an excess of sound; instead, there is a virtuosity of restraint. I am reminded of Webern (in the exchange of tone-colours following bars 100 and 165), as well as of Bartók and Messiaen (in the chromatic contour and harmonisation of the first

## Example 1 Campanella 3 for piano

for Giancarlo

Campanella 3 for piano

Howard Skempton

*gently* *a*

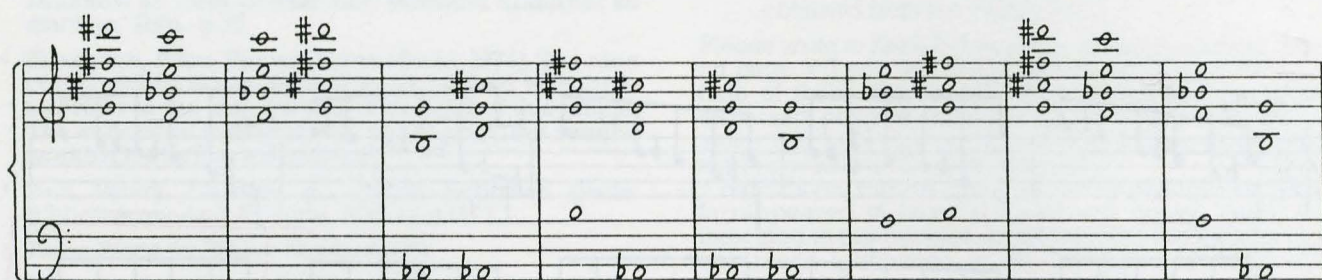
Oct. 1982

$110 + 6 + 9$

no A's or B's

Example 2 *Eirenicon* 3 for piano*Eirenicon* 3 for piano

Howard Skempton



12. June 1978

melody at figure B). But these are reminiscences rather than borrowings – the music never sounds eclectic.

Do you feel that with this work you achieved something substantially different from the earlier short pieces for solo piano and for small instrumental groups?

HOWARD SKEMPTON: No – it's essentially the same as what I was doing before, but on an orchestral scale. The sixteen chords which form the main chorales existed for a long time in open score; the material was 'quarried' almost a year before the work was written. The melody for violins (figure D) also existed independently as an accordion piece. *Chorales* is built up as a linked sequence of sections, each of which is closely related to a previous type of shorter piece.

MP: But there is also a strong sense of architecture in the large-scale form. The transitions from one section to another are beautifully managed, so that the piece never sounds episodic.

HS: This linking of sections is also related to the way any of the individual piano pieces can be grouped in performance. Rather than playing them as isolated single pieces, the performer may choose to arrange them in linked sequences, paying attention to the way one follows another in terms of pitch, texture and movement, and to the balance of the group as a whole. This has, in fact, become the way they are now usually performed.

### Solo piano works

MP: The piano pieces continue to be a central concern. Musicians who are not familiar with your work are sometimes puzzled by the absence of specific indications of tempo and dynamics, as in *Eirenicon* 3 and in some of the pieces in the Faber collection.<sup>6</sup> Is there a danger that this may appear to offer licence for types of performance which differ widely from your intentions? There have been, for example, fast and loud versions of *First Prelude*...

HS: It's a risk you have to take. One trusts the performer to be sympathetic. The absence of instructions will leave an unprepared performer at a loss, and a thoughtless or antagonistic player could always abuse the piece by taking advantage of the lack of instructions. But, on the positive side, the performer is encouraged to think carefully and to assume full responsibility for the choice of how to play the music. Each performance situation is different, subject to practical conditions over which the composer has no control. There is a point beyond which the composer should not go.

MP: Isn't the absence of instructions also itself a positive indication? I am reminded of a remark by Paul Valéry, to the effect that one's actions are best defined by what one abstains from doing.<sup>7</sup> When we were discussing a recent piano piece<sup>8</sup> – eventually notated, like so many of your works, in even notes without rhythmic inflection – I remember that, having considered the possibility of indicating nuances of performance by means of varying time signatures, tied grace notes and pedalling indications, you decided to write none of these things, but to leave the score 'clean'.

HS: The 'clean' score is crucial. It clarifies structure and emphasises what is purely musical. As in constructive art, form and content are identified. The score exemplifies the underlying principle on

which different performances are based, and provides a model for any and every realisation.

MP: So it's up to the performer to deduce from the notation, and from the absence of qualifying instructions, how a particular piece is to be played?<sup>9</sup>

HS: Yes.

MP: It's very refreshing to come across scores which are not overloaded with phrasing, articulation and dynamic markings. It gives the performer room to breathe; it also makes clear the distinction between composition and performance.

What about arrangements for different instruments? Some of the pieces exist in different instrumental forms,<sup>10</sup> and a number of recent pieces are written in open score. I have myself made versions of some of the piano pieces, including *First Prelude* and *Slow Waltz*, for small groups of instruments.<sup>11</sup>

HS: One hopes that the pieces will be as useful and accessible as possible. New situations may arise which could not have been foreseen, and the pieces may evolve in response to this. *Recessional* (Example 3) is a case in point; here no instrumentation is specified. It has been performed as an accordion solo and, on several occasions, with the addition of a stringed instrument (violin, cello or double bass) which doubles the upper part one octave below the written pitch.

MP: Some of the piano pieces, on the other hand, are difficult to imagine in any other form; the first three *Eirenicons*, for example, which seem essentially to do with the resonance of the piano. One must be careful not to offer a 'blank cheque' for any kind of instrumental arrangement.

A recent piano work, *The Durham Strike* (Example 4), written in 1985 for John Tilbury, differs from your previous piano pieces in being sectional, like a set of variations. And yet the relationship between the theme, a traditional folk tune from north-east England, and each of the other sections is by no means obvious. Do you think of this as a theme and variations?

HS: Yes, but the variations are obliquely related. I think of the piece again as a sequence of linked sections, for which I was able to use the theme as a starting point. There are six sections, and the theme appears only in sections 1 and 3. Section 2 is a variation 'once removed', and the material of section 4 existed previously, as an independent sequence of descending chords.

MP: As with *Chorales*, the continuity from one section to another seems both logical and natural, yet here the sequence is looser and more relaxed; each section has a distinct and independent character of its own. Section 5 gives the impression of a rather remote interlude, and in section 6 there is a new melodic idea, related to the opening phrase of the original theme but continuing quite differently.

HS: I do not like to vary or 'develop' the theme; it has its own integrity, which must be preserved. I try to allow the material to speak for itself, without pushing it around. This is getting close to Feldman! So it could be described as an assemblage of related short pieces, an association of similars; a society of smaller pieces in which each individual retains its own identity.

But this is a very 'traditional' approach? piano-dominated...

Example 3 *Recessional* (open score)

*Recessional*                      Howard Skempton

Oct. 1983

## Solo accordion works

MP: There have been a number of new accordion pieces since 1980, haven't there?

HS: There is an external reason for this. In 1981 I moved from Ealing to Clapham, where I was able to practise. Up till then I had played only the twelve-button accordion; at that time I became interested in extending my playing and, as a step towards the full-size instrument, I acquired a 48-button accordion, which has a much wider range, including minor, seventh and diminished chords as well as more major ones. Two of the movements in the 1982 *Suite* for accordion require the extra resources of the larger instrument.

MP: But more recently, in your own performances, you have reverted to the twelve-button instrument.

HS: Yes, the smaller instrument is considerably lighter, and this means that one has more control of the bellows, which can be fully extended. This increased flexibility allows for more dynamic subtlety and greater expressiveness.

MP: Zimmermann in his article also refers to your accordion playing; he describes the slow opening and closing of the bellows as an example of 'moving non-movement'.<sup>12</sup> He suggests that in your hands, through the way this elementary character of its 'breathing' is exposed, the instrument approaches 'the generality of a sound-object'. Many of the accordion pieces appear to be popular, even traditional, in style, but at the same time they are highly abstract. It is not only the directness and economy of the material which create this overall impression, but also the sense of concentrated attention in your playing. There is always a respect for the amount of time needed to perform each action and, as a result, the music is spacious and unhurried, reflective in a way that gives it a distance, even detachment, from its popular associations. But to return to the accordion itself – you were suggesting that the greater flexibility of the smaller instrument more than compensates for the limited range of only six major chords. I am tempted to quote again from Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music*: '... my freedom will be so much the greater and more meaningful the more narrowly I limit my field of action and the more I surround myself with obstacles. Whatever diminishes constraint, diminishes strength. The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees one's self of the chains that shackle the spirit'.<sup>13</sup> Is it a case of 'less is more'?

HS: The advantage of working with a limited amount of material is that you can keep it constantly in mind and feel at home with it. Once it's there, you're stuck with it! This gives the imagination sufficient time to explore it in depth, and allows it to find its strongest and purest form.

MP: I wonder how many other composers can remember everything they have written?

HS: Satie perhaps? I'm sure he never regretted a single note.

MP: What you say recalls Brancusi, one of whose aphorisms I quoted at the end of my earlier *Contact* article on your music.<sup>14</sup> One can visit his studio in Paris, which has been reconstructed as it was left at the time of his death in 1957. There are many examples of sculpture from different periods of his life, and it can be clearly seen how he constantly

returned to the same few themes – making different versions of them, with slight variations, over a long period. Is there an affinity here, in the search for the essential form of the image?

HS: If there is an affinity, it lies in the constant preoccupation with material and structure. Chorales, landscapes and melodies are the central concerns which recur in my own work. By having several parallel and related concerns, one retains a freshness of insight as one is drawn back to each of these in turn.

## Chorales and landscapes – the experimental tradition

MP: How has the chorale come to assume such significance for you?

HS: The material almost invariably comes in the form of chords, and the chorale is a way of presenting this primary harmonic material in its strongest form, without embellishment. The chorales generally have a clear melodic shape, and there is a sense of movement arising from harmonic tensions in the material, which is often chromatic. *Postlude* (Example 5) is a chorale.

MP: What distinction would you make between the chorales and the pieces which you describe as 'landscapes'?

HS: The landscapes simply project the material as sound, without momentum. They are more static; they are concerned exclusively with the structure and quality of the sounds in themselves. Sequence is not important and is sometimes chance-determined, as in the early pieces such as *A Humming Song*, *September Song* and *Snowpiece*.

MP: How would you define the characteristics of the 'landscapes'? In the past you have sometimes used the phrase 'spacious flatness'. They are obviously not illustrative in any literal way. Perhaps they are metaphorical landscapes, more to do with a mental imagery of space.

HS: There is no sense of forward movement in the landscapes; each chord is self-sufficient. They express a state rather than a progression. The spaces are more important than the features – the openness of the chords evokes spaciousness. The sounds are given as much time as they need. The recurrence of identical chords at different points in a piece is also a spatial feature, in that it contradicts the listener's expectation of events as an ongoing sequence. *Eirenicon 3* is a landscape.

MP: Isn't this sense of landscape also very much part of the experimental tradition? There are Cage's *Imaginary Landscapes*, in which sounds and silences are presented discontinuously, within a structure of predetermined time-lengths. The discontinuity enables one to hear the sounds freshly, without always anticipating where they are leading. But in your pieces, instead of discontinuity there is a more subtle displacement of expectation. In *Eirenicon 3*, though the movement between chords is unpredictable, they are all part of a related set. It's a field-situation where each of the six possible chords may be followed by any of the others, or may recur itself.

HS: Then there are the 'plateaux' of sound which Cardew used to refer to in Feldman's early work – in *Two Pianos*, for instance – where a single chord, or a short sequence of notes, is repeated several times; this is another spatial image.<sup>15</sup>

## Example 4 The Durham Strike for piano

for John Tilbury

## THE DURHAM STRIKE

Howard Skempton

*Slowly*

*Ped. pp*

(pedalling free to the end)

Handwritten musical score on page 23, featuring ten staves of music in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

The first four staves contain complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. The fifth staff begins with a measure in 3/4 time. The sixth staff continues with similar rhythmic complexity. The seventh staff features a measure with a 4/4 time signature. The eighth staff includes a measure with a 4/4 time signature. The ninth staff includes a measure with a 4/4 time signature. The tenth staff includes a measure with a 4/4 time signature.

Dynamic markings include *Smorz.* (Sforzando) and *h<sub>2</sub>p.* (half piano).

*Extremely Slowly*

January 1985

Example 5 *Postlude* for piano

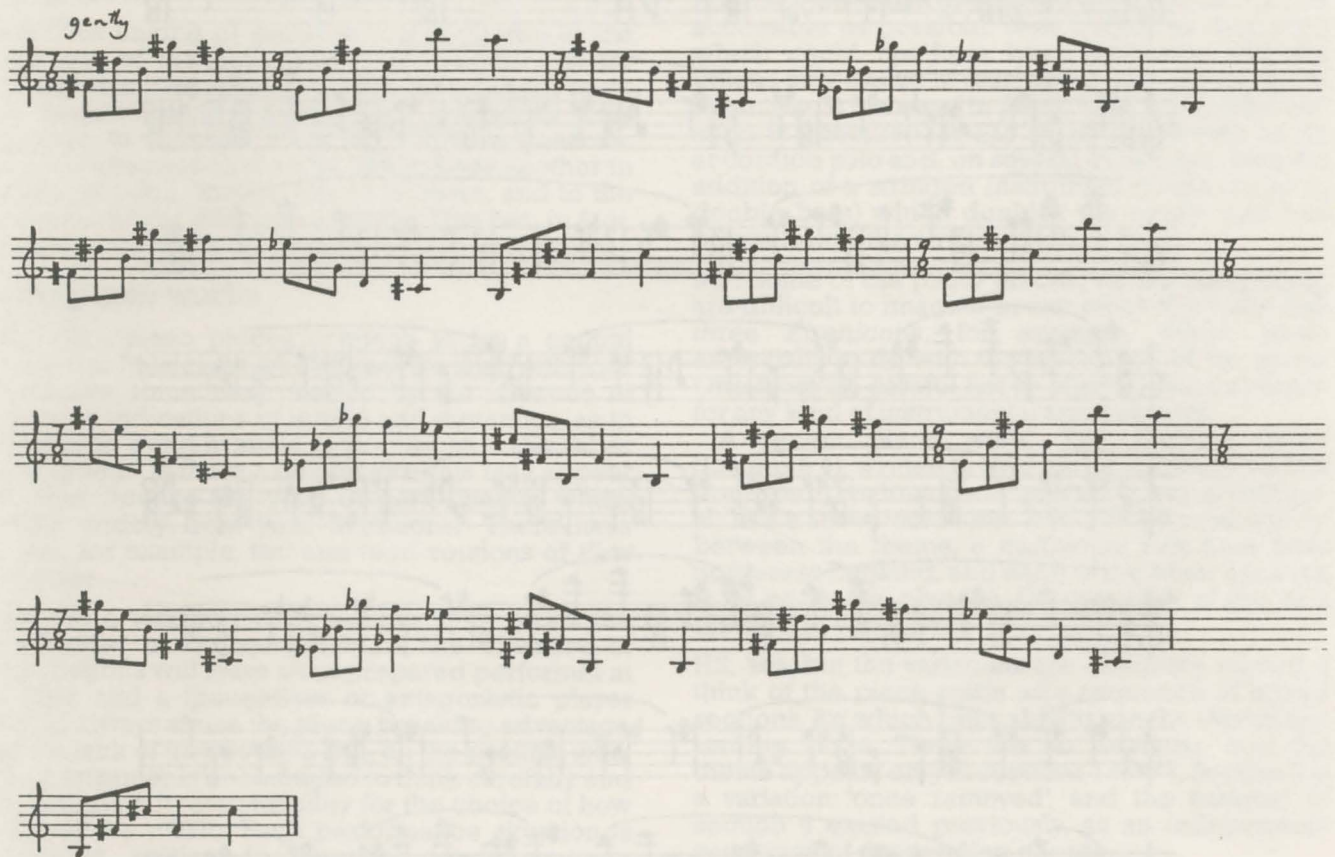
$O = 4''$       *POSTLUDE for piano*      *Howard Skerpton*

12. XI. 78

## Example 6 Trace for piano

TRACE for piano — right hand

Howard Skempton



for Peter Hill 27.8.80

## Example 7 Bagatelle for flute

for Sue

Bagatelle for flute

Howard Skempton

March 1985

MP: This awareness of space has always been a distinguishing feature of experimental music. Other forms of new music seem overcrowded in comparison, as if reflecting the image of an acquisitive society whose streets are jammed with vehicles, and whose TV screens are choked with information and entertainment. Every moment has to be crammed with stimuli, as if space were there only to be filled up. I see your music, on the other hand, as a way of creating space, both for the performer and for the listener. Not pushing the sounds around means also not pushing the listener around.

HS: Yes; the need to create space is of central importance. It is a reaction to pressure and congestion; it is a contemporary need, both in musical and social terms.

MP: In detaching itself from the European tradition, experimental music opened up a dialogue with the visual and spatial arts; as well as the relationship of Cage and Feldman with Merce Cunningham and with the New York painters, there is La Monte Young's connection with land artists such as Walter de Maria. Young's *Composition 1960 No.10*, 'Draw a straight line and follow it', is an image of spatial extension. He also describes 'the resonance from the natural characteristics of particular geographic areas such as valleys, lakes and plains'<sup>16</sup> as being among the sound experiences which influenced his development — another landscape reference.

HS: We must draw a distinction here: it is not any kind of mystical feeling for landscape as such, but rather the conscious perception of relationships which creates an awareness of space. Whereas the American music of the 1950s and 60s was closer to abstract expressionism — to the unmeasured space of Rothko's paintings, for example — we are now more consciously concerned with structure and measurement. You get a sense of space in 'Draw a straight line and follow it', but it is not limited and defined.<sup>17</sup> It's here that the link with systems art and constructivism becomes crucial. It is through structure and measurement that we create space.

MP: So there is a direct connection between the use of systems and the definition and articulation of space?

HS: Yes; and the use of systematic methods means that we are not oppressed by having to make decisions of taste and expression. Without the control of an external discipline, self-expression may enrich, but it can also overload and suffocate. The use of an objective decision-making procedure is a way of achieving a necessary distance between oneself and one's work.

### Melodies in musical space

MP: What about the melodies? They seem generally to move back and forth over a very limited range of notes, sometimes within a confined harmonic area, as in *Campanella 3*; some of the more recent ones, like *Trace* for piano (Example 6) and *Bagatelle* for flute (Example 7), are purely monodic.

HS: The great attraction of monody lies in its limitations. There are fewer variables. The subtlety of plainsong or Indian music lies in its movement within a restricted range. Whereas in the chorales the aim is to achieve gravity and in the landscapes to explore the quality of sound, the melodies are

concerned more with suppleness and flexibility of movement.

MP: Can you be more specific about the means to achieve this? Is it a more intuitive approach, or are there external controls?

HS: The use of additive rhythm is one means. It allows for shifts of emphasis — any durational value can be expressed in additive combinations of twos and threes. One can refer to pulse without being dominated by it.

MP: So, again, measurement is important?

HS: Yes; it's interesting that the Americans call their bars 'measures'. I would not be in the least interested in writing an unmeasured melody. Pitch and duration can be precisely measured, and this is what the composer is primarily concerned with. It is important to define a specific range of pitches. *Bagatelle* for flute is serial; each of the twelve notes appears the same number of times.

MP: But it does not go through the usual serial manipulations — transposition and inversion and so forth. Instead of variation there is recurrence, which is more modal than serial in the accepted sense. The rhythmic interplay of phrases of unequal length is particularly subtle here, as it keeps returning to and going over the same limited pitch-range. In this sense it is also like defining a space by approaching it from different directions.

HS: I think of melody as tracing a path through a landscape. It's an exploration in terms of intervals and durations.

MP: Are there any models we can refer to? What about Varèse's *Density 21.5* for flute? Here is an example of how pitch-space can be delineated with a single line. There is a sense of discovering a space — or rather, a linked sequence of interlocking spaces opening out from each other.

HS: *Density 21.5* is a marvellous example. The spatial quality is made clear if one thinks of the pitches as points of reference. Whereas the intervallic movement from one note to the next is linear, the vertical relationship of pitches considered as points of reference is outside time, and therefore spatial.

MP: Wolff has noted this also in Webern, in the *Piano Variations* and the First Cantata, and in the first movement of the Symphony, where the linear canons are dissolved into spatial relationships.<sup>18</sup> We must remember that Webern was a crucial influence on American experimental composers of the 1950s and 60s: it was not the serial aspect, but the definition of points in space which interested them. Young speaks of the discovery of 'stasis' in Webern.<sup>19</sup>

HS: So the suspension of time in experimental music is not a weakness but, on the contrary, one of its greatest strengths. It is through the suspension of time that we discover space.

MP: There are many possible dimensions in musical space. If one is not thinking exclusively in terms of argument and linear development, differences of pitch, timbre, loudness, duration and moment of entry may all be experienced as spatial values. And in your music, where some aspects of the structure are intentionally left open, the performer and listener are invited to participate in the creation of musical space. So it is also a matter

of social space. In common with experimental music generally, your work re-establishes the dialogue which other forms of new music have lost, and creates space for communication.

<sup>1</sup> Michael Parsons, 'The Music of Howard Skempton', *Contact 21* (Autumn 1980), pp.12-16.

<sup>2</sup> Reviewed by Calum MacDonald in *Tempo*, no.142 (September 1982), p.41.

<sup>3</sup> Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*, bilingual edition, trans. Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), p.43.

<sup>4</sup> 'Stillgehaltene Musik: Zu Howard Skempton's Kompositionen', *MusikTexte*, no.3 (February 1984), pp.35-7. All translations from this that follow are my own.

<sup>5</sup> 'So wie Wittgenstein die Sprache an ihren Grenzen erkennbar machte, versucht Skempton Musik als Zeitkunst an ihrer Grenze zum Stillstand erfahrbar zu machen.' Ibid., p.35.

<sup>6</sup> Skempton, *Piano Pieces* (Faber Music, 1974). The nine compositions in this collection are marked with three asterisks in the list of works at the end of this article. The collection is temporarily out of print, but see the worklist for further information.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Valéry, *Cahiers*, ed. Judith Robinson (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1973-4), p.1373.

<sup>8</sup> *Piano Piece for Trevor Clarke* (1985).

<sup>9</sup> For an interpreter's view, see Peter Hill, 'Riding the Thermals - Howard Skempton's Piano Music', *Tempo*, no.148 (March 1984), pp.8-11.

<sup>10</sup> For example, *Second Gentle Melody* for piano (1975) was originally written in open score (1974); Parsons and Skempton played it on baritone horn and accordion in 1975. *Wedding Tune* for violin and autoharp (1983) is also played by the composer as a solo accordion piece. *Slow Waltz* for piano (three hands) (1973) was originally conceived as an accordion solo earlier the same year and subsequently played (though never written down) in this form.

<sup>11</sup> For student groups in the Department of Fine Art, Portsmouth Polytechnic in 1978: *First Prelude* (1971) was transposed up a perfect fourth and arranged for flute, clarinet, violin, viola and cello; *Slow Waltz* was arranged for flute, viola and cello. The latter has also been arranged for cello and piano by Alan Brett (1985).

<sup>12</sup> Zimmermann, op.cit., p.36.

<sup>13</sup> Stravinsky, op.cit., p.87.

<sup>14</sup> 'Simplicity is not a goal, but one arrives at simplicity in spite of oneself, as one approaches the real meaning of things.' In Parsons, op.cit., p.16.

<sup>15</sup> In Cornelius Cardew, 'Notation - Interpretation', *Tempo*, no.58 (Summer 1961), p.33, a passage from Feldman's *Two Pianos* is quoted (bars 24-67), with indications that a single chord is to be played seven times, and a passage of seven bars four times. This differs from the published version of the score (Edition Peters, 1962), which contains fewer repetitions and is unbarred. The passage quoted by Cardew is presumably taken from an earlier, unpublished version. Another clear example of this 'plateau' effect can be found in Feldman's *Extensions III* for piano (1952).

<sup>16</sup> La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, *Selected Writings* (Munich: Heiner Friedrich, 1969), unpaginated.

<sup>17</sup> For Skempton's comments on performing this piece, see Parsons, op.cit., p.14.

<sup>18</sup> Christian Wolff, 'Movement', *Die Reihe*, no.2 (2nd, revised, English edition, 1959), pp.61-3.

<sup>19</sup> Young and Zazeela, op.cit..

## Selected Works

This list is arranged by year, but within each year pieces have been grouped according to instrumentation rather than chronologically. Thus solo piano pieces come first (48 out of the 131 works by Skempton listed here are for a single pianist), then pieces for piano (three hands), then other works for solo instruments (starting with those for solo accordion, the composer's other main instrument as a performer), then duos, trios, etc.; all, of course, as appropriate to each year.

Pieces published in conjunction with this article/interview have been marked in the worklist with a single asterisk. Fourteen other pieces by Skempton can be obtained through *Contact* under two separate headings as follows:

\*\* indicates the five pieces published in conjunction with Michael Parsons' previous article on the composer in *Contact 21* (Autumn 1980)

\*\*\* indicates the nine works for solo piano published in a special collection entitled *Piano Pieces* by Faber Music in 1974. Copies of this may currently be obtained from the composer.

Please write to Keith Potter at the editorial address given on page 3 if you are interested in purchasing either or both of these. Prices will have to take account of the necessary postage and packing, but a copy of *Contact 21* alone can be obtained by sending a cheque for £2.50 made payable to 'Contact Magazine'.

In addition, eleven other pieces by Skempton have so far appeared in other journals and books. These are indicated in the worklist as follows, with the exception of one piece (published in the collection in *Soundings*, no.10) which the composer has now withdrawn:

+ indicates the single work published both by the Experimental Music Catalogue (1972) and in Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (London: Studio Vista, 1974), p.145.

++ indicates the four pieces published in the American magazine *Soundings*, no.10 (1976).

+++ indicates the three pieces published in conjunction with Walter Zimmermann's article on the composer in *MusikTexte*, no.3 (February 1984), to which reference is made in Parsons' text above.

++++ indicates the two pieces published in conjunction with the interview with Skempton in Kevin Volans, *Summer Gardeners: Conversations with Composers* (Durban: Newer Music Edition, 1985).

- 1967 A Humming Song for piano\*\*\* 1
- 1968 Snowpiece for piano + 2  
September Song for piano\*\*\* 3
- 1969 Piano Piece 1969 4  
African Melody for cello
- 1970 Waltz for piano + + + 5  
Two Highland Dances for piano 6  
North Wind for soprano saxophone
- 1971 First Prelude for piano\*\*\* 7  
Prelude for horn + +  
May Pole for orchestra (open score)
- 1972 One for Molly for piano\*\*\* 8  
Quavers for piano\*\*\* 9  
Simple Piano Piece\*\*\* 10  
Not-very-long Song for voice and accordion  
Lament (open score) + +
- 1973 Intermezzo for piano\*\*\* 11  
Sweet Chariot for piano 12  
Riding the Thermals for piano\*\*\* 13  
Eirenicon for piano + + 14  
Rumba for piano 15  
Slow Waltz for piano (three hands)\*\*\*  
Bends for cello

- 1974 One for Martha for piano\*\* 16  
 Quavers 2 for piano\*\* 17  
 senza licenza for piano 18  
 Invention for piano 19  
 Tender Melody for piano 20  
 Gentle Melody for accordion + +  
 Heart Sounds for two voices  
 Embers 2 for two voices  
 Equal Measures for two drums  
 Drum Canon for two drums
- 1975 Second Gentle Melody for piano 21  
 Colonnade for piano 22  
 Quavers 3 for piano 23  
 passing fancy for piano 24  
 Deeply Shaded for accordion  
 Summer Waltz for accordion  
 Ada's Dance for accordion  
 Surface Tension for flute, cello and piano  
 Surface Tension 2 for flute, cello and piano  
 Two Drum Trios  
 Prelude for flute and string trio
- 1976 Chorale for piano 25  
 Surface Tension 3 for piano 26  
 One for the Road for accordion\*\*  
 Duet for piano and woodblocks  
 Drum Canon 2 for two drums  
 Acacia for two drums  
 Impromptu for two baritone horns  
 Autumn Waltz for two baritone horns\*\*  
 Hornplay for two baritone horns
- 1977 June '77 for piano 27  
 Eirenicon 2 for piano 28  
 Saltaire Melody for piano 29  
 Children's Dance for accordion and piano
- 1978 Eirenicon 3 for piano\* 30  
 Postlude for piano\* 31  
 Memento for piano 32  
 Merry-go-round for accordion  
 Pendulum for accordion + + +  
 Summer Sketches for accordion  
 Tuba da caccia for tuba  
 Intermezzo for viola and horn  
 Air Melody (open score)
- 1979 Friday's Child for piano 33  
 Air for piano\*\* 34  
 Melody for a First Christmas for flute  
 Melody for horn  
 Scherzo for two horns  
 Trio for three horns
- 1980 Trace for piano\* 35  
 Break for two drums  
 Fabric for two drums  
 Preamble for two drums  
 Song at the Year's Turning for four-part mixed  
 chorus (words: R.S. Thomas)  
 Chorales for orchestra
- 1981 Campanella for piano 36  
 Outline for piano (three hands)  
 Breather for cello
- 1982 Campanella 2 for piano 37  
 Well, Well, Cornelius for piano + + + + 38  
 Seascape for piano 39  
 Campanella 3 for piano\* 40  
 Suite for accordion  
 Prelude for violin  
 Alice is One for voice and piano  
 Tree Sequence (1981-2) for voice, piano and  
 woodblocks: From the Palm Trees; Willow;  
 Laburnum; Mountain Ash; Duet (1976)  
 Highland Melody (open score)
- 1983 Beginner for piano + + + 41  
 Breathing Space for accordion  
 Call for clarinet  
 Wedding Tune for violin and autoharp  
 Lullaby for clarinet and cello  
 Second Tree Sequence for voice and piano:  
 Tree, leafless; Under the Elder; Aspen Trees

Pigs could Fly for voice and piano  
 The Gipsy Wife's Song for mezzo-soprano, flute,  
 oboe, vibraphone and piano (words: Bevan  
 Jones, after D.H. Lawrence)  
 Recessional (open score)\*  
 Christmas Melody (open score)

- 1984 Quavers 5 for piano 42  
 Twin Set and Pearls for accordion  
 Cakes and Ale for accordion + + + +  
 A Card for Lucy for clarinet  
 May Air for bassoon  
 Fanfare and Caprice for guitar  
 Lyric for cello and piano
- 1985 The Durham Strike for piano\* 43  
 Piano Piece for Trevor Clarke  
 Campanella 4 for piano 44  
 Eirenicon 4 for piano 45  
 Second Suite for accordion  
 Third Suite for accordion  
 Small Change for accordion  
 Home and Abroad for accordion  
 Bagatelle for flute\*  
 Song without Words for horn and accordion  
 Agreement for two drums  
 Pineapple Melody for horn, accordion and  
 double bass  
 Alone and Together for clarinet, bassoon and  
 piano
- 1986 The Mold Riots for piano 46  
 Resolution for piano 47  
 Something of an Occasion for accordion  
 Axis for accordion  
 Axis 2 for accordion  
 Two Interludes for accordion and vibraphone  
 Two Voices (male voices)  
 Finding Home for clarinet, cello, glockenspiel  
 and piano  
 From Waterloo Bridge for mixed chorus and two  
 pianos (words: John Mackie)  
 Two Preludes for string orchestra  
 Suite for Strings (string orchestra or string  
 quintet)

All music examples are complete pieces and are reproduced by kind permission of the composer.

Two recently released records include music by Skempton. The two *Tree Sequences* can be found on a disc entitled 'Slower than Molasses', on which the performers are Janet Sherbourne and Mark Lockett; this also contains two songs by Michael Parsons and works by Glyn Bush and the performers themselves; the record number is Practical 3, and it can be obtained from Practical Music, 502 Chester Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B73 5HL. Ten solo piano pieces of Skempton's are included on a disc of piano music played by Peter Hill; this also contains works by Nigel Osborne and Douglas Young; the record number is Merlin MRF 86585, and it can be obtained from Merlin Distribution, 29 Brickle Road, Norwich NR14 8NG.

Roger Heaton

## The Performer's Point of View<sup>1</sup>

Looking through a random batch of recently published scores for possible review is an interesting and thought-focusing experience, especially for someone who, unlike the more usual 'academic' reviewer, has actually played in public performances of some of the pieces involved. It has proved sufficiently thought-focusing for me to decide to write not a straightforward review of them, but a rather more general article of a quite different kind.

Performers are generally not the most objective judges of new works when, particularly with the limited rehearsal time one has in Britain, they are concerned primarily with the problems of their own part. With the inevitable single performance, players seldom have the luxury of progressing beyond simply putting the right notes in the right place with the right dynamics. When quintets, and even quartets, are conducted to speed up the learning/accuracy process, the most interesting musical problems are left to a conductor (who is not always right!), and performer-listening diminishes, resulting in a lack of real ensemble feeling. Players naturally prefer pieces which they understand in terms of their own experience and familiarity with a particular style, and which are more or less conventionally notated, though not necessarily technically easy. Players want to enjoy playing a part which offers expressive and stimulating possibilities, so the extremes of recent music – minimalism and the New Complexity – are not high on the list, whereas almost anything by, for example, a composer of the Second Viennese School is.

Over the last 20 years, standards of performance in new music have risen dramatically. In this country, apart from the few 'specialist' soloists (and specialisation is very bad for a performer), this is due largely to the work and influence of Pierre Boulez at the BBC and to the London Sinfonietta. The days of the terrible diletantism of fringe new music and the worst excesses of the early music boom of the 1960s and 70s (when players who couldn't play 'properly' hid behind strange noises and 'wrong' notes or bad intonation on authentic instruments) are now happily over: shown the way in the early music field by people like Nicholas Harnoncourt and by Thomas Binkley's Studio for Early Music. Nevertheless, the excellent performances which we do hear show up the under-rehearsed, run-through type of performances that are an unfortunate part of the impoverished London scene.

Today, composers, musicologists and performers are still very separate, carefully pigeon-holed beings. Performers, perhaps, do not give enough thought to what they play – the notation, the style itself – and therefore do not command the respect they deserve from composers. Composers, on the other hand, seeing the increasing technical expertise of players, write things which are often impracticable, and they consequently appear to be arrogant and defensive in rehearsal. The musicologists, writers and commentators (with excep-

tions) view all this, if at all, with on-the-fence, non-committal coolness. It is refreshing to read opinions as strongly felt as those in the following review by Gregory Sandow, from the New York *Village Voice*:

Academics consider Carter the greatest living American composer, and discuss him with so much more respect than enthusiasm that I wonder what they'd think if they heard these two pieces (*A Symphony of Three Orchestras* and *A Mirror on Which to Dwell*) without knowing who wrote them. In the *Symphony* I was not impressed by the 12 much discussed, independent, overlapping movements, and rather put off instead by the colorless melodic material and stolid orchestration; the song cycle seemed more valuable for its deft instrumental writing than for its vocal line, which treats not just the meaning but the sounds and rhythms of Elizabeth Bishop's poetry with the same plodding determination not to miss a single obvious detail that a Carter admirer overimpressed by those 12 overlapping movements would bring to the *Symphony*. I challenge anyone who thinks I'm wrong to compare the piece to atonal works more idiomatically written for voice and chamber ensemble – Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, Webern's Op.14 songs, the Boulez *Marteau sans Maître* or *Improvisation sur Mallarmé no.1* – and tell me that its vocal line isn't too stiff, divorced from the best musical ideas in its accompaniment.<sup>2</sup>

Well, certainly no beating about the bush there, and one need only look at Carter's early neo-classical songs like *Voyage* (1942-3), written in a very familiar idiom, to see that he has problems with lyrical vocal writing. *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* of 1976 was the first music for voice he had written since the choral piece *The Harmony of Morning* of 1944.

The performer does have a great deal to offer the composer, not least in such practicalities as notation and what used to be called 'idiomatic' writing, and he is in the best position to have a finger in all three pies: performance, composition and musicology. The performer is potentially the most powerful of the three, since composition and musicology cannot exist without performance; and analysis, the most important and 'active' part of musicology, is what the performer does every day. In Leonard B. Meyer's words

The performance of a piece of music is . . . the actualization of an analytic act – even though such analysis may have been intuitive and unsystematic. For what a performer does is to make the relationships and patterns potential in the composer's score clear to the mind and ear of the experienced listener. Conversely, as Edward Cone has pointed out 'Active listening is, after all, a kind of vicarious performance . . .'<sup>3</sup>

The composer can learn about modern notation from the best solutions in works of the last 20 years or so, and there is little excuse nowadays for obscurity in even the trickiest of moments. Idiomatic writing and the performer's job of making those 'relationships and patterns . . . clear to the mind and ear' are more serious problems, and among performers are verging on causes for concern.

Returning to that initial batch of scores – and I think it better that the composers of them remain nameless: by chance they all belong to that bland, middle-of-the-road English atonalism which is a kind of 'wrong-note' version of Elisabeth Lutyens' 'cow-pat' school, or what the composer Christopher Fox rather cruelly calls '*stilo SPNMo*'.<sup>4</sup> Attending concerts of new music in London, one can also frequently witness depressing events which show that this style is not just contained in beautifully produced scores growing dusty on the shelf, but is

alive and well. I have heard in the last few years quite a few pieces that are overlong, meandering and cliché-ridden – often with the inevitable crotales, vibraphone, alto flute and florid vocal line: an extension of Brittenesque word-painting at its most banal. In short, no real creative necessity.

Nevertheless, in terms of our three disciplines, I do believe that composing should be central to music education: contemporary composers, techniques and music history ought to be studied through active reinterpretation, reconstruction and original composition itself. As Charles Rosen has written,

Those who wish really to study music should be taught composition in all its contemporary forms: we may then hope and pray that the majority will never become composers.<sup>5</sup>

This does not in any way suggest that conservatories and universities should become composer factories, but simply that music should be taught creatively, with performance seen as a major part of this creation, rather than the current trend of younger and younger players striving for technique above all in 18th- and 19th-century repertoire. The interrelationship of the three disciplines, while still forging ahead into new areas, might also temper that other manifestation of 'high-tech', the New Complexity, in which composers seem ill-at-ease with sound and might be happier in computer design or data analysis.

Now, more than at any other time, there is a great diversity of new art music, all of which is considered 'contemporary'. Music today, apart from the conservative element, falls roughly into two camps: the modernists and the post-modernists. Modernism is the continuing tradition of western music with its chromatic evolution, including such apparent opposites as neo-romanticism (and even, in Robin Holloway's recent music, neo-Malcolm Arnoldism) and the New Complexity. Post-modernism is a very different world. It is Fox, once again, who has attempted a neat distinction between the two in a recent programme note:

It might be argued that Modernism's preoccupations are essentially those of *Tristan and Isolde* – rhythm, harmony and timbre in flux, an endless striving after unattainable goals – while Post-Modernism's preoccupations are those of *Einstein on the Beach* – autonomous, regular structures, an attempt to draw connections between apparently unrelated phenomena.<sup>6</sup>

There are many problems for the performer as well as the listener in both camps. At the very worst, we appear to have on the one hand a music of great complexity and impenetrability which seems to require a privileged intellectual training and, on the other, a music of naivety and banality verging on the mindless. Perhaps most disturbing is that a real understanding of some composers' work presupposes a knowledge of recent musical trends. Some music depends on conditioning and education and requires a context, whereas other music is self-contained in expression, needing much less cultural knowledge, even when the piece is quite complex. With some post-modernist pieces, particularly those of post-Cardew Britain, being forewarned seems essential if one is not to hear them simply as poor tonal pastiche. The post-modernists have rebelled against the intolerance of the elite atonalists (within post-modernism there is a strong political awareness which equates

atonal complexity with capitalist expressionist decadence); but in doing so, they have formed their own initiates who can recognise the wit and charm of something which completely ignores the last 60 years of music. The meaning of such post-modernist music must be construed entirely by the listener, and the music serves to trigger this meaning, thus making it, at least in some cases, something more than simplistic, elongated tonal progressions. Post-modernist music holds no problems for the performer whose conservatory training is steeped in the 18th and 19th centuries; and now, with the growing number of young expert players, the same can almost be said of modernist music, but with the notable exception of the New Complexity.

It was interesting to read the reactions of one of Britain's best newspaper critics to two of the most important performances in the 1985 BBC Promenade Concerts series: the world première of Elliott Carter's *Penthode* for ensemble and the first British performance of Steve Reich's *The Desert Music* for chorus and orchestra.<sup>7</sup> After a glowing account of Carter's piece, Peter Heyworth concludes:

My ear was enchanted by what it heard, my mind thwarted by its inability to perceive any large-scale pattern.

He was less impressed by Reich's piece:

Take, for instance, an unremarkable melodic phrase, such as might have been served as an accompanying figure in a nineteenth century ballet score. Hardly has it appeared quite early in *The Desert Music* than it is subsumed into a characteristic Reich pattern. Yet, before it has been fully ingested, it fleetingly evokes another world. The damage has been done. Heard in a non-Reichian context, its banality is painfully evident. These reminiscences are fatal. They confront Reich's music with idioms more powerful than his own.

Heyworth has, I think, put his finger on the major problems of the two opposing camps. Reich's move away from what he himself might see as the limitations of his initial and highly original rhythmic/phasing processes towards a concern with more melodic and harmonic elements reveals a less original voice in the face of tradition. One may argue that originality is not important, but a composer must communicate something individual through whatever language he may choose, or there is simply no reason for saying anything at all. Perhaps the well-worn example of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* is apt here: the composition not of pastiche but of reinterpretation. Heyworth's comment on Carter's piece, on the other hand, questions our whole ability to respond to complex music. To be 'enchanted' by the sound of a piece but unable to follow its argument or structure is probably very common. How many concert-goers really hear the differences in the recapitulation of a classical sonata movement, or follow the thematic/harmonic direction of a development section?

Complexity may be a problem for audiences, but at least with repeated hearings one can begin to get inside a piece, as with all music. For performers, the 'complex' music of Carter is actually not as problematic as it may appear. His pieces do contain some very tricky rhythmic passages with fragments passing from instrument to instrument. Yet, despite the involved compositional systems, Carter is concerned with sound, and the orchestration does allow space for detail and the combining of lines to be heard. This cannot be said, however,

of the composers who are lumped together, rather uncomfortably, under the New Complexity label to which I have already referred several times, with Brian Ferneyhough not as leader, but as the most prominent and influential member of the group, not least through his rôle as teacher.

For the performer, even for the few circus-freak soloists who hawk their 'most-difficult-piece-in-the-world' shows from festival to festival, there is no doubt that much of the music of this 'school' exists only as intricate and ingenious systems on the page, and not in sound. To take one of the performer's biggest bugbears: why is it necessary for the basic metre of a piece to be a quaver, and then to have a metronome mark of, say, quaver = 40? This means that the piece looks black, fast and more complicated than it really is, when in fact it is quite slow; in other words, it does not look like it sounds. Since notation is only a set of signs to be translated into sound, and not an end in itself, one can only assume that in such cases the look of the score, its calligraphy, is all-important.

In an interview which appeared in *Contact*, Ferneyhough seems to be interested in a score which has a life of its own: '... a visual representation of a possible sound – that's just one aspect of what a score is'.<sup>8</sup> Ferneyhough also expects performances to be approximations, which is inevitable when successions of rhythmically detailed groups of notes, which also have many different superimposed treatments (flutter-tongue, multiphonic, etc.), are then directed to be played in a very short space of time. This is unlike the sort of techniques that Vinko Globokar would use, where he superimposes different events – singing, growling, trombone embouchure playing (on a bass clarinet), key movements/notes – to achieve a reasonably specific sound quality and the theatrical energy of the performer attempting the impossible. Ferneyhough's scores are, of course, very different from those of Globokar or even Xenakis: composers who take the performer clearly, almost graphically, to the heart of the sound. When asked what are the criteria for a good performance of his music, Ferneyhough offers '... the establishment of audible criteria of meaningful inexactitude'.<sup>9</sup> The interviewer, Richard Toop, then counters with: 'So interpretation consists, to some extent, of different intelligent failures to reproduce a central text?', and Ferneyhough agrees. He also agrees with the assertion of the next question:

Obviously, in the sheer technical difficulty of the pieces there is a certain in-built defence mechanism against uncommitted performers. Is even the notation itself, and its *mis-en-page*, a sort of "protective commentary" (in Debussy's sense) against the dilettantish approach?

The notation and the whole meaning of the style cut two ways with this point. Ferneyhough, by very nature of the conventional notation, places the performer's approach to his music within the western classical tradition. Because the pieces are impossible, the performer has to fake and to improvise certain sections; players familiar with the style, and probably well practised through free improvisation, can get away with it. This leads to the possibility of imaginative, but technically less competent, players performing these pieces, whereas a player with a sound traditional technique (the only one to have!) would not attempt something which has no regard for the instrument while still, by the notation, setting out its terms of reference within the tradition from which that

instrument comes. This approach of improvisational inexactitude is backed by two further points: the first important, the second less so. Some New Complexity composers have begun notating arrows showing approximately where the main metronomic pulses occur, ignoring the bar-divisions, which are often irrationals. This means that one plays as though reading spatial notation, which makes a nonsense of the original rhythmic detail but is, of course, already one of the techniques of faking. Secondly, many of the scores, even original manuscripts, contain rhythmic mistakes of bars which don't add up: not enough beams or wrong groupings.

The extremes of the New Complexity lead one back to the larger issues of originality. The modernist composer is now bound by the concept of the masterpiece. The business of new music – with its commissions, publishers, reviewers, radio, the one performance with its professional audience – pressurises the young composer into producing a constant stream of serious and intense 'masterpieces'. Increasing numbers of composers present increasingly eclectically-inspired pieces: rummaging among the obscure and esoteric for their inspiration, or at the very least to give the work a 'serious' identity. It is here, with the constant search for the new and the different, that the post-integral-serialist phenomenon of the New Complexity has come about. While one would never seriously condemn an 'advanced' composer simply because his early works show the unmusicality and banality of, say, Carter's early songs or Ferneyhough's *Sonatina* for three clarinets and bassoon (or bass clarinet) of 1963, these things do fuel the niggling doubt that the complexity is perhaps there to cover a lack of ideas. The techniques serve merely to make the musical material more 'interesting'.

At the other end of the spectrum, one of the good things about the post-modernists is a healthy attitude to the 'finished' work of art. If the newly written and performed piece doesn't work, then 'better luck next time'. There is little paranoid defensiveness here, and the down-to-earth approach of these composers is concerned as much with craftsmanship as with aesthetics. One of the major influences on this attitude is that the majority of post-modernist composers are, or have been, performers of their own music. This can only be a good thing: composers' active involvement, apart from stimulating new ideas, teaches a good deal about the technique of performance. Set against this are the problems of writing only to the limits of one's own instrumental technique, and perhaps compromising in more serious artistic ways for the sake of performance. It also breeds the idea and questionable merits of the 'professional' composer who can turn his hand to anything. There is the story (I'm not sure if it's true, but it is, nonetheless, a good one) that someone stood up at a composers' conference at which Harrison Birtwistle was present and said that it was vital for a composer to have a technique and to be able to write in any idiom before trying to write in a more 'advanced' style, to which Birtwistle replied: 'I have enough trouble writing my own music, never mind anyone else's'.

Finally, while there are no problems for the performer in post-modernism, he who tackles recent works from the modernists' Complex school begins to realise the absurdity of this culmination of tradition as we reach the end of the

century. Musicians might be encouraged if they were to explore the work of someone like Horatiu Radulescu,<sup>10</sup> who suggests one successful path for both performer and composer to music of the next century. The absurdity of the excesses of the New Complexity lies not merely in the precise notation of 'expression', but in the subjugation and manipulation of the performer, who can only conclude that his efforts are ultimately of secondary importance. The player confronted by these impossible works, is defeated before even beginning, and ultimately discouraged and depressed by the approximations which occur, challenging his integrity. In performance, the listener may be impressed by a great flurry of things and a show of techniques. But, finally, how much of this has anything to do with the composer? When the act of writing, the systems and the very notation itself, take on more importance than the music it is there to serve, I am reminded of an aphorism of Albert Camus which I read recently:

It is from the moment when I shall no longer be more than a writer that I shall cease to write.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have taken my title from that of an article by Leonard Stein, which originally appeared in *Perspectives of New Music* in 1963 and is reprinted in *Perspectives on Notation and Performance*, ed. Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone (New York: Norton, 1976), pp.41-50. This deals with problems similar to some of those discussed here; in Stein's case, they are posed by the total serial music of that period.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory Sandow, 'Fed Up', *The Village Voice* (2-8 December 1981), p.94. This reviews the recording of the two works by Carter that are mentioned, on CBS M 35171.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard B. Meyer, *Explaining Music* (Berkeley, etc.: University of California Press, 1973), p.29. (The Cone quotation is taken from the author's *Musical Form and Performance* (New York: Norton, 1968), p.21.)

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Fox, 'A Darmstadt Diary', *Contact* 29 (Spring 1985), p.46.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Rosen, 'The Proper Study of Music', *Perspectives of New Music*, vol.1, no.1 (1962), p.88.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Fox, programme note for a recital in the Purcell Room, London on 13 December 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Heyworth, reviews in *The Observer* (28 July and 4 August 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Richard Toop, 'Brian Ferneyhough in Interview', *Contact* 29 (Spring 1985), p.12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10. Toop's two following questions appear on p.11.

<sup>10</sup> See my article, 'Horatiu Radulescu, "Sound Plasma"', *Contact* 26 (Spring 1983), pp.23-4.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Nadine Gordimer, 'The Essential Gesture: Writers and Responsibility', *Granta*, no.15 (Spring 1985), p.140.

Richard Barrett

## The Notation of Time: a Reply

This essay began as an instinctive reaction to the ideas expressed in James Ingram's article entitled 'The Notation of Time' in the last issue of *Contact*:<sup>1</sup> ideas to which I had previously been exposed in Darmstadt in 1984. The somewhat polemical tone of Ingram's contribution, as well as my own fundamentally opposed convictions, led me to think that a 'reply' would be not only appropriate but also desirable. Nothing would be lost – quite the opposite, in fact – if questions relating to notation and to its connections with the musical scheme of things were to be discussed on a continuing basis in a journal such as this. It has always seemed to me that the evolution of notational practices which are relevant and integral to the characteristics of an envisaged music is essential to its composition in a less incidental way than is usually supposed. This is not to say, of course, that music is to be conceived in terms of notation, although there are composers who work in that way. I mean, rather, that the presentation of an efficiently communicative score is not a matter to be brushed under the carpet for reasons of mental slackness.

James Ingram is certainly not to be accused of mental slackness; the development of his ideas on 'the notation of time' has obviously involved a considerable amount of thought. I find it difficult, however, to accept the premises upon which many of these ideas are founded. I shall not waste time recapitulating the points of Ingram's essay here; I hope readers will check my reactions against the original for themselves. I shall, however, attempt to give a certain idea of the specific areas of conflict.

He begins with a rather conjectural history of the notation of time with which I can leave musicologists to disagree. It is here, though, that the essential direction of his thought becomes obvious. Conventional notation, its expansion into the realm of 'irrational' durations and the expressive inexactitude of proportional (space-time) notation are, he argues, all symptoms of a dualistic, 'Newtonian' world-view, and are thus to be expunged in favour of 'a practical, non-dualistic, approach to the problem of notating musical time'.<sup>2</sup> The dualistic outlook is reflected in the basic 1:2 ratio by which rhythmic notation divides timespans; it is also reflected in general by the assumption, for reasons of convenience, that horizontal space in notation may be equated with a conjectured linear passage of time. In other words, a dualism is stated to exist between an 'ideal world' (notations) and the real one (experiential time).

The 'non-dualistic' programme of Ingram's investigations and the conclusions he reaches seem to be (as these things often are) prompted more by a consideration of the needs and implications of an individual aesthetic than those of proposing a generalisable theory of notation. This can be seen even in his title: he writes of the notation of *time* rather than that of *rhythm*. In fact the word 'rhythm' does not occur at all in the text. Is it therefore possible for Ingram to state his goal as being 'a practical [my italics] ... approach to the problem of notating musical time'?

I would argue that, at any rate, he has not achieved it. Numerous observations and remarks are made by him on related matters, some of which make perfect sense. Others, however, do not. The idea, for example, that every shade of duration between  $d$  and  $\bullet$  is to be represented as  $d$  (admittedly within a rigid spatial layout) not only removes a whole area of potential for composition, but also admits of a degree of 'inaccuracy' in the sounding realisation which would seem to contradict Ingram's careful vertical alignments in the example from his work *beyond the symbolic*. Presumably the title of this work refers directly to its notational manner; presumably the performed result is therefore 'beyond inaccuracy'. It becomes obvious that such notations lend themselves only to the encoding of a music which does not require, or which at least does not request, the precise synchronisation of events in different instrumental or vocal parts. Such notations thus fail to overcome the problems of ensemble posed by proportional notation and similar techniques, the only potentially effective solution to which would seem to be that employed by Hans-Joachim Hespos. In this case each performer is given a full score and can immediately see the required alignment; again, though, this would be unsuitable for music which cannot be written out with frequent opportunities for page-turning.

More importantly, returning to Ingram, it is my opinion that *rhythm*, in the sense of iterations referring to a constant or changing pulse, is a far more fundamental aspect of musical discourse than is the division of a timespan into more or less irregular segments. A view of musical 'time' based upon the concept of rhythm would seem to be more congruent with the mechanisms of perception; at least, they would be with *mine*. The phenomenon of iteration, of durational cyclicity, is one which has been at the heart of human culture for a long time – and at the heart of the 'in-time organisation' of physical and biological systems for a good deal longer. Such phenomena are surely too deeply ingrained in the way we think about and listen to music to be ignored in favour of a spurious notational simplification.

This conclusion does not render it necessary to advocate an 'overuse of rigid tempos',<sup>3</sup> as Ingram puts it. A coherent flexibility may be achieved, leaving aside the consideration of *metre* for present purposes, by the hierarchical ordering of 'disturbances' in a train of iterations; in other words, by rendering compositionally meaningful the use of 'irrational' subdivisions, which are specifically excluded from the Ingram notation. A subdivisional hierarchy may be brought about, from binary and ternary subdivisions (2:1, 3:2) to more and more distant 'harmonics' of a pulsation (e.g. 9:7, 13:10, etc.); this would seem satisfactorily rooted in the fundamentals of musical perception. (The harmonic series itself, with its analogous hierarchy, is after all a physical fact, in contradistinction to, for example, the ordering of harmonic materials in serial music, which has its own well-documented perceptual problems.)

The use of these subdivisions – which are not to be treated as the equal divisions of a single timespan but, as I have suggested, as a quantum of 'harmonic tempo' – becomes not only musically valid but also a source from which to generate relationships and processes in sound. Using an idea analogous to Klarenz Barlowe's 'indigestibility values',<sup>4</sup> it is possible to quantify the 'remoteness'

of subdivided iterations from unsubdivided ones. This is realised in my own work by translating the 'remoteness' gradient into an exponential probability gradient: that is, the frequency of occurrence of a particular subdivision will be exponentially proportional to the inverse of its 'remoteness'. In a hypothetically accurate realisation, this system renders all subdivided values perceptible as more or less extreme departures from an implied 'fundamental'. This is of course only one, and seldom the most obviously important, level of discourse in a music which is perhaps most readily characterised by its multi-layeredness, but in which an attempt is made to compose directly with all available levels in a mutually interrelated network of *musical* possibilities. My mention of it is by way of illustrating what I see as a fatal oversimplification in Ingram's article. (The first of my compositions to attempt the described approach is *Coigitum* for five performers, written between 1983 and 1985.)

There seems, finally, to be little justification in presenting the so-called 'dualistic' aspect of the notation of time as an evil to be avoided if possible, although of course if that music which Ingram imagines demands such an approach, then this is justification enough with respect to his own 'stylistic' purposes. Also, his conclusions concerning barlines, spacing, positioning of accidentals, etc. are sufficiently generalisable; anyone interested, as I am, in visually efficient performing material would do well at least to consider them.

It is indeed impossible for me to lay any claim to having successfully resolved the implications of my own preoccupations in the domain of rhythm/duration and its notation. This is partly, at least, because there is as yet no adequate provision to train performing musicians in the realisation of notations with expanded scope; Ingram must also, of course, be suffering the same problem. When the majority of performers are not only ignorant, usually through no fault of their own, of the strategies for perception and execution of such notations, but actually unable to accept and react rationally to them, the degree of alienation which exists between composer and performer is hardly surprising. The main victim has been precisely the area of rhythmic notation, the performing problems in this area having arisen initially as a byproduct of the integral-serial manipulations of the early 1950s. It is true that the situation has not been assisted by the sloppy thinking, and notating, of many composers. It is, nevertheless, a pity that someone as thoughtful as James Ingram obviously is has produced only an evaporation of a musical domain whose potential for compositional exploitation has only just begun.

<sup>1</sup> James Ingram, 'The Notation of Time', *Contact* 29 (Spring 1985), pp.20-27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>4</sup> See Klarenz Barlowe, *Bus Journey to Parametron* (Cologne: Feedback Studio, 1980).

Both Heaton's and Barrett's articles are in their different ways controversial, and they are therefore eminently suitable as the basis, or bases, of a continuing discussion in the pages of *Contact*. The issues raised by these authors – one of whom is in any case responding to an article in the previous number of the journal (his article actually began life as a Letter to the Editor) – obviously overlap to a degree; prospective contributors to the debate may accordingly decide to respond to one article rather than the other, or to both. Responses – which can be of any length, though anything above 2,500 words might have to be considered for a later issue – should be received by the editors at the Goldsmiths' College address on page 3 by 30th June if they are to be considered for *Contact* 31.

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## Hilary Bracefield

### Cold Blue Records

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Barney Childs, *Clay Music* (Cold Blue Records E1)  
 Read Miller, *Mile Zero Hotel* (Cold Blue Records E2)  
 Rick Cox, *These Things Stop Breathing* (Cold Blue Records E3)

Daniel Lentz, *After Images* (Cold Blue Records E4)  
 Michael Jon Fink, *Vocalise* (Cold Blue Records E5)  
 Peter Garland, *Matachin Dances* (Cold Blue Records E6)

Chas Smith, *Santa Fe* (Cold Blue Records E7)  
*Cold Blue* – Eugene Bowen, Harold Budd, Michael Byron, Rick Cox, Michael Jon Fink, Jim Fox, Peter Garland, John Kuhlman, Daniel Lentz, Ingram Marshall, Read Miller, Chas Smith, James Tenney (Cold Blue Records L10)

The recordings may be obtained from Cold Blue Records, 1831 Orchid, Los Angeles, CA 90068, USA.

Listening in the fastnesses of Northern Ireland to these eight Cold Blue records, long-forgotten sounds of the seventies filter through the silent airwaves of the mind. Dim memories stir and vague connections are made. Wasn't Daniel Lentz part of California Time Machine and didn't they perform *You Can't See the Forest* . . . Music at the ICES festival in London in 1972? Here it is on the compilation record, *Cold Blue*. Peter Garland? Editor of the American magazine *Soundings*, of course. Here is a record of his music and tracks by several of the composers featured in the magazine: Michael Byron, Ingram Marshall, Eugene Bowen, Harold Budd. And James Tenney, teacher of Byron, Marshall and Garland at Cal Arts. He's here too. I knew something of him from the phone conversation he had with Walter Zimmermann in 1975, which is transcribed in Zimmermann's book *Desert Plants*.<sup>1</sup> And here is his *Spectral Canon for Conlon Nancarrow* for player piano, which Tenney told Zimmermann he had just left with Nancarrow in Mexico for punching.

Zimmermann on his odyssey through America never got to the west coast. It was too far away. It still seems far away, even here on the nearest edge of Europe. We don't hear enough music from the younger generation of American composers, but what we do is far more likely to be from the east coast, for that's as near again as California. For us, then, the music on these Cold Blue records is interesting because it is west coast, from California, and even more specific, from southern California – around Los Angeles, rather than around San Francisco – even if some of the composers have moved away, like Byron to New York and Toronto, and Garland to South America.

Away back in *Soundings*, nos.3-4 (1972), Peter Garland said:

Several people have suggested that biographical (or other) information be given about contributors. I tried this in Issue 2, but felt very unsatisfied about my ability to give facts about other people . . . In the future, if a composer wants such information given, he should supply it himself, and as briefly as possible.<sup>2</sup>

There was never much information about composers given in *Soundings*, and there is virtually none on these records either. But even from the meagre sleeve and label notes, one gleans some idea about who they are.

Cold Blue Records is run by Jim Fox in Los Angeles and seems a private (and probably non-profit-making) set-up functioning, out of the goodness of Fox's heart, to promote the music of southern Californian composers. The seven records E1-7 are rather charmingly produced, with interesting sleeve designs, in a 10 inch, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  rpm size rarely seen nowadays, giving a playing time of about 13 $\frac{1}{2}$  minutes per side. The record actually called *Cold Blue* (L10) is a normal LP and features one piece of music each by six of the composers who have records of their own (usually a more recent piece), together with tracks by seven others.

There looks to be a fair proportion of southern Californian composers represented here. The catalyst in the whole thing is probably Barney Childs, who teaches at the University of Redlands: Jim Fox was a student of his, he is in touch with most of the older composers and, of the younger ones, Read Miller and Rick Cox had their music recorded at Redlands, so I assume there is a connection. As a homage to Childs, perhaps, the first record, E1 is devoted to his *Clay Music* (1981). This is one of three records that do give some information. Childs was commissioned to provide music for a variety of ceramic flutes, whistles, pipes and ocarinas for an artist, Susan Rawcliffe, who has made a study of pre-Colombian clay instruments. The music on the record, as Childs says, is not an evocation of any kind of primitive music but, as one hears very clearly, allows performers first to explore the possibilities of the instruments and then to begin combining them in unisons, counterpoints and chords. It is a very lucid and charming 20 minutes of music.

Peter Garland has long been interested in the music of pre-European America (he has spent long periods in Central and South America), and his record presents music based on the matachin, a Mexican dance noted by Cortez's soldiers in 1519 and named by them after the Italian dance they thought similar. The matachin is still danced in parts of the Americas, and Garland's set of six, for two violins and gourd rattles, written in 1980-81, uses the small compass and limited scales of most folk music, oscillating tonally often around A, or the

pitches of the other open strings. Some of the dances are fast and some unexpectedly slow, such as the one called 'Dance of Death', which is the longest of the six.

The energy and artless artistry of these dances is only equalled elsewhere in the whole collection by James Tenney's track on *Cold Blue*, the manic *Spectral Canon*, in which the music erupts in harmonic series from a low A to crabbed scrabbling in the upper partials. Tenney's is the last track on the compilation record and it threw all the rest of the music into relief, electrifying me upright after the wavery, sitar-sounding, vox-humana-beset, sentimental tune of Eugene Bowen (guitar synthesizer) and Harold Budd (keyboard synthesizer). Their piece is titled *Wonder's Edge*; it seems piquant that the only other information given is that it was 'recorded at Old Rugged Cross'. There is more than a touch of the recent Terry Riley here. Even more wavery and sentimental is Ingram Marshall's *Gradual Siciliano*. Via mandolin, piano and electronics, snatches of an Italian tune filter through. I couldn't remember its name, but it's not *Just One Cornetto* . . . This would make a great atmospheric track for a spaghetti western.

Atmosphere! That's what so much of this music is about. It's there in Peter Garland's *The Three Strange Angels* (1972-3) and Michael Byron's *Marimbas in the Dorian Mode* (1976), but it's there even more – ad nauseam in fact – in the more recent music. The score of *The Three Strange Angels* is in *Soundings*, no.6 (1973),<sup>3</sup> but it's more effective in performance than it looks: mysterious bass drum bangs, the whole sounding-board of the piano allowed to reverberate, and eventually the wailing of a bull-roarer adding its sound. The marimba piece involves soft and slowly changing chords played tremolando by four instrumentalists, and of course conjuring up thoughts of Steve Reich.

Michael Jon Fink specialises in very spare music for piano solo, two pianos, cello and piano, and celeste. It is based on slow and soft solo lines, or unisons, or maddeningly hesitant two-part writing, in pentatonic or Eastern scales, without rhythmic interest, and the sound is allowed to die away upon the air; there is probably a carefully worked out system behind it all. *Vocalise* for piano and cello suggest more structure than the other pieces and the record is named after it, which could be significant. The music can have a feeling of timeless beauty, or it can become too spare, or too sweet, as in the *Celeste Solo* on *Cold Blue*. Fink's copyright title, I notice, is 'Deathless Moon Music' which may also carry some significance. The pieces were written between 1978 and 1981.

Chas Smith plays pedal steel guitar, 12-string dobro and banjo, and it was the sound of the Hawaiian steel guitars, beloved of country-and-western players and perhaps not so familiar in Britain, that awakened in me memories of the Polynesian Hawaiian guitar music I used to encounter in New Zealand. The three pieces on the first side all use those slidy, mournful sounds amplified by echoes and slowly moving up and down compasses of about a 5th. I hardly dared turn the record over, but *Scircura* uses a six-note ostinato over which relentlessly major chords accumulate, so it does sound somewhat different. The recording is nicely engineered by Smith himself. Like Fink and others, he loves the sound to fade away before offering the next wavering.

Rick Cox's music really sounds very similar to that of Chas Smith, except that he plays electric

guitar. *These Things Stop Breathing* (recorded 1981) begins with gradually changed and filtered guitar chords, has a middle section of tinkly sounds, and ends with a mournful clarinet solo that emerges through the fuzz. *Necessity* (1983) also has events ghosting out of fuzz – it made me think it was all happening under water. *Taken from Real Life* is strong on atmosphere too, with a poem spoken in a low confidential monotone by the composer accompanied by the sort of sounds the phrases of the poem suggest – they're all taken from love lyrics. (A large portion of the poem, typing error and all, makes up the record's cover design, and it makes a rather good 'concrete' artwork.)

Cox plays guitar and Chas Smith engineers the one piece by Jim Fox on *Cold Blue* – *Appearance of Red* for piano, cello and electric guitar – and it's plainly out of the same stable as their music and that of Fink: spare piano chords and notes releasing harmonies that are echoed by cello and guitar atmospheric.

It's both the voice in Cox's piece and the use of echoes that bring me to the music of Daniel Lentz. His amusing piece *You Can't See the Forest . . . Music* (1971), for three speaker-drinkers, who alternate syllables of well-known proverbs as they strike glasses with mallets and then snatch sips of wine, is presented on the compilation record in a version that differs to some extent from the score in *Soundings*, nos.7-8,<sup>4</sup> and includes his 'cascading echo systems' as a background.

On the smaller record of Lentz's more recent music the 'cascading echo systems' envelop everything. The term makes it sound like Mantovani's strings, and there is a resemblance. Lentz is the only composer other than Childs and Garland who gives some idea of his intentions in his sleeve note. He aims to build musical structures in spirals rather than from left to right, creating music that is in a constant state of becoming. In the pieces on *After Images*, for voices and keyboards, the gradual building up of lyrical poems from words like 'dawn' or 'beams' or 'sun' or 'fire', coupled with the whooshy sounds of the echo systems and the tonal harmonies, create a sound world that I can only compare with a make-believe, Disney-like land glimpsed through the ripples in a huge blue lake.

Read Miller's work is purely vocal, but no-one sings; voices intone his offerings in short phrases and without expression, though they often speak not quite in unison. *Weddings, Funerals and Children who Cannot Sleep* on *Cold Blue* talks of life 'breaking down, disintegrating' and the voices appear to do just that on the track. Clever, perhaps, but although it gave the flavour of southern Californian speech, I didn't really want to think about the message behind the monotone.

Perhaps I wasn't finding the messages behind most of this music. Is it really as innocent and gentle and static and mushy as it sounded to me? Are the composers really locked into the 'flower power' of the 1960s in their minds, and into dreamy, Eno-like repetition in their music? Does the Pacific sun drain the energy out of the young? Are these records typical, anyway? Childs and Garland and Tenney excepted, so much of the music presented here is a cop-out. The music doesn't find its logical ending, it fades away; it exists for atmosphere rather than for musical purposes; it ignores the element of rhythm. On the plus side, though, it shows genuine experimentation in the exploration of harmonics, and the records give fascinating

glimpses into unfamiliar territory, enlarging our knowledge of the range of American music today.

- <sup>1</sup> Walter Zimmermann, *Desert Plants* (Vancouver: ARC Publications, 1976), pp.221-32.
- <sup>2</sup> Peter Garland, 'Comment', *Soundings*, nos.3-4 (July-October 1972), p.73.
- <sup>3</sup> Peter Garland, 'The Three Strange Angels', *Soundings*, no.6 (Spring 1973), pp.16-20.
- <sup>4</sup> Daniel Lentz, 'You Can't See the Forest . . . Music', *Soundings*, nos.7-8 (July-October 1973), pp.148-53.

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Stephen Reeve

## ISCM Festival 1985

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57th ISCM World Music Days, The Netherlands, 4-13 October 1985

Cloistered behind a wooden perimeter fence during the current restabilisation of its rotting piles, the Concertgebouw provided a striking image with which to reinforce any prejudice the visitor may have felt when arriving for the opening concert of the 1985 Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music. For, like Amsterdam's magnificent but close-to-subsiding concert hall, the ISCM too has in recent years appeared in danger of sinking under its own weight. It has sometimes seemed as though decline were inevitable after those early years, soon after the First World War, when, under the Society's auspices, monumental works by composers such as Bartók and Berg were given their first hearings.

It was an omen sadly undisputed by the programme given by the Netherlands Radio Chamber Orchestra under Ernest Bour which followed inside. This consisted largely of old-fashioned and mediocre serial pieces, though admittedly things were enlivened at the end by the over-wrought grotesqueries of the Danish composer Poul Ruders' *Corpus cum Figuris*: a kind of up-dated Mahlerian slow-movement-cum-scherzo which, however, came complete with an all-too-Mahlerian projection of time-scale. The prospect before those of us who were committed to take in the entire ten days of intensive concert activity was not exactly enticing.

In fact the fundamental problem of the ISCM is one common to many another international forum: it has become bogged down by the bureaucracy of its democratic procedures. Nowadays any composer can submit scores to the annual sessions of an *ad hoc* international 'jury' of his august creative colleagues, but the works are really supposed to be chosen first by the relevant, affiliated National Section. It is hardly surprising that, in the main, only the most inoffensive – that is, the most boring – scores spill through this double filtering process, quite apart from the fact that selections of individual submissions scarcely make for coherent programmes. Any 'restabilisation' of the ISCM would clearly have to take all this into account.

In 1985 the Dutch Section actually tried hard to organise an interesting ten days of music-making from the works chosen, as well as attempting to sugar the pill by using a variety of home-based ensembles and a selection of venues in the five main cities of Holland. It was bad luck that one of the most logically planned concerts – of choral works – was in the event truncated, apparently because the Netherlands Radio Chamber Choir (under Robin Gritton) did not feel able to learn a whole new programme of difficult pieces; the English composer Bayan Northcott's *Hymn to Cybele* was one of those dropped. At least what they did do – including another English composition, Michael Finnissy's *Ngano* – was sung extremely well, despite the fact that an afternoon encased in the concrete confines of Rotterdam's De Doelen Small Hall did not exactly provide the most propitious circumstances for Finnissy's evocation of traditional 'songs sung during the evening' from the Northern Transvaal. *Ngano* reveals itself as one of its composer's closest refractions of folk music, especially in the transcription-like feel of the log drum rhythms at the end. Emile Biessen's playing of the obdurate quarter-tone material of the obbligato flute part Finnissy adds to the chorus yielded a particularly exotic flavouring.

The concert in the De Doelen Large Auditorium the same evening was also blighted: this time by the reorganisation – that is, the contraction – of orchestras that is currently going on in Holland. The Netherlands Radio Symphony Orchestra, a brand-new fusion of two 40-year-old radio orchestras which has been created as 'a result of economy measures which the government imposed upon the NOS' (the Dutch broadcasting authority), appeared somewhat demoralised. Its stylistically varied programme, under Lucas Vis, offered works by Kaija Saariaho (her now fairly well-known *Verblindungen* for orchestra and tape), Louis Andriessen, Werner Heider, and Zygmunt Krauze. At the end of the concert, the rapid-fire, spatial interplay of Andriessen's *De Snelheid*, a kind of aural equivalent of alternately flashing strobe lights astride a rhythmic ostinato on temple blocks, livened things up. I for one, though, find this composer's recent jackboot 'machines' somewhat distasteful; they seem, with their high amplification, to be designed solely to manipulate an audience into excited wonderment at the skill of an extended delay of a relatively simple process.

Real musical stimulation was certainly hard to come by during the course of the main week of events. But on the Friday night, back at the Concertgebouw, there was a concert which seemed to dispel the bad spell cast there seven days before; indeed, it proved to be an auspicious start to a good final weekend. Under Denis Cohen, the ASKO Ensemble provided a performance of Brian Ferneyhough's *Carceri d'Invenzione I* which had the distinct virtue – rare in performances of works by this composer – of making all the notes sound extremely vital: no mean feat in a piece which frantically 'invents', as it goes along, a grating proliferation of seemingly independent chamber-orchestral parts. With a quite different line-up, of brass, electric keyboards and percussion under Vis, the ensemble also made a good job of the young American Michael Torke's *Vanada* – a gripping panorama of musical Stateside, with Reich-like minimalism, jazz and funk all linked by similar modal material and an incessantly lively rhythmic jaunt – even if the group inevitably

played without the loose-limbed feeling that American players would have had. No less than four other substantial pieces completed this long, but well prepared, programme, including *Ritos Ancestrales* by the young Argentinian Alejandro Iglesias Rossi: a simple but highly effective series of Ur-gestures, often separated by pregnant pauses, that was confidently enacted by the Korean soprano Yung-Hee Kim and The Hague Percussion Group.

In contrast to all this drama, the final Sunday provided a relaxing afternoon recital in the Waterlooplein's Catholic, Baroque Moses and Aaron Church given by Het Nieuw Ensemble, one of Holland's most expert contemporary music groups, and the singer Dorothy Dorow under Otto Ketting. Zoltan Jeney's *Twelve Songs* for female voice, violin and piano, all based on variable repetitions of limited note collections, is a more entrancing piece of etiolated minimalism than anything I have otherwise heard from this representative of Budapest's New Music Studio. The Belgian Jacqueline Fontyn's *Alba: Tre Poesie di Vincenzo Cardarelli* for soprano and four instruments is, on the other hand, an essay in a more traditional kind of expressive radiance, complete with many eloquent points of instrumentation.

The most interesting discovery of the 1985 ISCM Festival was that nationalism in composition is far from dead. We are often told that music has become more international, and contemporary music in our part of the world sometimes seems couched in a kind of musical Euro-speak. The Dutch, however, succeeded in challenging these notions by inviting each of the 32 individual ISCM National Sections to submit an hour-long 'national programme'. This simple but effective idea – which followed up an initial attempt of this kind by the Greek Section at the 1979 Festival in Athens – proved to be the most consistently fascinating, if as often creatively uninteresting, strand in the 1985 events.

National character is, it seems, irrepressible. Even the fairly undiluted, Americanised jazz-funk of the Austrian 'electric big band' Nouvelle Cuisine – appearing at the BIM House, a popular 'centre for jazz and improvised music' in a converted garage near Amsterdam's Nieuwmarkt – provided a very European form of music: the soloists merely filled in some improvised space until the next dose of compositional arrangement was cued in, by the conductor Wolfgang Kubizek. A Viennese sense of propriety always prevailed.

Jazz received an even more stand-offish examination in the Dutch 'national programme'. The rhythmic jauntiness of Theo Loevendie's *Strides* for piano works towards but does not quite unveil the American stride-piano style that lies behind it. With the more recent *Walk* – like *Strides*, played by Fred Oldenburg – Loevendie is not as successful precisely because the walking-bass jazz influence is so much more pronounced. Both works, however, have that anecdotal quality so particular to Dutch composition: the nonchalance of traditional Dutch tolerance.

Towards the edges of Western Europe, the American influence is more subdued. Indeed, the particular propensity of the Swedes to disengage from the world and darkly contemplate one's navel was well on display the next day in their national programme, which consisted entirely of works involving tape. Like most of the electro-acoustic concerts, this was heard at De Ijsbreker, Amster-

dam's small auditorium-cum-riverside-café. Both Rolf Enström's *Fractal* and Pär Lindgren's *Den förstenade* (The petrified one) are obsessive studies in incestuous, ear-splitting grey. Lindgren's piece included a mezzo-soprano (Kerstin Stahl) who stood completely still in a dim light, several times opening her mouth as if to speak, but managing only to gargle: a scenario which had the kind of portentously erotic quality familiar from the more neurotic scenes of Ingmar Bergman films. After an hour of this sort of thing, even the strongest among us had to get some air. No wonder the suicide rate in Sweden is so high.

The Icelanders provided a more direct transcription of their wintry predicament. With its manic arrangement and rearrangement of a limited repertory of notes, Hjalmar H Ragnarsson's *Trio*, given by the Icelandic Piano Trio, presented a prospect of limitless ice floes dancing in front of the eyes, before surrendering to a sense of overwhelming intensity.

Significantly, the unmistakable engagement of the Central European tradition now appears at its strongest outside Europe. It was not surprising to discover that the Israeli composers should, like all cultural emigrés, lovingly recultivate in their hotspot in the Middle East the earnest romanticism of a now dead musical culture – particularly since their forebears played such a historically important role in it. Piano quartets by Tzvi Avni and Josef Tal, played by an *ad hoc* group, offered a surging amalgam of the pre-war *espressivo* idioms of Bartók, Janáček *et al.*

The Japanese, on the other hand, seem to have taken over the typically European 1960s obsession with instrumental technique and avant-garde gesture – but redefined via a particularly Zen-like quality of letting each sound speak of and for itself. The natural logic of the *recherché* sonorities of Joji Yuasa's *Inter-posi-play-tion No.2* was a good example of seeming intellectual disengagement. A trio of players began on bass flute, harp and vibraphone but gradually all transferred to percussion instruments. Yuasa's precise gestures were beautifully and unfussily realised by members of the HATO Ensemble.

The Australian 'national programme' – deftly and professionally put together by the mixed sextet of the Ensemble Flederman and heard to advantage in the excellent auditorium of the new North Amsterdam Music School – was one of the festival's bright spots. All the pieces in it – the composers were Graham Hair, Keith Humble, Carl Vine, and Martin Wesley-Smith – had something to say. Again, there was something inexorably 'nationalistic' about Wesley-Smith's *Snark-Hunting* for ensemble and tape which – with its wildly veering sections of different types of music, including boogie-woogie and, inevitably, jazz and funk, all most imaginatively integrated with a tape of simple transformations of instrumental sounds – netted a bumper catch of all the disparate influences that clearly face composers Down Under.

Some of the ISCM Sections outside Europe also sent over traditional music to be played alongside the contemporary compositions. Most notably, there was Chinese music from Hong Kong, heard to advantage in the small hall of the Vredenburg Centre in Utrecht. Unfortunately, though, a good deal of the traditional programmes planned – including a Greek Byzantine choir and a whole panoply of players from Venezuela – was cancelled at the last moment by the Sections concerned.

There was also yet another strand to the festival, brought about by the deferment of the annual Gaudeamus Music Week in order that this event for young composers should run during the same period. There was, however, no danger of overload, since only two programmes' worth of music – just seven scores, out of some 400 submissions – were selected by the 1985 Gaudeamus jury. This was ironic, given that more than twice the normal number of submissions had been received. The rules had been changed so that works already played were not automatically excluded. (There had been complaints that, because of the relative ease of getting performances in Holland, Dutch composers were effectively being excluded from their 'own' competition. Double irony: not one of the consequent flood of Dutch entries was selected.)

The Gaudeamus prize, of 4,000 guilders (just under £1,000), was won by a 24-year-old Korean, Unsuk Chin, for her composition *Spektra*, a rather playful essay for three cellos which was reminiscent, in its mercurial contrasts, of the range of expression to be found in shorter pieces by Ligeti, her current teacher. The British composer James Clarke, four years older, was unlucky not to have won or at least to have shared in the prize. His *Försvinn* for bass clarinet and ensemble, played in Hilversum by Harry Sparnaay and the Radio Chamber Orchestra under Ernest Bour, was a stronger score: its thoroughly worked run-down of tension is matched by its clear reflection of the composer's experience of a gradually calming electrical storm over the coast of Finland, where he lived for two years.

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The above, broadly negative, account of the 1985 ISCM Festival as a whole could apply in general terms to almost any of the World Music Days of recent years, during which time there have, it is widely agreed, been too many consistently mediocre events cobbled together from selections of indifferent music. Indeed, the last time the ISCM scored a shattering success was in the ancient history, in contemporary-music terms, of 30 years before the Dutch festival, when Boulez' *Le marteau sans maître* first saw the light of day at Baden-Baden in 1955. That, of course, was when the ISCM practically stood alone as the standard-bearer of new music internationally. Since then, innumerable festivals of contemporary music have sprung up, many of them indisputably eclipsing the World Music Days in terms of international impact. Each year, during the festival, the ISCM General Assembly nevertheless meets, pontificates and attempts to pass resolutions as if – even when the delegates all agree on something – it was really going to achieve anything to alleviate the depressing prospect that inevitably lies ahead each year.

So is the ISCM a mere relic of outdated international goodwill? Has it, in the cynical 1980s, simply outlived its usefulness? I would argue not, if only because it remains just about the only democratically run international forum to which unknown composers, of any age, can send their work. That is something of inestimable value to hang on to, particularly in the face of the increasing tendency of the other, more autocratic, festivals to trade off each others' discoveries and successes, or simply to organise yet another event around the always imminent round-figure birthday of a world-

famous composer.

It is, of course, precisely this 'democracy' to which many object, with the familiar and indeed self-evident argument that no committee ever makes good programmes. And ironically, though we may look back at the early ISCM festivals – when works such as Berg's String Quartet, Op.3 were heard for the first time – as particular moments of glory, the fact is that bad programmes have undoubtedly always been a feature of the organisation. The reason for this is simple: there was just as much fudge and horse-trading in the jury room then as there indubitably is now, as the following remarks, from a letter written by Berg while he was himself on the 1928 jury, suggest (the festival was in Siena that year):

As this year there will be only three chamber-music concerts it was not easy to distribute fairly the works to be chosen among the many nations which fancy themselves to be creatively productive. All the same, I have succeeded in causing Austria to be represented with dignity by Webern's Trio [Op.20] and the latest quartet by Zemlinsky. The members of the jury were perhaps not all aware that Zemlinsky can write a quartet movement not much worse than that by [Frank] Bridge, that his inventive power is perhaps not less than that of Bloch, and that he is scarcely less up-to-date than Alfano, who mostly belong to those composers of whom two can be had for a penny.<sup>1</sup>

This revelation may be taken as typical of the dismissive and/or chauvinistic spirit in which many, if not most, composers approach jury work – especially prominent composers who, caught up in their own ideas, usually have little or no understanding or even (as private conversation reveals) tolerance of other music. Perhaps the ISCM should recruit *failed* composers as jurors.

The easiest time for the ISCM to make coherent programmes was undoubtedly during the mid-1950s, when total serialism intellectually swept all before it, and any other music could be, and often was, conveniently dismissed on the grounds of historical irrelevance. Juries could at this period in effect be 'packed'. Then the 1960s saw the rise of a whole succession of fashionable tendencies (mobile and graphic scores, space-time notation and so on) which could be seized upon in the selection process. Nowadays, any such intellectual consensus has long since vanished, and we have returned to the privatism of mutually antagonistic groups typical of pre-War days – especially in view of the intolerable pressure under which all such 'international juries' are expected to operate.

Faced, typically, with a room full of scores from which selection has to be made by the day after next, even the strongest go weak at the knees. After a first morning's dithering, an experienced jurist will suggest an early lunch, at which a liberal supply of liquor will flow. Thus suitably fortified, the whole jury can return and get through the job of rapidly selecting or despatching scores with the detached bemusement necessary to such an ostensibly ridiculous task.

Well, that's how some of the stories go. But obviously, in such a situation, a composer can anyway only succeed in getting a piece selected by a jury if a) he flatters its members (by writing in the same style as at least one of them), b) he writes in the sort of nondescript, post-serialist idiom to which no-one will object, or c) he is himself simply well enough recognised as a creative figure. And all this is quite apart from the fact that 'priority' is supposed to be given to works submitted by the

National Sections, which themselves may not necessarily be representative of composers in their particular countries. Only in Eastern Europe do the National Sections appear to be under the direct control of composers' organisations. Elsewhere, radio producers seem too often to have gained the controlling hand, while the British Section is all too cosily couched within the bureaucracy of the Arts Council. But then to have one's National Section in the hands of a composers' clique is scarcely more palatable for the neglected ones than any other sort of alienation. And the Eastern-bloc countries were only represented at the 1985 ISCM Festival by a desultory string quartet programme from Poland, played by the Silesian Quartet at The Hague Conservatory.

Actually, to their credit, recent ISCM juries have regularly selected a high proportion of so-called directly submitted work. So who needs the National Sections? The answer is, needless to say, that the National Sections do. But to be fair, all these problems are apparent to the ISCM delegates themselves, who are all too aware of the circumstances under which each annual festival is actually organised. These representatives will eagerly buttonhole you with their own individual proposals for improvements: ranging from the appointment of an artistic director, so that someone would shoulder the praise or blame for a particular festival, to the commissioning of works from prominent composers, so that at least a degree of musical quality would be guaranteed each year.

All these are admirable ideas, but there is really no point in turning the World Music Days into yet another autocratic and success-trading festival; nor is there any point in using the ISCM's limited funds to pamper famous composers with further lavish commissions. We have to accept that as a democratic festival of new music, the World Music Days will always fall short of any profound aesthetic experience. Democracy is never the most efficient way of organising things.

It would surely be far better to turn the festival really properly into what many of its participants suggest it is already, in effect: a trade fair for contemporary music. Only works written within the previous year would then be performed, whether in 'national programmes' or in concerts organised directly by the host Section. And since the ISCM was founded on the ever-valid principle of giving a hearing to important but neglected work, it really is time to start limiting the actual submissions to pieces which will be receiving their first performance. Appallingly, only one world premiere – that of Klaus Huber's . . . *Nudo que ansi juntais* . . . , an up-dated lyrical madrigal for double choir (sung in the Radio Chamber Choir concert mentioned near the start of this review) – was given in the 1985 festival.

In the final analysis, the composers themselves, and/or their publishers, have to take much of the blame for the current state of the ISCM. In Holland there were simply too many pieces which had already gone the rounds of other contemporary music events and which had clearly been sent in willy-nilly because to list ISCM performances still looks impressive in a composer's biographical note, even if the particular festival involved proved thoroughly mediocre. Most dismaying last year was the acceptance of the direct submission from Stockhausen Verlag of The Master's *Klavierstück XII*, which naturally had to be performed by

Majella Stockhausen (in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum). What jury is going to turn down Stockhausen? (Maybe one day . . .) But then if the ISCM was essentially created by and for composers, it is perhaps only just that it should effectively be composers who are now killing it off.

<sup>1</sup> From a letter to Schoenberg written on 30 March 1928, as quoted in Mosco Carner, *Alban Berg: The Man and The Work* (London: Duckworth, 1975), p.67.

*The 1987 ISCM World Music Days are scheduled for 23 October to 1 November; the host country is West Germany, and the festival will take place in Cologne, Bonn and Frankfurt.*

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## Mark Ingleby

### Pacific Ring Festival

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Department of Music, University of California, San Diego, 29 April – 9 May 1986

*... California has come to be not only the last arrival point of the Frontier spirit, but also a powerful springboard for a growing awareness of and interest in the cultures of the Pacific. Spanning the largest single area of ocean on Earth, the Pacific Ring itself is perhaps the last region of its size to offer the opportunity for peaceful cultural osmosis in an age of awesome technological power and yet multifariously fragile diversity.*

[from a statement in the Festival Exhibition]

The influence of Oriental cultures on the music of American, and particularly of Californian, composers is by now a *de facto* occurrence of contemporary music, but the two-way process of technological and artistic exchange between the countries of the Pacific region has rarely seen the light of a consistent concert series or festival, even in California. Presented as part of the 25th-anniversary celebrations of the newest campus of the University of California, at San Diego, and sponsored by the latter's internationally famous Music Department, the UCSD Pacific Ring Festival unveiled a boldly imaginative and perhaps unique gathering of New World and Japanese new musics, highlighted against a background of traditional performance groups from these and other Pacific Ring nations. Although financially linked to the University's marking of its quarter-century and to the opening of a new Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies, this multimedia and multi-ethnic celebration was stimulated by a National Endowment on the Arts award to John Cage, Toru Takemitsu and UCSD composer/performers Ed Harkins and Philip Larson. Starting from the theme of trans-Pacific collaboration, the Music Department's annual 'Sound Shapes' Festival was transformed into an event of considerable international significance, which went engagingly beyond the already wide-open commitment of UCSD to technological, stylistic and media pluralism in music.

The meaningful presentation of what the Festival Exhibition text called 'multifariously fragile diversity' hinged crucially on the cunning division of the festival along the lines of four themes: 'Collaboration', 'Technology', 'Extensions' and 'Ensembles', as overseen by Festival Director, Roger Reynolds. These overlapping distinctions provided the materials for some stimulating public discussions among panels of the attending composers and performers, but they chiefly functioned as labels to the billing of the four major multi-stylistic concerts. The extent to which avenues of 'collaboration', 'extension' and so on were actually unveiled by the events of the festival was, however, less a product of the contents of these categories themselves than of the amount of time the visiting guests were able to stay. Almost all the purely traditional performances of Pacific music, for example, were confined to a single 'Ensembles' day; and among the participants in this, the Samahan Philippine Dance Company and Musicians and a Javanese gamelan from Jakarta were only present for the concert itself. The value and interaction of the exploratory juxtapositions of the Pacific Ring Festival depended crucially, as at any other international festival, on the amount of time during which performers and composers from different cultures and styles were able to intermingle. Instant osmosis was thus not to be had, unless one accepted the colourful speculations to be found in the festival brochure.

Nevertheless, variety and contrast produced their own moments of lucid interconnection in the main concerts. Computer music by John Chowning and Roger Reynolds dominated the main 'Technology' concert, but the electricity of these powerful pieces was matched by the extraordinary 'electricity' of the Guatemalan composer Joaquín Orellana's live array of self-built cane instruments, used with analog tape. The range of computer-aided and computer-created work at this concert gave some useful hint of the development of digital techniques in recent years. Four-track performances of two of Chowning's early digital synthesis compositions, *Phone* and *Sabelithe*, were reminders of the first characteristic timbres of the now portable Frequency Modulation technique; the technique of vocal re-synthesis, as used in *Phone*, maintained its allure, in spite of its now widely imitated FM percussion timbres. Video synthesis was shown off to very good effect at this and other concerts in the festival; the climax of this particular event was the world premiere of *Vertigo*, with video synthesis by Ed Emshwiller and computer music synthesis by Roger Reynolds. This was a work of impressive formal proportions which, like other pieces from UCSD's Computer Audio Research Laboratory (known as CARL), made telling use of spatial manipulation; it was considerably enhanced by the multiple monitor onslaught of images from the stage. Although timbrally a little disappointing, the combined effect of CARL's spatial algorithms and the adroit compositional use of the phase vocoder transformed the recorded piano source material into some areas of interesting complexity.

While Chowning's work reminded one of the power of vocal modelling in digital music, the electro-acoustic pieces of Orellana more succinctly presented the juxtaposition of the native human with the technological: *Híbrido a Presión*, for two flutes, cane instruments and tape, contrasted traditional European instruments with the treated

sounds on tape of native Indian phonemes and with instruments built in the composer's own locality. Orellana, according to Gordon Mumma in the festival brochure,

bypassed the distractions of technological opulence which would have been quite inappropriate to the Guatemalan context. Instead, he explored indigenous acoustical resources, developed extended performance techniques with local ensembles and built new musical instruments. He gathered the sounds of his experiments and of life from both city and countryside. Using these materials, during the 1970's, Orellana produced a stunning group of electro-acoustical compositions, some of which employed theatrical or projected images. They include *Humanofonía* (1971), *Malebolge* (1972), *Primitiva I* (1973), *Tzulhumanachi* – *Rupestre en el Futuro* (1978), and *Imposible a la "X"* (1980).

Orellana's works presented on this occasion allowed us to hear, among other things, front-blown cane sounds, used in numerous groups with various forms of attack, and a delightful plethora of percussion instruments, varying from circular wind-chimes to various sizes of half-moon-shaped 'sonarimbás' – curved marimbás in micro-tunings. Different sonorities were provided by different attack agents such as marbles on rubber bands, and by membrane instruments using braided string snares. The sight of at least 15 musicians playing these toy-like creations added to the bewitching timbral 'electricity' of the music.

Indeed, the unspoken message emerging from this main 'Technology' concert and from the 'Ensembles' concert the following afternoon was that of appropriate, rather than 'high', technology as the future currency of artistic exchange in the Pacific region. The latter event was brought to a fitting close by the Harry Partch Ensemble's performance of this composer's *Daphne of the Dunes*. Following on the heels of delightful performances by the Samahan Dance Company and Musicians and by two Indonesian gamelans – one Javanese, the other Balinese – the music and spectacle of Partch could not have been better placed to show the debt and yet the individuality of a Western composer in relation to Oriental traditions and tunings, and the re-discovery of 'multi-media' presentations. *Daphne of the Dunes* was fairly modest in theatrical demands by comparison with some other Partch pieces, and utilised two dancers. While their choreography here verged on the predictable, the 'unsung' choreography of a Partch performance happened magically around them: eight musicians playing Cloud Chamber Bowl, Bamboo Marimba, Diamond Marimba, Bass Marimba, Gourd Tree, Cone Gongs, Kithara II, Harmonic Canon II (with movable bridges), Surrogate Kithara, Spoils of War (assorted non-pitched percussion), and the multi-coloured keyboard of the Chromelodeon organ. The ensemble was capably directed by its leader, Danlee Mitchell, the curator of the Harry Partch Collection. Performances by this group become rarer and rarer: there is no permanent building or facility for the composer's unique set of instruments, which lives almost cheek-by-jowl with the percussion of San Diego State University, without repair budget, staff or ensemble tour co-ordinator for one of the outstanding heritages of 20th-century music. In any other country but the United States, the Harry Partch Collection and Ensemble would be awarded the financial and artistic protection that they manifestly deserve. As a visitor to the Collection on previous occasions, I was sad to witness its slow

decline.

Technology was also viewed through the exhibits and words of Nam June Paik. Paik had numerous videos on display throughout the Pacific Ring Festival, chief of which were *Something Pacific*, digitally synthesized, and a permanent outdoor installation of the same name at the University of California's Media Studies Department, which showed rooted television screens and contemplative Buddhas squatting under the palm trees of California's quick-grow turf.

Aside from the innocent wit of Cage's contributions to the public discussions, the main focus of his activities at the Pacific Ring Festival was his contribution to its opening event, *Vis-à-Vis* (under the 'Collaboration' heading), performed by [THE], the trumpet-and-voice duo of Harkins and Larson. Originally forming the male end of San Diego's Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble, this music-theatre team performed a two-hour show that bore a disturbingly close resemblance to their previous concert, six months earlier. The showmanship, precision and dry humour of their material, some of which requires considerable bodily virtuosity, is too easily taken by Californian audiences as easy humour, and [THE] has an obvious white, middle-class following around affluent San Diego. The fact that this duo has successfully toured Japan several times points to something else, however, and it was disappointing that Takemitsu's involvement in *Vis-à-Vis* turned out to be no more than a shy analog tape part, isolated near the end of the piece.

Harkins and Larson were open in discussing the problems of a collaboration that involved 'antiphonal responses through the mail'. They initially sent a videotape of some of their previous collaborative works to Cage in New York, who responded with a mesostic. According to Jonathan Saville in the festival brochure, both poem and videotape arrived in Tokyo, where Takemitsu responded with a poem by a contemporary Japanese poet, an audio-tape and 'a two-color graphic, made up of abstract symbols, together with very general instructions as to how to convert these symbols and their arrangement into sounds and movements'. [THE] then produced an audio-tape and began the circle again, with similar responses. It is unclear why these inputs did not obviously manifest themselves in the performance, but Harkins and Larson told us that Cage's contribution was primarily 'structural'. Although Cage's text did appear as a lyric at one point, the distance of the collaboration and the concern to 'respect integrity' resulted in a performance which audibly owed nothing directly to either composer.

While Harkins and Larson displayed a way of proceeding in openness with regard to non-traditional forms and sounds, a powerful example of the force of sounds and gesture in a partly traditional theatrical context was given by the Pacific Ring Festival performances of the Suzuki Company of Toga, Japan. Based on the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides, their Japanese version of *Clytemnestra* projected tremendous emotional force through the well-patterned ebb and flow of spoken rhythms and dynamics, intensified by deliberate, decisive body movements. It did not matter that we were not hearing an English text.

'Extensions' in the Pacific Ring Festival, like 'Technology' and 'Collaboration', were best achieved in terms of their relation to technical advance and the dynamics of individual projects. Some of the most successful compositions,

whether by major figures or graduate students, were those which started from modest materials and means. Among the student composers, the UCSD penchant for sustained timbral interest was amply demonstrated by David Dramm's syllabically inspired *f/v* for solo flute, ably played by John Sebastian Winston; *Chuen Mian* by Gan-Wei Yin for soprano, flute, cello and piano and *Japanese Gardens* by Igor Korneitchouk for flute/piccolo, guitar and percussion showed a very Eastern and highly musical sense of timbre and space. Takemitsu's musical presence at the festival was better manifested through several piano pieces, exquisitely interpreted by Cecil Lytle, who was also the soloist for Joji Yuasa's major electro-acoustic piece, *Towards the Midnight Sun*. Yuasa's adroit use of the technology of the instrument to hand was superbly exhibited by Laura Hunter's performance of his *Not I But The Wind* for solo amplified saxophone, which successfully projected the world of the ancient shakuhachi into the complex resonances of the alto saxophone.

Yuasa's *Towards the Midnight Sun*, for piano and digital tape, was, for me, the most successful piece involving computer music in the festival. As in *Icon* – a much earlier analog work, sculpted from elemental white noise – Yuasa here used the same sound source and carved it into shapes and gestures of awesome range, aided by an exemplary use of spatial manipulation software, which is one of the outstanding creations of the CARL system. The live pianist functioned not so much to do battle with the 'orchestral' might of the sounds around him; rather, he 'stoically offers complementary patterns which weave in and out of the computer's tapestry of elastic evocations', as Roger Reynolds put it in the festival brochure. Pieces by John Stevens (*The Evolution of Madness*) and Robert Thompson (*Soul Rejoinders*) from CARL, the latter with video synthesis by Victoria Bearden, also displayed the strengths of the system's randomness programs as compositional and textural aids: the use of randomness within other, controlled, parameters.

Perhaps the works of Conlon Nancarrow should have been billed under 'Technology' rather than 'Extensions', for although the player-piano was a development in the line of Cage and Henry Cowell, it is perhaps the first computer music in terms of machine execution. It was disappointing that no player-piano suitable for a live rendition of Nancarrow's rolls had been permitted, but the re-hearings of *Study No. 25* and the acoustic *Sonatina para piano* were supplemented by the world premiere of Nancarrow's first ensemble piece to be written since his exile in Mexico. *Piece No. 2 for small orchestra* (consisting of oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, two pianos, two violins, viola, two cellos, and double bass), replete with hocketing, posed enormous challenges for its non-automated performers, and it reflected the composer's lack of contact with performers over such a long period of time. The audience was also treated to the as yet unavailable sequence of *Study No. 48 a, b and c* for player-piano in which, as in *Study No. 47*, the final section repeats the previous two sections simultaneously, leading to textures of stunning viscosity.

If Nancarrow's ensemble piece represented the tendencies of the isolated technological composer, then the Harry Partch Ensemble and, even more so, the Ensemble Sekar Jaya, offered visions of instruments for future multi-stylistic

composition. Sekar Jaya, from San Francisco, which played at the already-mentioned 'Ensembles' concert, was the first all-American Balinese gamelan to be invited by the Indonesian Government to tour in Bali, and the presence of their excellent performance begged the question as to why there was no Lou Harrison, in music or in person, at the festival. Although they performed no new music for gamelan, of which a considerable amount exists in the United States, Sekar Jaya symbolise the kind of cross-cultural exchange of performing practice outside commercial music that the world has already seen with jazz and certain African-related idioms.

Clearly, much more in the way of Pacific synthesis could have been pursued at the Pacific Ring Festival, but in the time and budget available Roger and Karen Reynolds, Bonnie and Ed Harkins and F. Richard Moore are to be congratulated for a remarkable innovation. Although modest by comparison with some more regular new music or ethnomusical festivals, the Pacific Ring Festival, organised in the middle of a busy university schedule, was highly successful in promoting awareness of the myriad richness of the innovative osmoses which are possible across the Pacific region: a richness that is just as valid as well as challenging to composers elsewhere in the world.

## Contributors to this Issue

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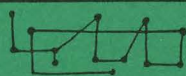
**Christopher Fox** Composer, performer and lecturer in art and design. A member of the Composers' Forum at the Darmstadt Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in 1984 and 1986. He is at present working on an evening-long cycle of pieces for Ensemble Köln, two interlocking trios for the Swedish group Aquarius and a piece for Philip Mead for electrically stimulated piano.

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