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34

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C O N T A C T

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Andrew Hugill Thomson

A Tale Told:

A brief appreciation of the music of Roger Marsh

Roger Marsh occupies a curious position in British musical life. On the one hand, his works are fairly frequently performed (*Dum*, for example, has been done around the world, and *Not A Soul But Ourselves* has received over 100 performances) and yet, on the other hand, they are not 'well-known' in the conventional sense. The general public, if it thinks about him at all, places him in the 'ghastly modern music' category (his orchestral piece *Still* was greeted with characteristic indifference in Liverpool recently by an audience who had come to hear some classical music), yet the 'modern-music' world maintains a somewhat sceptical position about his work too, usually deploying a series of easy put-downs in order effectively to dispense with his music. Small wonder then that, initially at least, Roger Marsh has a tendency to define himself in terms of negative images of the world, in the same way that Wittgenstein pointed to everything *but* an object in order to define that object.

Marsh, then, dislikes modern settings of texts in which the words are inaudible, or set in an unsympathetic way. Particularly high in this category of dislikes is the kind of setting for piano and voice in which the two 'instruments' doggedly follow their own purely musical paths, and both the writing and mode of delivery suggest that the vocal part might as well be set to 'la'. He dislikes the encumbrance of tradition, the detritus of culture which seems to oblige audiences to evaluate theatrical work in terms of Chekhov and Shakespeare and musical work through Monteverdi and Beethoven. He dislikes redundancy of musical and theatrical gesture, preferring every element of a work to be to the fore and meaningful. He prefers not to be seen as a composer seeking an established position or a conventional celebrity. In sum, he is not ambitious, except for the content of the works themselves which, as we shall see, is both condensed and fragile, like poetry.

Many of the arguments used against Marsh are familiar and well-worn simplifications. As a product of the celebrated Wilfred Mellers era at York University (to which he has recently returned as a lecturer), then a student at San Diego and then a lecturer at Keele University, he has acquired the generally derisory label of 'University composer', presumably implying a certain cosiness and academicism. Marsh, however, sees the academic environment as a liberating force, allowing time and resources for composition and buying the freedom to write in a way untrammelled by commercial constraints. That this influence rubs off on his students is something to which I can attest: in 1981 I, along with John Abram (now resident in Canada) was the first student to take an M.A. in Composition at

Keele under Roger Marsh. The fact that my music was, and still is, completely different from his in every respect in no way hampered the progress of this valuable experience.

The label 'the English Berio' which has occasionally been applied to Marsh also reveals a shallow understanding of his work. He has always been keen to acknowledge his sources, where appropriate, and sometimes his work does have strong parallels with Berio, but even in these cases the spirit of the music is very different from Berio's brand of European eclecticism. Marsh has a distinctive personal voice which shows itself through the delicate tracery of the musical materials, frequently more by implication than direct statement.

The most obvious characteristic of this voice, in both musical and mixed-media works, is 'theatricality'. This really takes the form of an intense focus upon gesture heightened by the exclusion of peripheral activity, be it visual or musical. The gesture itself may be more or less decorative, but its crucial function is to be meaningful within the still frame of the work. This idea applies as much to the purely musical works as it does to works of so-called 'music-theatre', a genre in which theatrical presentation serves to emphasize the musical gestures and to maintain the illusion of a single, self-sufficient, non-referential statement. Concomitant with this idea is the abandonment of tradition or, at least, the creation of a new tradition of music-theatre which owes something to Beckett's more visual plays and to Oriental theatre.

An early example of this is the piece *Dum*, composed in 1972 and revised in 1977. This is scored for solo performer and calls for some rudimentary props: a lectern, a saucepan-lid, a small bell concealed inside one of two metal buckets which also contains fistfuls of nuts and bolts, a hammer and a tam-tam. The work's origins lie in an earlier piece, *Dum's Dream*, in which an orchestra surrounds a curious box which is festooned with junk objects. Gradually the box comes to life as the character within – Dum – rattles his cage and rails against his environment. The theme of prisoner is continued in *Dum* itself, where the protagonist is portrayed as a human fly trapped in a web of poetic memory and despair. This effect is achieved through a fragmentation of a number of 'found' texts: *Grace* by Ralph Waldo Emerson; John Donne's sonnet *Batter My Heart*; Christina G. Rossetti's *Despised and Rejected*; a Hymn to the Virgin and Dante's *Purgatorio* Canto XII; *The Hill* by Rupert Brooke and *The Lord's Prayer* in Greek, Italian and English. The following example gives a good picture of the way in which these texts are treated:

Example 1
Roger Marsh: *Dum*, p. 7.

As also we h_a WHO IS THIS THAT CALLS?! f_o Give! Nay!
(ff) (mf) (f) (mf)

n-? Give! Nay! I am deaf as are my walls! that ss-pa s-tr s
(mf) (f) (ff) (mf)

(c)ease crying for I will not h-ear Others?! Others?! What? Indeed! that I, should, m-? hungry?
(f) (very ill tempered)

Feed! I will not open! And r-um-ing! Trouble me no more!
(yelling) (calm) (ill tempered...)

Bell: (f) (back into bucket)

Go on! Footsore? No! I WILL NOT RISE AND OPEN! But Give us this
(ff) (ff) (mf) (mp) day our...
(mumbled, fast)

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The notation here is familiar to students of contemporary music and even dates the work fairly accurately. Perhaps the only unusual indications are the large dots in bars 3, 4 and 9 of the example. These relate to a theatrical gesture: Dum is seated clutching a metal bucket full of metal objects, to his right on the floor sits another metal bucket. At each dot he hurls a handful of metal objects into the second bucket, producing a loud metallic crash. This passage contains another visual gag (bar 8), namely the little bell, the appearance of which comes as a surprise in the context of a lot of noise and shouting. The texts are jumbled throughout the work and Example 1 shows their occasional dislocation into pure syllabic vocalisations of phonemes (e.g. bars 2 and 4), often moving into phonetic script. Finally, note the brief appearance of a section of the Lord's Prayer at the very end of the

example. This familiar text runs through this section (and, indeed, through the whole work in various languages), fragmented but not distorted, and adds to the fervent character of the performance. In fact, the prayer sticks in Dum's throat – he has particular difficulty with 'forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them...'

The various performances of *Dum* that I have seen tended to emphasize different aspects of the protagonist's character. Alan Belk reminded me irresistibly of that most famous Dum – the one twinned with Dee in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass and what Alice found there* – the sudden, irrational, changes of mood and the bumptious delivery suggestive of the refrain:

Nohow!
Contrariwise!

The composer's own interpretation is more tortured, a result as much of his physical appearance as of his awareness of Dum's apparently horrific predicament. But the final impression left by the work (and this is a theme to which I shall return) is of a *poem*. It has its roots in the Dada sound – poems of Schwitters and Ball, with their fragmentation of text into pure vocal sound. It shares their style of presentation: aggressive, hectoring and 'theatrical' in a crude way. It is also shot through with poetry at its very sources and, despite the fragmentation, something of the flavour of each of the 'found' poems comes through. More important than these characteristics, though, is the sensitive way in which Marsh has shaped his material, balancing events by careful notation, providing a sequence of sonic and visual imagery and creating a rhetorical tone which is emphasized by the use of lectern and gavel.

Rhetoric and its antithesis – muttering – form the basis of Marsh's most famous work *Not A Soul But Ourselves*. Marsh has recounted his disappointment when, having tracked down a recording of James Joyce

reading the 'Anna Livia Plurabelle' episode of *Finnegans Wake*, he heard the writer employing a standard rhetorical style of reading, intoning or declaiming the text which purports to represent the gossip or chatter of Irish washerwomen on the banks of the Liffey. Originally written for the Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble of California, but latterly performed and recorded with some success by Electric Phoenix, Marsh's piece reinstates both the Irish accent and the gossipy style. Here the delivery is more intimate than *Dum* and, despite the precise notation, more casual, even lending itself to a theatrical version made by the group Vocem which sets the work in a pub. However, as with so many of Marsh's works, the success of the piece relies enormously upon the accuracy and sensitivity of the performance. Here, even more than in *Dum*, the music is delicate and fragile, made up of predominantly small vocal sounds, combined in carefully balanced and shifting aggregations of inflection, interspersed with silence. Take, for example, this passage:

Example 2
Roger Marsh: "Not a soul but ourselves . . .", p. 9.

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Here the consonant 't' is used to suggest the ticking of a clock (time-checks are a feature of the piece), and also as a means to mask other entries, each of which is clear in both sound and meaning. This clarity eschews subservient or 'accompanying' material and, once again, Marsh's poetic feel for balance and timing

produces a structure in which events are carefully placed in time, like figures etched on glass. In this case the events tend to converge upon an ending which, in Marsh's opinion, accounts for the popularity of the work:

Example 3
Roger Marsh: "Not a soul but ourselves . . .", p. 19.

♩ = 60

The musical score consists of three systems of staves. The first system has two staves, with the top staff marked '(mp)'. The second system has three staves, with the top staff marked 'mp Anan' and the bottom staff marked 'pp n ananan'. The third system has four staves, with the top staff marked 'mp Anan' and the bottom staff marked 'pp n ananan'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

This unification of the voices and the presence of simple but delightful harmony seems to reassure the listener not expecting such obvious 'tonal' material in a work of extended vocal techniques. That Marsh is still unsure about this ending is an interesting comment upon his attitude to his own work. His usual approach to a new composition is to consider the performers and then to deliver the sort of material which takes them outside their normal style or repertoire. This practice can backfire, as Marsh himself admits (it produced a certain amount of open hostility from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, for example), but is done in the sincere belief that worthwhile musical activity is only possible through the creation of something new, extraordinary; something perilous for the performer, composer and audience. Marsh has a fondness for stark, sometimes unpalatable, material which, whilst it may not exactly confront the listener, nonetheless leaves him or her feeling somewhat uneasy.

Since 1976, Marsh has been working on a large-scale piece of music-theatre which, despite his efforts, has so far failed to attract either funding or offers of performance. Entitled *The Big Bang*, it is a loose collection of pieces on mythical themes, in particular the Old Testament myth. Early pieces such as *Three Hale Mairies*, *A Psalm and a Silly Lovesong*, and even *Not A Soul But Ourselves* originate in this larger work. This is an important notion, since it points to the stylistic unity of much of Marsh's music. Like Beckett, many of

the works minutely examine a limited amount of material and, viewed collectively, the works may be seen as varied elaborations of a central theme or idea. Initially, this was a kind of female personification of Love. All three of the pieces mentioned contain 'love choruses', sung by women, characterised by the rapidly repeated phrase 'lualualuva . . .' or sometimes 'lualualiva . ..'. In a more recent work, *Delilah*, the character of Samson is portrayed through Delilah's own account. Gradually, though, these female statements have disappeared to be replaced by a more muscular, 'male' delivery.

The central focus of *The Big Bang* as it stands today is the character and life of King David. In Marsh's reading of the Old Testament, the political implications of the story of David are explored in the manner of a thriller. The closest model is Mario Puzo's *The Godfather*, and there are some astonishing parallels between the two stories. It is important to note, however, that although there are many tales within *The Big Bang*, there is no overall narrative.

Marsh deals with the Biblical concept of ideal love, to which we all, supposedly, aspire, and the paradox of the low, even crooked, means we employ in its pursuit. The image of a congregation dutifully, and apparently sincerely, singing the words of Psalm 137 has always amused Marsh:

Blessed shall he be who takes thy little ones and dashes them against the rock!

He is also struck by the limitations to the knowledge of the David story shown by most churchgoers. It is rare to hear a sermon about the story of David and Bathsheba, for example, and virtually impossible to hear one in which the full facts are spelt out. Yet the Old Testament states them clearly enough.

The Song of Abigail (1986), which was first performed by Lontano with Frances Lynch as soloist, illustrates this neatly. After an introduction played by a solo violin, Abigail introduces herself and the story that is to follow thus:

Perhaps I should explain. The tale you are about to hear is a true story, and you can read it for yourselves in the first book of Samuel, chapter 25. It concerns a protection racket, and the manner in which David – shepherd, harpist, giant-killer and eventually King of Israel and Judah – came to acquire the land and possessions of the wealthy Nabal. Chief among the chattels which David won for himself was Nabal's wife, the beautiful and intelligent Abigail – that's me. O.K?

When Nabal, who is mean, refuses to pay protection money to David, he sends messengers to demand payment. Nabal refuses and Abigail, seeing an opportunity to better her position, meets David

'accidentally' and offers him both gifts and herself, at the same time inviting his wrath upon Nabal. David accepts everything. When Abigail tells Nabal, the shock kills him, and so Abigail enters into a polygamous marriage with the King.

Marsh instructs Abigail to be played in a 'relaxed, friendly, confidential' way, with a 'natural, everyday, accent'. The work is subtitled 'a melodrama' and, for much of the time, the vocal writing is very close to speech. The ensemble of: flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, tuba, piano, percussion, violin, viola and cello, is lightly scored, with Marsh's usual concern for subtle instrumental sonority, minimal material and perpetual variation. Like many of the more recent works, *The Song of Abigail* contains much humour, in particular a witty section of cod Anglican-chant. This occurs at a crucial moment in the story, when Abigail pleads with David on her knees. The audience is aware, of course, that this pleading is something of a sham; we have formed a clear enough opinion of Abigail's character to recognise that she is attempting to ingratiate herself with a view to matrimony.

Example 4

Roger Marsh: *The Song of Abigail*, p. 41.

The musical score is for a vocal soloist (Soprano) and an ensemble. The vocal line is written in a style that is very close to speech, with lyrics in English. The lyrics are: "Upon me, my Lord, upon me let this iniquity be, and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid, (mf, clear and simple). Let not my Lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, a ver Nabal, for as his name is so is he, Nabal is his name and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid (thine handmaid) saw not the young men of my Lord whom thou didst send. Oh!" The score includes dynamics such as *mf*, *p*, and *mp*, and performance instructions like "(stem) poco sul pont." for the strings. The tempo is marked as *f = 240 (recitativo)*. The score is in 4/8 time and consists of two systems of staves.

Notice the coy little unpitched interjections 'please Sir!' and 'Oh!' which break up the chant. Dramatically this passage is full of irony, on several levels, an irony achieved by a careful exposition of the characters' motives and a playful manipulation of the audience's expectations and knowledge. In fact, the lightness of treatment of such a violent story is in itself a dramatic irony. In many ways the subject of *The Big Bang* is chauvinism: Abigail's 'music-hall-style' delivery diminishes the significance of David's actions, accommodates them to the Sunday School, renders them tolerable as unfortunate means to a desirable end.

Within the kaleidoscope of tales which make up the whole cycle, numerous examples of such inversions appear: shorn Samson lies to a chorus of stamping women, a coquettish Delilah recounts her conquest and, most recently, in a move away from the Biblical context, a frustrated Alcestis is disappointed to be rescued by Hercules from the lure of Charon.

As the title suggests, *The Big Bang* begins with an explosion and expands through the various tales. Then, like *Finnegans Wake*, it cyclically contracts to the point from which it started. Most of the individual works, or tales, within it stand on their own, and some

important parts – in particular *Three Biblical Songs*, scored for baritone, soprano, female chorus and large ensemble – remain unperformed to date.

The presence of a piano in the *Song of Abigail* and the later *Music for Piano and Wind Instruments* comes as something of a surprise to those people familiar with Marsh's output. His penchant for delicate timbral combination and, one suspects, his dislike of the tradition associated with piano repertoire, usually leads him to write for harp if an instrument of that type is required at all. However, in response to a self-criticism that his music lacks harmonic richness and a 'layered' texture, he has gradually increased his use of the piano. This has culminated recently in his first work for solo piano: *Easy Steps* (1987), written for Anthony Williams. Despite its construction from a kind of note-row, and despite the painstaking way in which Marsh built up some of the more vigorous passages, the work is surprisingly pianistic, unintentionally seeming to evoke Scriabin in its harmony and Liszt, or even – in a small way – Sorabji, in some of its textures.

The first page of the score contains the bulk of the material to be examined later in the work:

Example 5 Roger Marsh: *Easy Steps*, p. 1.

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The thick, immovable chords of the last three bars contain some of the notes of the sixteen-note row (which divides into three unequal parts of eight, three and five notes) within which the interval of a minor

third predominates. This interval also features in the main melodic motif which opens the work.

An example from later in the piece will show how this material is presented:

Example 6 Roger Marsh: *Easy Steps*, p. 6.

The addition of a Scriabinesque left-hand motif to the thick chords and the transformation of the rapid, arpeggiated figures into a flourish at the end of each two-bar phrase both thickens and 'beefs up' the texture. Marsh's characteristic technique of near repetition of such short blocks of material contains enough variation to maintain interest, whilst the prevailing non-functional dominant, or rather extended-dominant, harmony, does not propel the piece forward in a conventional sense, but seems to hold the gestures in a state of suspended animation, active yet unresolved, muscular without being really menacing. Marsh is keen to emphasize that he sees this and other recent works as representing a real progression from earlier material. As I have already mentioned, he is aware of the fact that many of his works, being 'single-image' pieces, rely upon extreme accuracy of performance and are vulnerable to the slightest insensitivity on the part of the performer. He is also aware that, in a number of cases, fairly straightforward musical devices (e.g. accompaniments, drones, etc.) could be employed to bind and support the central idea. His decision not to employ these means is indicative of his thinking about the essence of that idea. In *Easy Steps* and other recent works, however, he has set out to create a more robust structure which nonetheless does not include redundant or meaningless gesture. Rather, the gestures are 'layered' carefully to create a kind of gestural polyphony.

With characteristic frankness, Marsh confesses that he feels 'something is missing' from his work. One

senses this missing 'something' is what leads him on to the next composition. In my discussions with him, he has always been at pains to point out the unwillingness of his music to fit into conventional categories. *Dum*, for example, he refuses to see as music at all, arguing hotly that it is theatre, in the same way that Beckett is theatre, apart from the Shakespearean tradition, sufficient unto itself.

Yet, to my mind, the question of categories – music, theatre, music-theatre and so on – is ultimately of secondary importance to the nature of the works themselves. After one has absorbed the visual impact of the disembodied, luminous mouth in Beckett's *Not I*, for example, the greatest interest remains *what* the mouth says, *how* it says what it says and *when* it says what it says. One is left with an impression of words, a stream of words, punctuated with silence, mouth open, mouth shut.

Roger Marsh is a composer with an acute sense of balance, a feeling for proportion, an ear for sonority and, above all, an accuracy and exquisiteness of *timing*. If his work must be squeezed into an existing category, I would consider it closer to poetry than anything else. Indeed, Marsh shares many of the attributes of a poet: he is something of an outsider, his language is condensed, heightened and loaded with meaning; the delivery is frequently rhetorical or, at least, there is always a 'tone of voice'. Poetry is not as common as might be expected in contemporary music, but its authenticity may be tested by its tendency to linger in the brain long after the actual performance is ended.

Novello Contemporary Composers

Roger Marsh

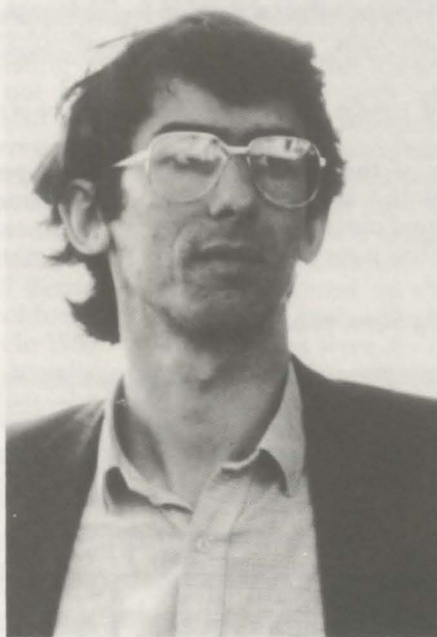
'A splendid, zany monologue, with just the right pitch of hard dramatic sense. A memorable high-point'

(Dum)

FINANCIAL TIMES

Born London, 1949, studied with Ian Kellam, later with Bernard Rands at York where he ran the music-theatre group *Clap*. Awarded a Harkness Fellowship to study at the University of California (San Diego) 1976/8. Now lectures at Keele University.

Established early reputation with a series of striking music-theatre pieces. His style is characterised by a pungent lyricism, decorative or ironically barbed, sometimes humorous, producing works of drama and emotional impact. Commissions include: CBSO, Lontano, Vocem, Electric Phoenix, BBC.



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Pamela Smith

Towards the Spiritual – the electroacoustic music of Jonathan Harvey

The emotional response to music, whether affective or intellectual, is often experienced at a profound level. It is even likened by some to a kind of spiritual enlightenment. Electronic and computer technology has provided new musical materials and resources for composers this century, and has broadened the field of musical expression; perhaps the electronic medium also has a particular contribution to make to the kind of response and the depth of musical experience we can have as listeners.

One composer for whom the spiritual function of music is especially important is Jonathan Harvey. One only has to look at the title of his Ph.D thesis – *The Composer's Idea of his Inspiration* – or indeed at the titles of his pieces – *Inner Light*, *Bhakti* (Devotions), *Smiling Immortal*, *Be(com)ing*, to mention but a few – to realise that Harvey has identified a new ideology in contemporary art which is influenced by Eastern philosophy and moves away from a post-Renaissance preoccupation with individual expression. In his opinion, this has been strongly reflected in two major developments in Western music:

Serialism, and electronic music, with its ability to get into unknown sorts of sound, both suggest a new world which could be called spiritual; or one might speak of a greater awareness of what is. It's a matter of the expansion of the narrow self . . . The magic is in the composer inviting people to expand their individuality into a new region and thereby experience selflessness, egolessness, without losing the sense of a connection. It's the function of art to make one expand one's consciousness so that a narrow, insecure, individual self disappears and a larger self, the absolute is brought to consciousness.¹

Why does he single out serialism and electronic music? Firstly, serialism provides an alternative to bass-line dominated harmony and form. It is free from

tonal hierarchies and enables structures to be formed symmetrically around an axis. Musical cells may be so configured that even in retrograde or inversion they are reflections of the same essential idea. Electronic music is also free from tonal 'gravity' in the sense that synthetic sounds may be constructed at will, not necessarily in accordance with the hierarchical harmonic series. Electronic sounds lack what Harvey calls 'externality': in other words, they have no recognisable physical source and thus acquire a disembodied quality which can be exploited for its associations of weightlessness and timelessness. Both serialism and electronic sound synthesis may be used to create music which revolves rather than proceeds, music of stasis in which motion and development take place within a much larger stillness. (Such ideas, though perhaps without the spiritual overtones, go back to the palindromic pitch and rhythmic configurations of Webern and Messiaen, and the aleatoric works of Boulez and Stockhausen.) It is as if in breaking free from goal-orientated finite forms, one begins to reach towards the infinite.

The Inner Light trilogy

Ideas such as these began to reach fruition in Harvey's music after his 'massive Pauline conversion' to Stockhausen in the late sixties and his subsequent studies at Princeton with Milton Babbitt. His *Inner Light* trilogy (1973-7), which is dedicated to the exploration of timbre in relation to structure, is a kind of metaphor for the concepts of expansion and integration expressed in his writings. It is an expanding series of works each scored for a different ensemble plus tape and written according to strict serial principles.

Example 1

Inner Light (1), bar 8 (unmeasured), pp. 10-11 of Novello score

The musical score for Example 1 consists of three staves: Violin (Vcl.), Piano (Ptte.), and Tape. The Vcl. staff features a melodic line with an 'espress.' marking and a 'pp' dynamic. The Ptte. staff has a complex rhythmic pattern with 'pp' and 'f.v.' markings. The Tape staff shows a transformation from 'pitch' to 'harmonic space' with a diagonal line and 'beats.....' marking. A box with the number '9' is present in the Tape staff. A bracket with '22'' is also visible in the Tape staff.

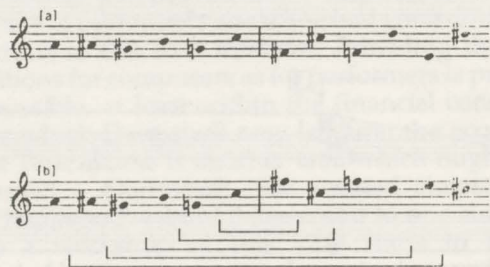
Inner Light (1) (1973), for seven instruments and tape, sets up a continuum between instrumental timbre and structural harmony whereby the harmonic fields (or what Harvey calls harmonic 'spaces') of the piece are formed in approximation to the spectral analyses of the instruments in the group. The work journeys along a path from indistinct sound, via the establishment of timbre and pitch to three 'crystallised' chords which represent the formal structure of the piece: one low and dark, one high and bright and one mediating chord.

The basic row, from which these final three chords are taken, is created in the first section. At the beginning, noise gradually changes into simulated cello sounds in the tape on low C, the real cello's first note. All twelve pitches are introduced in this way, the tape always giving a cue for the real instrument to enter on its associated note. The partials of each simulated sound on the tape are then increased in volume until they are heard as a chord. Thus timbre 'flowers' into harmony and harmonic fields from which new sets are drawn (Example 1). Each note is further linked to a particular rhythmic figure, so that the instruments finally become characterised on four related levels: timbre, harmony, derived pitch material and rhythm. Timbre here is used as an integrating medium through which the interrelationship of the different musical parameters is explored.

In *Inner Light* (3) (first performed in 1976), timbre is used to 'enlarge' instrumental identity. The work is scored for full orchestra and 4-track tape – an important role of the tape being to transform the waveform of one instrument into that of another. For example, from figures 126-7, a horn sound is extracted from the orchestral texture, projected around the concert hall where it changes into a flute sound, and sent back to the stage speakers to be taken up by the orchestral flute.

Inner Light (3) is probably the most structurally complex of all three works. It is organised on several distinct levels² (of pitch, rhythm and timbre) all of which involve a process of expansion and contraction. The basic set is one of expanding intervals. (The retrograde version is therefore one of contracting intervals; furthermore if inverted, the second half of the row retrogrades the first half.) (Example 2 (a) and (b)). Derived sets are generated from intervals of the basic set and form the substance of the musical material. Harmonic fields, or 'spaces' expand and contract on another level from tritones to semitones and even further to noise at four significant points. On the highest level is a background sequence of expanding intervals, whose constituent pitches slide off both ends of the audible scale one by one into silence.

Example 2
Inner Light (3) basic set

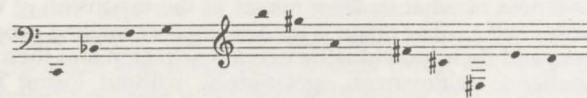


Expansion and contraction may also be seen in the rhythmic organisation, which gets alternately faster and slower and eventually does both simultaneously, loud chords articulating a slow tempo while the instrumental figurations reach the speed of alpha brainwaves.

The expansion of timbre is manifested in three ways. Firstly, each pitch of the basic set has an associated instrument or instruments, hence the orchestration at any point is governed by the number of pitches in the derived set. The instruments remain in the texture once they have entered, accumulating as background material to accommodate new instruments as they are introduced. Secondly, the piece begins, as do the other two *Inner Light* pieces, with indistinct, low sounds on the percussion and tape, from which clear, recognisable sounds emerge. Thirdly, and more significantly, instrumental identity is expanded through the tape transformations, each instrument becoming part of a much greater, all-embracing sonic world.

Inner Light (2) (first performed in 1977), the last of the trilogy to be written, also features the ideas of integration and expansion of the other two and in many respects makes explicit the ideology underlying all three works. It functions as the intermediary work, most obviously in the forces employed: chamber orchestra, five solo voices and tape. It is also the linking piece in terms of the musical material: the notes of its basic row are almost identical to those of *Inner Light* (1), except that notes 5 & 7, and notes 10 & 12 have been swapped around to ensure the intervallic symmetry of the two halves (Example 3).

Example 3
Inner Light (1)



Inner Light (2)



The piece begins on C, the last note of *Inner Light* (1) and ends on A, the first note of *Inner Light* (3). Serial proportions are extended from vowels and consonants to jumbled texts, invented nonsense language, speech and narrative. On the simplest level, *Inner Light* (2) explores the relationship between timbre, harmony and structure like *Inner Light* (1) only taking the human voice as the starting point rather than instrumental sounds. This is done at various points by translating the formant structures which characterise vowel sounds into audible pitches in the tape, which are then taken up by the strings to form chord sequences (Example 4).

While the tape has the same vital bridging function in these transformation passages as it has in the two other pieces, it also performs several other roles. Harvey uses it quite deliberately as a dramatic device, almost like a film sound track, as an accompaniment to the tenor's spoken narrative. This is an extract from *They* by Rudyard Kipling, in which the protagonist attempts and finally succeeds in making contact with the spirit world, symbolised by children. Thus, for

Example 4

Inner Light (2), bars 132-4, p. 25 of Faber score

example, children's voices break through the texture in the tape, speaking, singing, laughing and breathing, always through a distancing 'veil' of other noises.

A large part of this text is spoken over an important rising glissando in the tape during which formant chords and their fundamentals ascend repeatedly into inaudibility, the whole passage being punctuated by rising clusters in the organ. This both looks back to a similar passage in *Inner Light* (1) and looks forward to the expanding spaces of *Inner Light* (3) as the culminating work in this expanding series. Harvey writes:

The third is concerned with expansion itself, a reflection of the basic idea of the expansion of the consciousness towards God.³

This transcendental theme is encapsulated in the final text of *Inner Light* (2), a Meditation by Rudolf Steiner, in homage to whom the whole trilogy was conceived:

Ich schaue in die Finsternis. In ihr erstehet Licht, lebendes Licht. Wer ist dies Licht in der Finsternis? Ich bin es selbst in meine Wirklichkeit. Diese Wirklichkeit des Ich tritt nicht ein in mein Erdensein, Ich bin nur Bild davon. Ich werde es aber wieder-finden wenn Ich guten willens für den Geist durch des Todes Pforte geschritten.⁴

(I gaze into the darkness. Light arises from within it, living light. Who is this light in the darkness? I am it myself in my reality. This reality of the 'I' does not step into my earthly existence, I am only an image of it. But I shall find it again when with goodwill for the spirit I have stepped through the gates of death.)

Mortuous Plango and Bhakti

The tape parts for all three *Inner Light* works were created using analogue equipment. Harvey had found working with the MUSIC IV BF sound synthesis program at Princeton 'too protracted' and was discouraged from experimenting further with digital computers (with the exception of *Veils and Melodies* (1978), now withdrawn) until trying his hand at IRCAM in 1980 with the assistance of Stanley Haynes to produce the now classic tape piece *Mortuous Plango, Vivos Voco*. The kinds of transformations mentioned earlier are the very basis of this work.⁵ Analysis of the spectrum of Harvey's pre-recorded bell sound gave the sequence of notes in Example 5. With this information, Harvey was able to resynthesize the bell in such a fashion as to have complete control over each partial, opening up the possibilities not only of transposition but also all manner of mutations. For example, normally the low partials of a bell decay slowly and the high ones quickly; by inverting this pattern the bell could be turned 'inside out'; rhythmic effects were achieved by virtue of the computer's ability to extract selected segments of bell sounds and mix them in sophisticated ways at great speed; there was also a rich area of hybrid sounds available from combinations of bell and treble voice sounds (the only other concrete sound used): a common one is a chord made up of bell partial notes sung by a 'chorus' of boys. (The same technique is used in *Bhakti*. The bell chord reappears in movement 7 with the partial notes distributed across all instruments.)

Example 5
Mortuous Plango

Bell Spectrum



There are many reasons why *Mortuous Plango* is so effective. The familiar sounds of bell and treble voice provide a foothold in a work which otherwise attempts to challenge accepted modes of listening, at the same time imbuing it with a sense of history (and even cultural heritage in a country famous for its cathedral tradition). The jumbled text is loaded with implied meaning, a feature which Harvey exploits in a manner reminiscent of Berio and Stockhausen. The composer has described how the pattern of the bell sound – the rapid disappearance of the high partials leaving the 'prolonged calm of the deep hum note'⁶ – suggested to him the progression from outwardness to inwardness, the central idea of the piece. This is reflected in the relationship between spectrum and structural harmony: eight of the lowest partials are

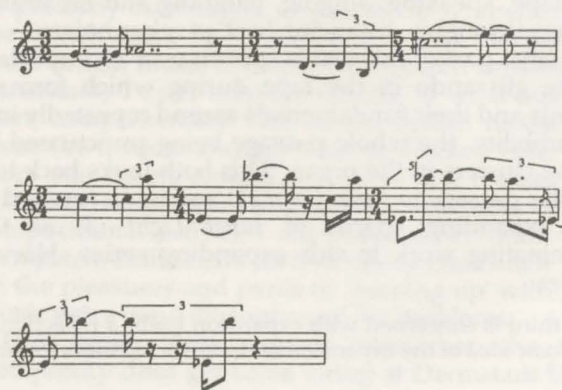
used as the tonal centres of the eight sections of the piece, so that the bell in a sense is the piece. We are taken inside the bell sound, quite literally in places when the different partials are assigned to different loudspeakers and diffused around the room (a feature which is obviously suppressed in the stereo version of the piece). The bell 'explodes' before our ears and yet remains intact, recognisably whole.

Mortuous Plango lasts about fifteen minutes. *Bhakti* (1982), in contrast, explores similar ideas over twelve movements lasting almost an hour. This is another 'child of IRCAM', born from the desire to use sophisticated sound analysis and resynthesis to expand the notion of timbre composition. Harvey returned here to the instruments-and-tape format of the *Inner Light* pieces but with the intention of disguising the tape by making the synthetic sounds as close as possible to the acoustic ones, thus releasing a fertile area of ambiguity. The familiar Harvey fingerprint of timbral transformation plays an important part in creating this ambiguity. In several instances instrumental sounds fan out into harmonies or melt into new sounds (especially at the end of movement 7), so that the attack, usually the clue-giving component of a sound's identity, becomes less dependable. Furthermore, the tape part itself has a strong instrumental character; not only are the sounds similar, but also the gestures, so there is a real sense of dialogue between the orchestra and its mirror image. However, transformations and instrumental ambiguity do not form the essence of *Bhakti* as they do the *Inner Light* pieces and *Mortuous Plango*; rather it is the concept of timbre as the sole conveyor of musical meaning which is being explored:

Once you strip away all complexities of relationship and simply listen to the single notes as such, another new music begins to become possible. If the melody is slowed down to such an extent that all that normally charms the mind into constituting pretty intervallic patterns is absent, the mind explores the timbre itself.⁷

Examples of this exploration of timbre can be found in the first movement and the ninth, both of which are dominated by the axial pitch G to the exclusion of almost all others in the desire to liberate that 'new music'; it is for this reason also that the macro-melody (Example 6), another symmetrical construction, is heard throughout the work in unison.⁸

Example 6
Bhakti, movement 3, bars 2-8 of Faber score



New Directions

In his article 'New directions: a manifesto', Harvey pinpoints what are, for him, the two most important attributes of electronic music. The first, as noted earlier, is the lack of 'externality' of synthetic sounds – the fact that they issue from no known instrument or identifiable physical locality. The second is that in electronic music individual notes may take on a new dimension through explorations of their acoustic structure and no longer be simply perceived as units of a musical argument:

Form there still is, of course. In a sense it is pure immanence (lack of identifiable source for sound), but also it is pure timbre (the exclusive construction of form from tinkering with timbre itself). 'Outer' colours are not used to colour an 'inner' abstract pattern, rather colour and pattern are one and the same. There is no more 'outer' and 'inner'. The pattern lies in the structure of colour itself. Everything has changed. We are getting closer to a more spiritual art in some sense.⁹

Harvey's more recent electroacoustic works seem to challenge these assumptions in a puzzling way. This has much to do with his current fascination with commercial technology: a Fairlight CMI used in *Nachtlied*, and various synthesizers and samplers used in *Madonna of Winter and Spring* and his more recent work *From Silence*.

Nachtlied (written in 1984 for piano, soprano and tape) is one of the best examples of Harvey's instrumental approach to the use of tape. By far the largest part of the material in the tape involves piano or vocal simulation, with clearly defined melodic lines and even polyphonic writing in places. Very rarely does the range of pitches in the tape part extend beyond the natural compass of the voice or piano, and the timbral or technical extensions which do take place serve to integrate the two sound worlds of voice and piano rather than adding a new dimension to each individually.

The work may be divided into two main sections corresponding to the two poems set (Goethe's *Wandlers Nachtlied* and Steiner's *Abends/Morgen*). Uniting the sections are semitonal cells with which harmony and melody are constructed and from which the basic twelve-note set is derived. Not surprisingly, the tape part is crucial to the structural unfolding of the piece. This is especially so of the second section, which is introduced in the tape with an ostinato from which the basic set emerges; the section is subdivided by interludes for tape or piano and much of the material here consists of a four-part polyphonic vocal texture for which the tape provides three simulated 'voices'.

What is particularly perplexing about this piece is the combination of some convincing electronic sounds with other very crude ones. The vocal simulation varies in effectiveness according to context: where words are clearly defined (e.g. 'tritt', 'ich', p.6, 'mein ich', p. 23), our recognition of the word makes up for deficiencies of timbre; the same applies to the 'massed voices', but the single vocal lines of the polyphonic sections are unsatisfying and rely on reverberation for added depth. The 'bells' at the beginning of the ostinato sound cracked and tinny, as do the 'perforations' of piano chords and the pitch shifting which is used liberally at several points (pp. 9, 15, 18) verges on the banal. Such timbral transformation as takes place in the tape part (e.g. p. 20) is more akin to that of *Inner Light* (3) than to the subtle effects of *Bhakti*.

The criticisms are harsh only because the quality of the electronic part is incommensurate with the beauty of the work, which is tightly constructed, lyrically expressive and emotionally rich. In addition, the tape part has a deeply symbolic function. The Steiner poem *Abends/Morgen* reflects on the nature of being, and speaks of the movement of the soul between the realms of the worldly and the divine through sleep, placing great emphasis on the 'radiant light' which illuminates the world of the Spirit. With reference to these images, the tape part seems to represent the Divine, by virtue of its lack of physical source (while the piano and voice represent the Worldly, their sounds issuing from visible and limited reverberating bodies). It also represents the human soul since it is able to move easily between the sounds associated with both states of being. By extension, therefore, the tape part is symbolic of the Spirit's affinity with the 'higher worlds', while maintaining its links with material reality. (To quote from Steiner again: 'all higher spiritual realities must be related to the physical world and man himself must act as a channel for them to flow into it.')

To a certain extent, however, Harvey's intentions are thwarted by the limitations of the technology. He can no longer claim, for instance, that the electronic sounds have no identifiable source: in his sense, of course, they do not since there are no reverberating bodies; on the other hand, the sounds and gestures (such as pitch shifts and 'perforations') are quite clearly recognisable as coming from a commercial machine, if not directly traceable to the Fairlight. Moreover, the concept of expansion of identity implied by the tape transformations is restricted by the resolution of the instrument; on reflection, Harvey probably had to keep the range of pitches in the tape part within the natural registers of the piano and voice in order to maintain fidelity. Although Harvey is well able to tailor this particular shortcoming to his needs, even make it appropriate to the piece, it is indicative of the instrument's inferiority, which in other respects is too intrusive for the work to be entirely successful.

By 1986, and the orchestral work *Madonna of Winter and Spring*, Harvey had turned to live electronics. Everything about this piece is large-scale: the orchestra, the number of electronic devices, the length, the necessary performance space, the conception. The thematic material is woven from twenty melodies which are both self-contained entities and also part of a circular chain. The reason for this, Harvey says¹¹, is that structural depth is not perceptible without memorability. If the melodies can be memorable in themselves and also coherent in combination, their various permutations in a musical texture will have many layers of meaning. Melody has always been of great importance in Harvey's music (for example, the macro-melody in *Bhakti*) although this kind of melodic 'addition' has only developed in his compositional technique in recent years. (It is the basis of a new tape work to be completed at IRCAM in the spring, as well as his new chamber work, *Tendril* (no electronics) and his latest electroacoustic work *From Silence*.) The melodies of *Madonna of Winter and Spring* grew from the seven harmonic spaces of the piece, all of which are symmetrical around an E/F semitonal axis. When the harmonic spaces are transposed down a minor ninth in the third section, the E/F semitone becomes an inverted pedal; when transposed up a minor ninth for the final section it becomes a bass, and anchors the new, twenty-first melody.

It is clear to see the motive for this kind of writing. Each melody is at once individual and a small part of a greater whole. The permutations offer a chance for the individuality of each one to be incorporated and thus transformed into a larger entity. That aside, the dense thematicism of the work's opening section allows a striking contrast with both the 'timbral' composition of Harvey's previous electroacoustic works and also the static central sections of *Madonna*. During the piece there is a shift away from discourse to what Harvey calls 'psychic music' – the intellect is abandoned. It is music of transition.

The electronics have two roles to play. One is simply to augment the orchestra – the two synthesizers (Yamaha DX1 (and TX816 voice bank extension) and Emulator 11) are used as orchestral instruments in the first section, participating in and articulating the musical argument. In this capacity they work well: most of the sounds used are percussive and augment the orchestral percussion effectively. Ring modulation and amplification (controlled from separate units) are also used for this purpose, expanding the timbral resources of the orchestra without detracting from its physical presence. The second role is to illuminate the path from discourse to spirit. Extended reverberation can 'freeze' any sound, prolonging it indefinitely or storing it for later output independently of the original instrumental gesture. Diffusion instructions are explicit in the score: any of the sounds may be sent on a journey across the acoustic space. Both of these effects draw our attention away from the abstract musical argument towards contemplation of the sounds themselves, and imply stasis.

The transition ('Descent') between the first and third sections is effected almost exclusively in the electronics. The synthesizers discard their orchestral guise and are simply generators of timbre. At the end, their two functions become merged when the instrumental sound of temple bells is sampled and looped by the Emulator to produce a continuous, breathing, pulsating sound which is both bell and something more. It has a new aura.

The two years which separate *Madonna of Winter and Spring* from *Nachtlied* are, as Harvey acknowledges, a long time in electronics. It is partly for this reason that the electronics in *Madonna* are more successful than in the earlier work, the sounds improved. It should also be said that Harvey's use of the instruments is more appropriate, in that he asks from them only such effects as they are capable of producing convincingly. The only reservation one has is that while the reverberation and diffusion techniques will not be greatly altered by the progress of technological evolution, the keyboards will date the work prematurely when they become obsolete, unless their parts are redesigned for succeeding generations of synthesizers.

One could be forgiven for supposing that Harvey's priorities had changed somewhat in recent years, in line with new trends and developments in music technology, for it is hard to reconcile the obvious keenness of his ear and fertility of his imagination in pieces like *Bhakti* or *Mortuous Plango* with the apparent lack of concern shown for the richness and depth of synthetic timbres in some of his more recent compositions. Yet preliminary tape sketches for his forthcoming IRCAM piece indicate that Harvey has by no means foregone the kinds of painstaking spectral manipulation which characterised his works of the early eighties. If anything, he seems keener than ever

to explore the paradox of interchangeable instrumental identity and to refine his control of the 'borderland' of sounds hovering just beyond the limits of conventional musical resources. Evidently each technological step forward has had its attractions for him: first, computers 'fast' enough, then synthesizers 'interesting' enough and now computers 'friendly' enough to suit his musical and artistic purposes. If we as listeners are not so ready to accept the compromises Harvey has made along the way, we can nonetheless look forward to his future electroacoustic works in the assurance that technological progress will only enhance the means at his disposal for realising his musical and spiritual goals.

Examples 2, 3 and 5 were designed on a Macintosh computer by Michael Alcorn and Dr Alan Marsden of Queens University, Belfast.

Unacknowledged translations are by Jane Curren, University of Durham.

¹ Quoted in Paul Griffiths, 'Jonathan Harvey', *New Sounds, New Personalities: British Composers of the 1980's* (London: Faber Music, 1985), pp.51-2.

² See Harvey's article 'Inner Light (3)', *Musical Times* (February 1976), pp. 125-7.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁴ Quotation taken from the score of *Inner Light* (2).

⁵ See Harvey's article 'Mortuous Plango, Vivos Voco: a Realization at IRCAM', *Computer Music Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Winter 1981), or his chapter 'The Mirror of Ambiguity', *The Language of Electroacoustic Music*, ed. Simon Emmerson (London: Macmillan, 1986).

⁶ Emmerson, *ibid.*

⁷ Jonathan Harvey, 'New Directions: A Manifesto', *Soundings*, Vol. 11 (1984), p. 9.

⁸ This is the one melody, among many, which reappears throughout the work, always played in its entirety and in unison, which, by virtue of its own symmetry is reflective of the more complex symmetrical structure of the whole piece.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*, trans. D.S. Osmond and C. Davy (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1969), p. 165.

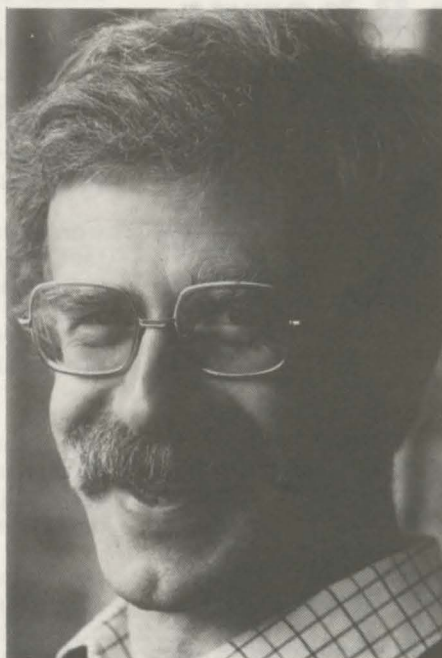
¹¹ Jonathan Harvey, "'Madonna of Winter and Spring' – some structural and aesthetic thoughts', unpublished.

Novello Contemporary Composers

Jonathan Harvey

Born Birmingham, 1939. Educated Repton and St. John's Cambridge. Studied with Erwin Stein and Hans Keller (composition and analysis). Attended Darmstadt, 1966 (contact there with Stockhausen) and a Harkness Fellowship took him to Princeton to study with Babbitt, 1969/70. Reader in Music, Sussex University since 1977. Frequent guest at IRCAM, and will visit MIT in 1987 to study computer music processes.

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Chris Newman: A self portrait.

Controversies incorporated takes temporary leave of absence in the present issue; in its place we offer the first of an occasional series of self-portraits, opportunities for composers to present themselves directly, rather than through the intermediary agency of a Contact contributor. Appropriately, the first self-portrait is of a composer whose work regularly extends beyond music to verbal and visual media – poems, prose-pieces, drawings and videos. Chris Newman was born in London in 1958 but has lived in Cologne since 1980. His work regularly divides critical opinion; indeed the decision of Contact's editors to publish the following text was by no means unanimous! When London New Music premiered Newman's ensemble work *Belgium* last season, Andrew Clements' review in *The Financial Times* described the

composer as a 'breath of fresh air, even within the broad church of experimental music' and the music as 'robust' and 'good-humoured'; Meirion Bowen in *The Guardian* found only 'gobbledegook'. Perhaps the last word should go to Michael Finnissy, a regular advocate of Newman's work and Newman's accompanist in performances of *The Moss* and other songs. In an interview with Richard Toop, quoted in *Contact* 32, Finnissy said of Newman's music, 'I feel close to it even if it seems different from anything I'm doing; it's all music that I passionately believe in, and needs hearing and cherishing'.¹

¹ Richard Toop, 'Four Facets of the "New Complexity"', *Contact* 32 (Spring 1988), p. 11.

C. Newman

Going to the station twice within 2 hours

The first time catching a tram at 9.51pm and arriving at the station at around 10pm in order to meet a train at 10.19pm buying a loaf of bread and 4 rolls and an English newspaper in this intervening time, the 19 minutes mentioned, and being sadly disappointed by the content of the train it not carrying that which had been hoped for, been expected, unless the aforementioned had refrained, for some unaccountable reason, from alighting at this station, but had chosen another destination, returning to the tram stop and waiting for the return tram at 10.40pm simultaneously reading the English newspaper earlier bought, boarding that tram and being conveyed to the location at which it had been boarded at 9.51pm, it now being around 10.50pm, returning home by foot, setting off at 11.03pm in the direction of that location of alighting and boarding at 11.11pm arriving at the station at 11.18pm in order to meet the train at 11.19pm but the latter train with the previously mentioned time of arrival being delayed by 50-60 minutes so writing this.

As already mentioned, I use my work to transcend life, my work is made by transcending life, (comma) and with video one has the ability to transcend real life while keeping very close to it, closer to it than with other media. What interests me is to make a picture very close to life in that it represents that which you really see (or I really see) through your (or my) eyes (as opposed to thoughts), it is what you are seeing, you are placed inside the film, and the picture's function is as a catalyst to thought, just as in real life; I am not interested in trying to show or illustrate, or to present self-contained pictures or images which are more suitable to film. Thus I am interested in a 'real life' kind of filming, very close to real time, where the pictures aren't self-contained pictures but an extract from real life (the picture goes beyond the screen) in a constant flow which is then cut/presented formally in order to imbue it with emotional intensity and transcend it into (as opposed to life). A formalistic presentation of what could be described as subjective material. A very naturalistic surface which is cut and presented in poetry. Prosaic surface presented as poetry. Transcending the material through its presentation is the main concern of my work, usually an 'informal' material transcended through a 'formal' presentation; the imposing of a foreign 'method' on the material in order to transcend it. I am very interested in presenting sketchy personalness, and this is a very satisfactory way of doing it.

Glittering and gleaming and glimmering and bobbing up and down and white inside before I come home and waiting for me my pages transparent and radiant and raising themselves and bobbing up and white before I write my empty pages of paper. A hard piece of old apple has become lodged between 2 teeth and won't budge.

Writing about something which is nothing is that which produces great art. The material is immaterial, as long as it is presented in such a way as to make it immaterial (what kind of material it is). Sibelius's *Tapiola* is like filling in the

gaps between nothing. Life is sketchy and inconclusive. How to bring the unofficial on to the level of the official without losing anything (in music). Art is a reduction of life. Using music as a substance, not trying to portray it. Portraying it would be like painting pictures of it. Most composers try to portary music. To what extent should notation obscure the way in which music is written; to what extent should it reveal it? Transcended by revealing or transcended by obscuring? In this respect notation and instrumentation are the same thing (from a compositional point of view). In trying to get enough material, you make the piece. In trying to find enough to go on with, you make a piece.

My interest in combining words and music (whether songs or longer pieces of text) (the songs are like transcendence of life, the longer pieces are a more indirect transcendence), is to produce a third thing which is neither words nor music but a third thing, that to which the same attitude has been taken individually.

I make no distinction in value between the pieces I write for the rock group and those I write for the classical media. This is emphasised by the fact that the material originally intended for one is frequently re-completed/rearranged into pieces for the other.

Art is a matter of leaving out the 'I think' in 'I think the sky is blue'. The more precise you are, the more mystical it is. (Art is always a little pretentious, to be an artist you have to be a little pretentious.)

Jeux (Debussy) is the perfect combination of new music and old music. Instruments are usually a way of transcending the music, Feldman has transcended the instruments.

It is (not so much the intrinsic profundity, the depth on the surface, but more the depth of what lies behind the surface, it is not so much the depth, but more the width, the wide open spaces, more the mind when the phrase came into being, more the power of the phrase to point to everything in the width of the mind when the phrase came into being, to outline the borders of the mind when the phrase came.

Problems we have with others - not even reflected, just shown and remain our own, and have nothing to do with their problems, and the problems we have with them, although may point to problems of theirs, in that problems exist within them, but of a totally different nature, just as, when an audience reacts, it often reacts in the right way, but for the wrong reasons, or, as I was saying, like Gaddafi, reacting towards Thatcher, what he said happened to have an element of truth in it, but for the wrong reasons, and this happening to have (an element of truth but for the worn reasons) is the nearest most (people, who live everywhere) get to the truth of the matter when they have problems with another (person) or have problems with other (people).

How insubstantial this train is in the world (by comparison to the rest of the world).

Blake managed to make something out of the mustiness of (old) England.

Swimming through the stocking up wooden bits of tree sticking up like a sea in London bits of woody stick or trees and shrubs in winter where there is just the wood sticking up through which one should swim or sail through in London, the train travelling over the countryside, swans swimming over green fields, the train travel-

ling over the countryside, back at the mercy of English countryside, crossing out countryside, cancelling English countryside, money until none's left, *The Flooding of English Countryside*, riding a beautiful white horse over the wave caused by a dinosaur, not a dinosaur, a beautiful white horse (overtaking the horizon) forwards to France but backwards to Paris, eating an English white bread sandwich while going through Picardie, No, (comma) A BEAUTIFUL WHITE HORSE, Blocking out nature, from Lyon to Grenoble, through a landscape of scruffy farms.

Living in Cologne is like living in the north of Scotland, but without the Scotland.

My main problem is presenting my work (I mean the medium) because it isn't really anything

France is like everywhere else without the everywhere else

In Germany, it is more like being in England than being in England.

The English turn art into folklore

I like Germany because here I can imagine that I'm in England. (*Imagining I'm in England*)

Why must I always again realise (come to understand) the same thing?

Marcel Broodthaers in Galerie Werner (Tomatensuppe und Orangensaft) in Cologne in the Hauptbahnhof made official Belgium Industry in Belgium Belgium is a Land the Earth is Solid ground Everything I've written whole passing through (it) Belgium now it is come and paid for, (comma) and they (yesterday) at 5 o' clock in the afternoon) couldn't not understand why my music was life transcended twice. Why twice? (in German translation). Belgian Woman Belgian Belgian Colony, Valley of Smoke and flashing windows (between Verviers and Liege) the presence of other people makes things confusing

The unevenness of the countryside makes it impossible for me to write. Cutting through (the distance of) the imaginary countryside

Wiping your bum as a substance/
 Pain as a substance/
 Coal as a substance/
 Fire-lighters as a substance/
 Heat as a substance/
 Cold as a substance/
 Video as a substance/
 Pictures as a substance (not colour etc.)/
 Music as a substance (not sound)/
 Songs as a substance/
 the way words and music go together as a substance/
 This piece as a substance/
 Brackets () as a substance/
 A phonecall as a substance/
 crossing out as a substance/
 the whole of Cologne (including people)/
 Pillow (as substance) with music (as substance)/
 Mushrooms (as substance) with music (as substance)/
 If you (he) didn't wear those V-neck pullovers you'd (he'd) paint much better/
 Filming, the actual filming itself, as a substance/
 Using mushrooms (spinach), portraying

them would be like painting pictures of them - Using them like a substance, a material, mushrooms (spinach) as a substance. Most composers try to portray music. Greenness (blueness) as a substance. Music as a substance. The friction between the vagina and penis as a substance.

It's a great pity that what the evil people want often happens to coincide with the right thing. A good person may tell you 'yes' and a bad person may tell you 'yes' and because you have also heard 'yes' from the bad person it may prevent you from doing it which is why bad people are dangerous.

People, (comma) the intertwining paths they make with their directions which on this cold, as the hat which I have on keeps the whole of me warm just like in bed at night when cold when warm inside the bed and your head is poking out of the coldness of your head is a warm and satisfying feeling because of the warmth of your body, so how the coldness to the marrow which has sunk in a pervading static coldness which is now coming from inside me out rather than as before the other way round, and the coldness on the outside being like an old pal very human, not like heat which is uncaring, coldness embraces you and you it like old pals, but then, after embracing for while and having got used to it and feeling fine, you suddenly notice this more abstract general feeling of coldness coming from the inside of you, the intertwining of the directions of people's feet intertwining with bits of litter like paper and cigarette ends and sweet wrapper and a piece of purplish grey fluff blowing among them, and, as I was saying, (comma) the heavy sadness being now at a point beyond distraction.

The Moss

C. Newman

SING VERY QUIETLY, IN a cracked voice. (register ad lib)

SING ONLY

pp IN WIN-Ter comes the Moss, IT co-vers all the yard, IT

PLAY

makes the yard Look green AND plea-sant to be seen. La

SING & PLAY

La La La La La La La La La La IT co-vers all the

square! IT co-vers ev-ry-where; IT co-vers You and

SING ONLY

SING & PLAY

broader

SING ONLY
Almost NOTHING

New Pianos/Nice Pages

C. Newman

Handwritten musical notation for the first system. The top staff is in treble clef and contains several chords, some with a 'K' marking above them. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains rhythmic patterns and chords. A slur with the number '8' is positioned above the top staff.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system. The top staff is in treble clef and shows a melodic line with eighth notes and a final chord with an accent (>). The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with eighth notes and chords, including a 'K' marking.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system. The top staff is in treble clef and features a slur with the number '6' above it. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains chords and rhythmic patterns.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system. The top staff is in treble clef and shows a melodic line with a key signature change to one sharp (F#) and a final chord with an accent (>). The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains chords and rhythmic patterns, including a 'K' marking.

Handwritten musical notation for the fifth system. The top staff is in treble clef and contains chords and a melodic line with a slur and the number '8' above it. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains chords and rhythmic patterns, including a 'K' marking.

Handwritten musical notation for the first system, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff begins with a series of eighth notes, followed by a dotted quarter note, a sharp sign, and a series of eighth notes. The bass staff contains a series of eighth notes.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff features a series of eighth notes, a bar line, a sharp sign, and a series of eighth notes. The bass staff contains a series of eighth notes.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff begins with a sharp sign, followed by a series of eighth notes, a bar line, a series of eighth notes, a bar line, a triplet of eighth notes, and a series of eighth notes. The bass staff contains a series of eighth notes.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff features a series of eighth notes, a bar line, a series of eighth notes, a bar line, a series of eighth notes, a bar line, a series of eighth notes, and a bar line. The bass staff contains a series of eighth notes.

Handwritten musical notation for the fifth system, consisting of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff contains a few notes, and the bass staff is mostly empty.

16/Apr/88

Julian Anderson

Superformula v. the inner ear

Robin Maconie, ed., *Stockhausen on Music – lectures and interviews* (London: Marion Boyars, 1989), £17.95.

This excellent volume comes hard on the heels of a similar book by Mya Tannenbaum entitled *Conversations with Stockhausen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Having already waded my way through the turgid and sometimes distasteful contents of Tannenbaum's volume, in which Stockhausen indulges in egocentricity to the extent of claiming to have been born and musically educated on the star Sirius, I did not relish the prospect of reading Maconie's book and was both pleasantly surprised and rather puzzled by its clarity, lucidity and readability compared to the earlier volume.

The format of the book differs slightly from Tannenbaum's: whereas her book consisted entirely of interviews with Stockhausen (her questions being of the rather crudely journalistic type, for example: 'Maestro, are you a genius?'), only the second part of Maconie's book – about 40 of the 170 pages – is given over to an interview with Stockhausen; the rest consists of transcriptions of lectures Stockhausen gave in London in 1971, such as the four-hour lecture 'Musical Forming', which were preserved on film by Allied Artists; other material is taken from informal interviews given on the same visit. Allowed a completely free hand in deciding what to talk about, Stockhausen covers the broad range of his musical techniques up to this time (there is rather less about the *Einheitsformel* or unifying melodic superformula, a technique he had then only recently begun to use) and he does so coherently and logically in an English of great elegance and consistency. The topics covered include Stockhausen's childhood, his thoughts on 'the musical gift', the evolution in his music from music of 'points' to music of 'groups', moment-form and musical form in general. Lectures on electronic music and intuitive music complete the first part of the book.

Maconie's interview which, together with a short 'afterword' from Maconie himself, forms the second part of the book, was recorded in 1981, around the same period as Tannenbaum's conversations, but, curiously, the authoritarian and irritable character of her interviews is nowhere to be found in this interview, perhaps due to Maconie's sensitive and precise questioning, which never strays too far from musical matters. A large amount of space is devoted to the *Einheitsformel*, of course, but Maconie persuades Stockhausen to elucidate its relationship to and derivation from certain electronic synthesisers, notably Peter Zinovieff's 'Synthi-100', which Stockhausen has regularly used since *Sirius* (1975-6). Stockhausen appears indifferent to the possibilities of digital technology which, in 1981, were nothing like as advanced as they are today, and it is a pity that a section could not have been added as an update on this subject, particularly in view of Stockhausen's extensive recent experiences at IRCAM, working on a version of *Kathinkas Gesang* (1982-3), with electronic tape (for those interested, a substantial article about this was published by *Perspectives of New Music* in 1986!).

Stockhausen is asked about the extent to which films have affected him and evinces discerning taste: Charlie Chaplin, for instance, although praised for moments of 'quality, here and there', is criticised for his 'sentimental side . . . the formal side (of his films) became weaker and weaker . . .' and Stockhausen dislikes 'the pie-throwing aspect of his earlier films, which is humour of a terribly primitive kind'. Stockhausen wistfully recalls the films of 'the wartime years . . . they often made me weep, because they were always about guys in submarines in love with their girls at home, going away and never seeing them again, but their love would go on for ever – this kind of fantastically idealized, fictional love made a deep impression on me'. Stockhausen waxes evangelical on the visual and theatrical side of his own compositions, looking forward to distributing videodiscs of his works and chastising the rigidity of traditional Western musicians in this domain: 'the public will not put up any more with the same old faces and worn out postures . . . this inability to move among European performers will have to go.'

Perhaps the most interesting part of this interview is the final section in which Stockhausen outlines his proposals for the curriculum of a good music college – a subject which is also of considerable topical interest in this country at the moment. For Stockhausen, pride of place goes to training in listening – 'listening to something you don't know at all, then transcribing it in the way phonetics students transcribe an unfamiliar language' – and he allots it two hours daily. Stockhausen attaches great importance to playing an instrument, if one is a composer, and insists that 'it should be *sine qua non* that every music student should learn to sing as well as play', also recommending that this should go beyond singing in a choir – ideally there should be 'lessons in both singing and instrument for everyone'. In the teaching of analysis, Stockhausen rightly stresses the importance of 'hearing what is being talked about . . . avoid overloading analysis with too many words and diagrams . . . analysis without hearing the music is a meaningless exercise' (university teachers, please note!). Disappointingly, when it comes to the teaching of composition itself, Stockhausen merely suggests a method of teaching students to compose super-formulas, rather than dealing with broader topics such as technique, inner hearing, etc. Lastly, Stockhausen recommends that every music student should 'go dancing at least once a week. *And dance . . . with a partner and to different rhythms and tempi . . . make your own evenings of . . . Austrian, Spanish, Hungarian, South American (dances)*'. Stockhausen places counterpoint, harmony and especially the study of the history of music below everything else, even dancing! 'Let those who are interested . . . do it, and those who are not do something else . . . they will still be well-trained musicians.'

The main body of this book, the lectures in part 1, dates from the same period as Jonathan Cott's widely-read *Conversations with Stockhausen* (London: Pan Books, 1974), a period when Stockhausen was enjoying a huge popular following unparalleled by any other composer of his generation (in 1967 his photo had even figured on the cover of The Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper* album), a popularity aided by the marvellous sequence of works which closed the sixties and opened the seventies: *Hymen* (1966-7), *Stimmung* (1968), *Trans* (1971), *Sternklang* (1971) and the final version of *Momente* (1972). Already, there were

ominous signs of the creative decline to come, in the shape of the first works based upon melodic formulas, such as the protracted and stiflingly unimaginative *Mantra* (1970) for two pianos and (jarringly persistent) ring-modulation, to be followed by the equally protracted *Inori* (1973-4), with its muddy, singularly unadorable orchestration, itself followed by a series of ever more grandiose and ugly pieces, such as *Sirius*, which culminated in the seven-opera cycle *LICHT* ('The Seven Days of the Week') (1977-), on which Stockhausen is still working. But in 1971 *Mantra* was brand new and it was still possible to believe that Stockhausen was the greatest composer of his generation. For someone such as myself, who is too young to remember clearly a time when Stockhausen was not working on *LICHT*, these lectures give a good idea of how fascinating and magnetic a figure Stockhausen must have seemed to a young composer in the early seventies. He seemed to have the answer to everything: improvisation, serialism, acoustics, notation, form, melody, harmony – you name it and Stockhausen sheds new light upon it, all in the same charming, suave manner with judiciously placed similes ('apple on the moon', comparisons with atomic physics, *et al.*), not forgetting to add a touch of humour at the end of a section, just to show how human he is (or can be). In fact, Stockhausen does have a lively sense of humour, far removed from the heavy-handed 'fun' of his operas, something which surfaced frequently during his introductory talks in the 1985 'Music and Machines' series at the Barbican: one recalls that, before a performance of *Mikrophonie II* (1965), he commented that 'radio listeners should be warned not to adjust their sets: what you're hearing is what I composed!' His humour surfaces often in the book, too, as in the passage where he is poking fun at 'specialist composers', composers who concentrate on one single aspect of music and are 'famous just because they specialise' (Ligeti, Xenakis and Feldman are cited as examples): ' . . . I tell my own students, if you want to become famous, just take a magnifying glass to one of my scores and what you see there, multiply for five years . . . if you see snare drums, then start composing around twenty pieces only for snare drums . . . snare drums on the roof . . . in the basement, big snare drums and very tiny snare drums, snare drums amplified and intermodulated . . . you will be known as the snare drum specialist, you'll be known in Japan, you'll be famous everywhere.'

In the same passage, Stockhausen is dismissive of 'style' in music, commenting that it means merely that the composer in question 'has narrowed down his field of activity so completely, that it takes only a fragment of a work for you to say, ah, that's so and so.'

This last point sheds curious and, by Stockhausen's own criteria, not very complimentary light on his music written since the mid-seventies. Up to 1971 there had been no such thing as a 'Stockhausen style'; indeed the idea would have seemed quite bizarre, since he had made it an artistic principle never to repeat himself, to make each work completely new and unprecedented. But since 1977, when he began work on *LICHT*, Stockhausen has voiced few new ideas – the *Einheitsformel* has invaded everything – and suddenly the concept of a 'Stockhausen style' has become all too easy to delineate: construct a banal melodic formula – a slightly incoherent sequence of small phrases separated by awkward pauses (which the players may usefully 'colour' by blowing or sucking tonelessly through their instruments, rattling the keys,

etc.), ornament each phrase with pseudo-Oriental turns or pseudo-militaristic dotted figures, provide each phrase with a pre-echo and an echo – then simply blow up this formula to whatever size you wish the piece to be and play it at ten or so speeds/pitches simultaneously; take care to orchestrate awkwardly for your chosen instruments, persistently choosing the weakest and least articulate registers and ensure that the overall effect is heavy and ungainly; finally, add a good quantity of embarrassing theatrical gestures and poses for your performers to execute, not forgetting that you must also ask them to count up to thirteen and back every once in a while. Has Stockhausen himself not become a 'specialist composer', and a specialist in a style of composition far less sophisticated and flexible – in short, far less musical – than that of Ligeti, Xenakis or Feldman? One wonders what became of the composer of *Hymen* and whether he can ever recapture any of the freshness and spontaneity of that earlier work, now that he has planned out the rest of his life's work with such remorseless rigour. Will he ever allow himself to forget his beloved superformulas and indulge again in some genuine musical invention?

As one reads both the lectures and the interview, some awkward questions start to rear their ugly heads, and they do not only concern the recent music. One notices that, although Stockhausen attaches great importance to 'training in listening' for music students, he seems sublimely unaware of the yawning gap between his compositional methods and the audible effect of his music: the elaborate scales of rhythm and tempi used in *Kontrapunkte* (1952), *Gruppen* (1955-7) and so many other works, are of little value if the music written with these scales evinces no perceptible feeling of beat or tempo. Similarly, Stockhausen is so obsessed with his superformulas that he has failed to realise that what is heard is a seemingly arbitrary sequence of pitches which hesitantly jump around (with an occasional corny glissando) – or, at the slowest speeds of expansion, an again apparently arbitrary collection of pitches irregularly and insistently repeated ad nauseam. To claim that this sort of composing is 'expanding human perception', as Stockhausen does in this book, is the purest self-deception: it would be truer to say that this music by-passed the question of perception altogether. Of course, Stockhausen is not the worst offender in this domain: few composers of his generation showed any interest in making their compositional structures audible.

The trouble is that Stockhausen's ear is a good deal poorer than many of his contemporaries' – incomparably poorer than Boulez's, for example – and therefore the music makes far less purely aural sense than their's. His emphasis on 'training in listening', rather than training in inner *hearing*, is all too clearly symptomatic of a composer whose inner ear is not on a par with his intelligence and skill in other areas. As Stockhausen does not forget to tell us, for more than 30 years he has edited and mixed recordings of all his works: 'I can't imagine any other colleague of my generation who has spent so many years and hours of his lifetime in a studio . . . certainly I have become aware that I hear much, much more . . . I can hear a difference (in some sounds) of only 1db . . . though everybody tells me, Herr Stockhausen, you're crazy, a change of 1db cannot be heard, it is a waste of time . . .' Once again, however, one notices that the activity of listening to and re-mixing studio recordings places emphasis on listening outwardly rather than hearing in one's inner ear (one's *outer* ear becomes vastly more

sensitive, as Stockhausen affirms), so it is no surprise that Stockhausen is such an excellent recording engineer – he could have earned a good living as such. But nobody with an inner ear of real sensitivity could orchestrate as heavily and unsonorously as Stockhausen does in *Inori*, and then describe the result as 'a joyous celebration' (it is as if Messiaen had written *Turangalila* entirely in clusters . . .).

This book is attractively presented, with an easily readable typeface and a judicious sectionalising of the material; Maconie has done his editorial job well and his afterword on 'Beauty and Necessity' offers some sobering thoughts on the place contemporary music currently occupies in society in general and in British society in particular. The one annoying feature of the presentation, presumably due to Stockhausen's insistent internationalism, is the printing of all Stockhausen's titles in the original German (where applicable) and in English translation; this gives rise to some rather cumbersome passages as ' . . . in some works, such as MUSIK FÜR DIE BEETHOVENHALLE 'Music for the Beethoven Hall', STERNKLANG 'Starsound', HARLEKIN and ATMEN GIBT DAS LEBEN 'Breathing gives life . . .'. But this is mere griping about an excellent and highly enjoyable book. Buy it!

¹ Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Electronic Music for Kathinka's Chant as Lucifer's Requiem', *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Spring-Summer 1985), p.40.

Keith Potter

Darmstadt 1988

34th Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik,
Darmstadt, 1-17 August 1988

Contact has regularly charted the progress of the Darmstädter Ferienkurse für Neue Musik during the 1980s.¹ Roger Heaton's review of Darmstadt 1980 makes it clear that things were already changing at this famous summer school for new music before the arrival of its present director Friedrich Hommel (who, it is rumoured, may preside over his last Darmstadt in 1990); indeed, reports of the 1978 Ferienkurse suggest that some of the essentials of that change were already in place even four years before his arrival in 1982. This is not, however, to belittle Hommel's achievement, for it is clear to the visitor returning, as I did, after an absence of fourteen years that the Ferienkurse have been very much affected by the presence of this benign but powerful director. It was he who saw not only that Darmstadt needed new compositional driving forces to replace those of the 1950s and 60s who had – give or take the odd arrival or departure – remained dominant but increasingly ineffectual down to at least 1974, but that there was also a need for a different sort of Darmstadt in the eighties to reflect the current state of compositional confusion that goes under such names as pluralism or postmodernism. It takes both courage and vision to move an institution forwards in the way that Hommel has done; the fact that he is of

the German generation that brought about the post-war, post-Nazi modernist revolution makes his more 'postmodern' position all the more admirable as well as, perhaps, curious. Whatever criticisms follow, the real progress of the Hommel Years should not be forgotten.

Progress, moving forwards . . . are these, though, the ways in which we should be speaking of an institution which – quite logically, in the context of the pluralism mentioned above – no longer seeks to confirm its position, even its authority, via the maxims of an avant garde? Change, yes: no postmodernism worth the investigation would suggest either that we should remain where we are or that we should go back to some previously held position. (However perplexing this latter proposition may seem, it is, nonetheless, widely regarded as a reasonable answer to the Post-Avant-Garde Dilemma. How far back, though, are we supposed to go?) But progress? In what sense might this be meant, other than merely chronologically? And to what extent is it either desirable or possible for Darmstadt 1988 to be experienced and reported as a barometer of The State of Composition in the Late Eighties?

There are quite a number of people who expect Darmstadt to reflect current moves across compositional space, even if they acknowledge that the 'space' occupied is more accurately likened to that of a chessboard (warring factions going in opposite directions) or a race track (everyone going in one direction but round and round in circles and with everyone in a different position on the circuit) than to a straight line disappearing over the horizon to a glorious future. Darmstadt does reflect current moves, of course, and it can to some degree be reported in that fashion, but only to an extent which takes account of a mixture of historical, personal and other factors which are probably impossible to unravel, especially so close in time.

One reason why this expectation of Darmstadt as an accurate reflector continues can be found in the firmly-established view that lies behind it: namely, that 'Darmstadt' has been a reliable barometer of avant-garde concerns in the past and now functions, historically, as their record; in a sense, indeed, as their embodiment. To my students, for instance, 'Darmstadt' means *only* the Mecca of the avant garde, chiefly in the 1950s. One might argue that if they had read the relevant issues of *Contact* they would know better. But the view is widely available in the textbooks, and it has a certain validity. Paul Mounsey's story, related in *Contact* 31, of the group of four Brazilian composers who went to Darmstadt in 1962 'to find out at first hand what was happening in total serialism, and were shocked to discover that Europe had moved on' – a shock which caused two of the four to abandon 'serious' music entirely – is but one rather touching illustration of the talismanic power of 'Darmstadt'.² And presumably the reputation of 'Darmstadt' – as the Damascus road for serialists and, later on (for those with stronger constitutions than the Brazilians possessed), for composers prepared to follow the path towards indeterminacy under the guidance of teachers stimulating enough to bring about such radical changes of heart – has something to do with the prevalence, even today, of starry-eyed assumptions about what the real Darmstadt can achieve. These days (just as in 1974 when I first went), most people, especially younger composition students, seem to leave Darmstadt dismayed by its failure to stimulate

them. There are good reasons for this, and some of these can be put right, as I will suggest below. But expectations of Darmstadt will no doubt always run unreasonably high among first-time visitors as long as 'Darmstadt' continues to mean anything much historically. Indeed there are few reasons to suppose that the slate will be somehow wiped clean.

It should also be pointed out that the image of 1950s 'Darmstadt' as simply the dispenser of the pure mountain air of the new serialism, invigorating all who went to have their constitutions improved, becomes not a little tarnished directly one looks at the details. A spot of delving, in rare idle moments during Darmstadt 1988, into the Darmstadt Institute's extensive archives (which should be used by researchers more than at present seems to be the case) makes a little clearer, for instance, the position there of Bruno Maderna who, though seen by some as one of the embodiments of 'Darmstadt' – perhaps partly because he made the city his home for many years – was at least a neo-Romantic, if not a postmodernist, before either term was invented, and who must have irritated hard-line serialists even as he helped champion them as a conductor. It is also too easy to suppose that everything about 'Darmstadt' was so much better in the early years: some accounts I've received of 1950s Ferienkursen do not entirely substantiate the glowing impression that history has so widely conveyed.

* * *

How, then, has the real Darmstadt changed since its Mecca days? Perhaps the chief innovation in the 1980s has been an almost total avoidance of the 'old guard' who previously ruled: Berio, Boulez, Ligeti and Stockhausen; even Kagel and Xenakis, whose relationship with the old Darmstadt was more problematic despite their status as Major European Avant Gardists. These composers might anyway no longer respond positively to invitations to appear in person; what is more interesting is that their music is, with the exception in 1988 of one or two short pieces by Berio and Xenakis, seemingly now banned from performance as well. The system of one-hour presentations which now replaces the courses of lectures given by the old figure-heads produces, however, something less than the total democracy that might conceivably have been brought about. One reason for this is that some composers, young or old, are inevitably going to be seen by the majority of participants as more important than others (though that in turn raises the question of who those participants are nowadays and what their value judgements are likely to be). Another reason has more to do with the nature of the choices made by Hommel and his team which, while quite possibly stemming from concerns for equality and 'righting the balance', result in practice in what looks like an attempt to establish an 'alternative history of contemporary music' which threatens to become every bit as enshrined in stone as the 'official avant-garde' one. It could be argued that 'alternative history' is a very necessary counter to received views that make what should be a constant process of change and flux into something ossified: we can all benefit from a view that is sufficiently open-minded to encompass a wide range of aesthetic opinions and stylistic results, however contradictory, but which also provides some even vaguely coherent way of looking at things. More

practically, it may be argued that emphases of some kind are inevitable, at least during any individual summer school. What seems especially interesting about the Hommel Years, though, is that they seem to have gone out of their way to elevate older figures who were previously regarded by the Official Avant Garde as also-rans or at least as outsiders.

Two composers given this treatment in the recent past are no longer living, but the shades of both were strongly felt this year. Giacinto Scelsi actually died while the 1988 Ferienkurse were in progress; news of his death quickly filtered through to participants and resulted in some memorial tributes and performances. The music of this redoubtable Roman count, who received belated and rather cultish attention in his last decade or so, had been a feature of Darmstadt 1986. Morton Feldman, who died in 1987, had been a special feature of Darmstadt 1984 and was, I understand, still a strong presence two years later. (The treatment given to this composer in his last years was seemingly quite different from that offered his erstwhile 'New York School' colleague Christian Wolff at Darmstadt 1974; though their markedly different personalities undoubtedly played some part in this, it is encouraging to think that former experimentalists besides Cage are now perhaps seen as more than 'interesting minor figures'.) A tape of Feldman's last orchestral work, *Coptic Light* (1986), was played as a tribute to him late on the last evening of the 1988 Ferienkurse, by which time most participants had either left town or got drunk and gone elsewhere. Feldman's presence had, however, been strong throughout the preceding weeks not only through other, live, performances of his music, but because a number of composers presenting their own work in the course of lectures had been pupils of his and referred frequently to his ideas and sayings. These included Feldman's widow, Barbara Monk-Feldman, who is, though, far from being the clone of her late husband that cynics would have you believe. It may not be too far-fetched to suggest that the kinds of energy generated by the music of Scelsi and Feldman – different from one another in important respects but also sharing qualities defined only very inadequately by such words as 'contemplative', 'spiritual' and 'undramatic' – are now seen as complements, even antidotes, to past concerns. Serialism and indeterminacy – also, of course, very different from one another – often generated raging but at the same time rather rebarbative sorts of energy. The output of the 'quietist' Feldman was always an exception to this – as was the music of all the American 'chance' composers with the exception of Earle Brown, whose more emotional indeterminacy was, significantly, an important influence on European brands of 'aleatoric music' in the fifties and sixties: it's more the European 'misunderstanding' of indeterminacy (fruitful or otherwise) of which I'm thinking here. An 'angry-young-man' aspect can still be perceived in the work of the modernist 'successors' to the 1950s avant garde, perhaps partly for the simple reason that these composers dispute the 'succession'. If Brian Ferneyhough (who may stand as an example of such present-day modernism) and Feldman are both acceptable at Darmstadt these days as somehow fulfilling complementary needs, perhaps an 'alternative' (because less straightforwardly combative) view of the present is being offered, as well as the more obviously 'either/or' of an 'alternative musical history'.

There were living older presences at Darmstadt 1988 as well. The 65-year-old Karel Goeyvaerts will be known to students of the Official Avant Garde as one of the chief contenders to be written up in the history books as the writer of the First Totally-Serial Piece. It was his just-completed Sonata for two pianos that so fired Stockhausen at Darmstadt in 1951, and Goeyvaerts talked about that early period in the course of his lecture. Following a gap of some years after he gave up serialism around the end of the fifties, he began writing a totally different, much simpler music which he himself is quite happy to describe as minimalist; these works have received a certain amount of attention in Continental Europe but, as so often, almost none in Britain. We were able to hear a number of recent compositions by Goeyvaerts in the course of the concerts, as well as a seemingly quite splendid performance of the early sonata which, not for the first time in my experience, made it seem much more than the Historical Curiosity it is written off as (I'd like to know how many people *have* heard the piece). Goeyvaerts' recent 'minimalism' often seems gauche to me, but fascinatingly gauche; I've just about convinced myself that I mean more by saying this than that I'm simply intrigued by the aesthetic reversal and the clear and compelling honesty that lies behind it.

Other neglected older figures at this year's Ferienkurse included the 71-year-old Frenchman Jean-Etienne Marie, who writes microtonal music which sometimes, bizarrely, combines different tuning systems. Hommel's choice of Goeyvaerts suggests that he feels rejection of serialism should continue to be encouraged on moral as well as musical grounds, while his equally obvious enthusiasm for Marie suggests that the lonely explorer of music's innards must be encouraged as another kind of musical outsider (few even today, with the aid of all the New Technology, seem willing to devote themselves to serious and systematic investigation of microtonal possibilities). Both composers use an interesting mixture of simple materials, maintaining a certain 'distance' from them while also accepting their emotional connotations. Both minimalism and microtonality can, it appears, continue to offer both contemplation and exultation at the same time.

It would also be easy, however, to paint a picture of the present Ferienkurse as continuing to favour, at the expense of others, a tendency frequently given the label 'New Complexity'. The strong British contingent, for instance – invited back and even expanded year after year in what is, I suppose, a welcome contrast to the tiny group of British representatives in 1974 – is dominated by the four composers – Richard Barrett, Chris Dench, James Dillon and Michael Finnissy – who were so extensively discussed in *Contact* 32 by Richard Toop.³ That article made clear the foolishness of considering these composers (or their colleagues James Clarke, Richard Emsley, James Erber and Roger Redgate, who all swelled the ranks at Darmstadt 1988) as some kind of post-serial, post-Ferneyhough school united against the inanities of all other present-day composition; what unity they ever possessed is rapidly disappearing anyway. But it's interesting – particularly for a London-based observer used to seeing these composers forced out of so many of the institutions which foster new music, on the grounds that their musical philosophies are incomprehensible and their compositions anyway impossible to perform – to find these men, at least some of them, fêted as a British élite. The view now seems quite well developed

at Darmstadt that, with or without the assistance of Ferneyhough (who, not entirely surprisingly, seems to view them more as rivals than colleagues these days), Barrett, Dench and Dillon (probably not Finnissy, though maybe some of the others) are the 1980s equivalents of the 1950s serialists in their quest for a synthesis of intellectual rigour and musical forms consistent with acoustic realities. The fact that their New Complexity has challenged the old serialism as both intellectually and musically bogus only adds spice to the crusade currently being waged on their behalf. The fact that their work is not presented on the lavish scale Stockhausen could once expect at Darmstadt (Dillon, for example, was represented in the concerts by a couple of short solo pieces, while his major recent orchestral work *helle Nacht* (1986-7) could only be heard on tape during his talk) is more an indication of Darmstadt's presently rather parlous financial situation than of anything else.

Any suggestion that Hommel is himself openly fostering the advancement of these composers' careers at the expense of his already-mentioned pluralism must, on the other hand, be challenged. The principal protagonist in the British New Complexity business at Darmstadt appears to be Harry Halbreich, an omnipresent but also elusive presence around the Ferienkurse who seems to function in something of the manner of a Court Jester to the summer school's directorate. Halbreich's achievements as a critic and a catalyst for new musical activities are only sporadically known in Britain; regrettably so, since his knowledge of contemporary music is considerable and he has made important contributions as a writer, broadcaster and festival director in his own right. And though his range of knowledge is not, I dare assert, as wide as his reputation as a walking encyclopedia of new music may suggest (he seemed unaware of musical activities in Britain or the USA, for example, outside his particular aesthetic preferences), his interests stretch to a very laudable and necessary attempt to make Tippett better understood in non-English-speaking countries than he is today. Halbreich's position at Darmstadt is one of apparently considerable influence wielded very selectively. There may be nothing wrong with this, and anyway Halbreich does an invaluable service to the Ferienkurse by making his quite astonishing linguistic talents freely available in the absence of proper translation facilities. (It's a disadvantage, incidentally, to attend Darmstadt without at least some knowledge of German, even though English is widely spoken there too. The British and the Americans ought to be better linguists than we are, of course, but it's a pity that some better arrangement can't be made to help the flow of information and ideas.) Halbreich's position should, however, be reported, even if its exact influence cannot be precisely established. As someone sympathetic to the British cause he espouses, and glad that at least some British music is finally being taken seriously at Darmstadt, I can't help wondering to what extent a more comprehensive view of the British new-music scene (be it warts and all) is being blocked here. The more one travels around, the more one realises just how hard it is to get any kind of comprehensive view of compositional activities anywhere other than your own patch. Halbreich's own lecture at Darmstadt 1988 on the pleasures and perils of 'keeping up' with new music was a good illustration of the problems.

Then again, British music other than the New Complexity does get some airing at Darmstadt these

days. Composers of various kinds of repetitive music (to use another blanket label possibly as unrevealing as 'New Complexity') may have more trouble than most in gaining much attention in this context, since it seems you don't *have* to be a serialist or indeed any other kind of avant-garde dogmatist to consider anything even vaguely 'minimalist' to be fundamentally unserious. Both Christopher Fox (*Heliotrope 6* (1987), premièred by the Arditti String Quartet, was surprisingly minimalist) and Steve Ingham (who mounted his own performance of an engagingly rock-repetitive piece entitled *Shards* (1987) for bass clarinet, marimba, piano and tape in a late-night programme at the summer school's end) managed to present works which went right against the grain of 'Darmstadt' as Halbreich apparently conceives it. Chris Newman, who can seem so fundamentally unserious that even avant-gardists conclude he must have a point somewhere, has become a part of the West-German music scene anyway, but while his 'lecture', consisting of readings of his 'poetry', struck me as an ideal demonstration of his somewhat Satie-esque art, his new piano piece, *My Night in Newark/New Pianos* (1987-8), played by Marianne Schroeder, was boorishly reminiscent of a child at its first piano lesson. Near the end of the Ferienkurse, James Wood's *Stoicheia* (also 1987-8) for percussion, keyboards and electronics showed what can be presented at Darmstadt these days if you provide at least some of your own resources and take full advantage of the situation; unfortunately, while it actually fitted rather better than the above-mentioned works into 'Darmstadt' as purveyor of cosmic experiences, I could find its lengthy ritualistic exposition of percussive theatre only lengthy and pretentious. I couldn't help but recall that the last time I was in the local Sporthalle, of whose impressive space *Stoicheia* made full use, was to hear Stockhausen's *Indianerlieder* and, even more vacuously pseudo-cosmic, his *Herbstmusik*. Wood's official role at Darmstadt was that of percussion teacher; the Instrumental Studio continues to be dominated by British performers, who also include Christopher Redgate (oboe), Roger Heaton (clarinet) and most of the Arditti Quartet.

The view of American music from the angle of the Ferienkurse has always included an element of suspicion; imperialist tendencies, scorn, envy, downright hostility and rank schizophrenia have also featured at various times. (At least the European avant garde could muster up some real venom for its American rivals; the official reaction to British experimentalism at the summer school in the past has simply been to ignore it.) Thirty years on from Cage's infamous 'storming' of Darmstadt 1958, Hommel may have felt he had quite good enough reasons to risk flouting his ethic of 'no domination' by inviting a large group of American composers and performers to dominate the first week of this year's summer school. Unfortunately not only did things seem to have escalated beyond his original intentions, but the lengthy presentation of work of many kinds, too numerous to identify separately, from the Department of Music at the University of California at San Diego had few moments of real musical interest even for this British listener keen to encounter new American music of all – well, nearly all – sorts. In this context – for the right reasons I hope, and not just out of personal sympathy for a composer plagued by illness for many years now and unable to attend Darmstadt 1988 himself – I found the evening of, chiefly, solo works by

the veteran American Robert Erickson the most invigorating. Erickson was born in 1917 and his music is not widely known even in the States, though he is often spoken of highly as a teacher and musical catalyst. Not everything in the programme lived up to the high claims being made on the composer's behalf, but several pieces suggested that not only they but other works of his too might deserve more attention than they have so far received. Erickson's position as an innovator in the field of what are usually called extended instrumental techniques may not survive close scrutiny. But pieces such as *The Pleiades* (1981) for violin and *Dunbar's Delight* (1985) for timpani (the title derives from the name of the percussionist for whom it was written) are such *musical* fruits of lengthy and careful collaboration with individual performers that they not only compel admiration as real pieces of music using extended techniques, rather than merely as catalogues of fancy sounds, but they also help to vindicate the much-maligned profession of 'campus composer'. If campus composition can allow the leisurely production of such exquisite music (though not many composers in universities these days have that sort of leisure), then its continued support, public or private, should not be in question.

Most of the rest of what San Diego offered is, however, best passed over as offering more evidence for the abandonment of campus composition than for its retention. Roger Reynolds' work is at least a serious attempt to make new musical discoveries with the aid of the computer, though I generally found, as I have done before, that his music leaves me cold and feeling more in the presence of a brilliant intellect than in that of a composer dealing with sounds in a truly musical way; *The Palace (Voicespace IV)* (1980) for baritone and tape seemed, though, to have the sweep of real musical drama about it. But so much of what we heard from the other composers and improvisers represented – provided by a team that was reputedly some 70 strong, counting all the attached performers, academics, technicians and so on – seemed to be little more than reworkings of ideas about extended techniques, improvisation of various kinds, mixed media and other theatrical possibilities which were not only discovered in the sixties but which, at that time, produced much more interesting results. Besides, the notion of a whole university music department, however devoted to radical composition and performance, as worthy of attention as a 'school', as opposed to possessing one or two talented composers, is more promotional than truthful.

Ferneyhough, who joined the San Diego faculty a year before the 1988 summer school took place, was of course widely credited with fixing the whole thing through his influence at Darmstadt, which goes back around ten years. His distance from his new colleagues compositionally was, however, matched by his marked absence from the summer school during its first week (he did, though, have a piece to finish), and anyway it seemed fairly clear that the San Diego arrangements had been put in train before his appointment. The main performances of his own music were independent of the UCSD concerts, and though his recent *Third String Quartet* (1987) is a powerful work containing one or two new things I should like to discuss, this is not the place for it; his music is well known and his aesthetic position does not seem to have changed. As far as his position at Darmstadt is concerned, Ferneyhough has long since made his mark as the rightful successor to the serialists of yester-year who

has shown the post-serial way forward for serious composition in the late 20th century. That this is probably not how he himself views matters is just one indication of the problems to be encountered when trying to report Darmstadt 1988 in the State-of-the-Art terms I mentioned at the beginning. Ferneyhough is possibly as dismayed as much as he is flattered by the number of imitators he has, wittingly or unwittingly, spawned in the last ten or fifteen years. But the problems involved in finding your own voice as a young composer these days (including whatever that may mean exactly) are all the greater for the lack of present certainties. Darmstadt still seems, to the outsider, to be providing some kind of refuge for at least some of the 'aesthetic certainties' encompassed in that so-called New Complexity and its rigorous intellectual and performing demands: West German, Italian and other composers of highly complex and 'difficult' music – as well as those from Britain – continue to congregate at the summer school. But, paradoxically, it achieves this in the context of a highly developed state of schizophrenia, marked – as I suppose Darmstadt rather than 'Darmstadt' always has been – by endless and often boorish frictions between the competing factions.

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Mention of the response received at Darmstadt by both compositions themselves and the ideas they embody leads me, finally, to the conditions under which all this activity went on during the seventeen (or rather in practice more like fifteen) hot August days of the summer school. And since these conditions strike me as open to at least some improvement, I'll end with just a few suggestions made from the point of view of an observer, rather than that of an active participant, which most of *Contact's* previous reporters have been.

Good summer schools are probably quite naturally and rightly hectic affairs in which, while a lot is attempted for all kinds of good reasons, less is actually achieved than people, particularly some people, may have wished, and in which a lot of the most useful and interesting things take place outside the formal sessions, of whatever kind. But Darmstadt 1988 was, I thought, needlessly – as well as, ultimately, debilitatingly – chaotic. One area in which I felt this strongly was the whole Composition Studio set-up. In the old days, this was essentially a workshop for composers, allowing them to bring along pieces, discuss matters both aesthetic and technical, compose exercises or even real pieces during the course for class experiment or concert performance, and generally behave much as their performing colleagues would be doing elsewhere at the same time, even though the possibilities of one-to-one lessons which at least some performers were getting was effectively reduced to nearly nothing by the sheer preponderance of composers attending. In 1988 composers still outnumbered performers to a considerable extent; indeed, I understood that the numbers of performers attending had gone down, and I'll return to this in a moment. Providing the same conditions for composers as for performers is probably not possible, at least within the financial constraints under which Darmstadt now labours; the economics of the Ferienkurse is another area which ought to be discussed – Darmstadt 1988 seemed almost *not* to have happened – but I'll leave that to one side here. Since a workshop of this kind starts to become unworkable as soon as numbers reach any distance

into double figures, and Darmstadt attracts over one hundred composers, it seemed sensible to have abandoned it in favour of an extension of the open lectures given chiefly, but not exclusively, by composers, which composers were presumably expected to attend and to which performers could go as they wished and as their other commitments allowed.

In practice, though, so great was the expansion and so strongly was the 'no domination' ethic observed, that the results resembled more an endless parade of turns on a TV chat show than a serious attempt to address aesthetic issues and to introduce what was in fact often complex and challenging music. In 1974, even with the dominant focus of a whole series of lectures and presentations from each of the four Leading Composers selected for this treatment (Stockhausen and Xenakis had a complete week each, while Kagel and Wolff, deemed Lesser Leading Figures, shared one week between them), it was still possible for one-off talks to make an impact: there weren't so many of them, and the conveyor-belt effect was correspondingly reduced; there was less pressure on speakers to complete their presentations within the hour; one or two were even allowed mini-series; and people were more likely to attend a large number of them.

In 1988, around 70 egos jostled for position to make their aesthetic pitches and sell their compositional wares to anyone who would listen. At least this was how it often seemed, particularly when speakers had to be cut short when a morning or afternoon session had already been allowed to overrun quite considerably and as the cumulative effect of information overkill overtook proceedings in the later stages of the summer school. Some speakers already experienced in the ways of the recent Darmstadt wisely offered, say, a brief introduction to a recent piece rather than launch a major defence of their aesthetic position; and of course some presentations still managed to say important and interesting things. But it did seem that the atmosphere was not ideally suited to much serious discussion of the matters we presumably all thought we were there to address.

There appears to me to be at least one thing that could be done to reduce the negative effects of what is, in theory, a very laudable effort to democratise Darmstadt; and I feel the more confident about suggesting it, since not only does it appear to tie in with Hommel's encouragement of independent presentations of various kinds mounted on an ad hoc basis, but it might also work better in bringing together those interested in a particular subject to meet in smaller groups for more extended discussion and listening. Some speakers stimulated such interest, even as they battled with the disadvantages of the ego parade, that they were able to attract some kind of audience for a few hastily arranged extra sessions. Hommel, as I said, seems to encourage this. But at present there is simply too much going on and channels of communication are too erratic to allow such independent projects to take flight. If, on the other hand, such project leaders were selected in advance, I feel the consequent lack of democracy would be a small price to pay for what could be the most stimulating sorts of experience I at least can imagine taking away from Darmstadt, should I go again.

I even have two suggestions for such people. Lev Koblyakov, a Russian-born musicologist now living in Israel and just about the only person ever to have

produced a convincing serial analysis of Boulez' *Le marteau sans maître*,⁴ was persuaded to offer some seminars on this work at Darmstadt 1988 which proved fascinating (though I was not able to attend them all); his defence of serialism as a still viable basis for present-day composition seems unusually well-argued, and a series of presentations from him in a future year would surely be an eye- and ear-opener. Revealing too, I suspect, would be the chance to hear the German-born composer and theorist Konrad Boehmer, whose early book on open form⁵ reveals only one side of what seems a fascinating critical mind, as those who have read his work in the Dutch journal *Keynotes* (he has lived in Holland for many years) will be aware. His seminars at Darmstadt 1988 on the social as well as aesthetic and technical issues currently confronting young composers – or rather the issues which he thinks they *should* be confronting and so often are not – could easily be extended into a whole series in a future year; if they were given in English as well as German (which Boehmer is, like Koblyakov, perfectly able to do), they would be especially valuable in opening up some of the difficulties of what so many English-speaking people simply write off as 'incomprehensible Adornian dialectics' and in encouraging a wide-ranging debate steered by an unusually perceptive but highly comprehensible thinker. These are the kinds of things Darmstadt needs, not the chat-show approach, however well intentioned.

The other area I found unacceptably chaotic at Darmstadt 1988 was the one of actual concert performance. It was, basically, good to hear such an enormous amount of new music in not much more than two weeks, and one accepts that one is not only going to hear a great many pieces one doesn't like but is also going to tire towards the end. From the listener's point of view, it is unfortunate that the long programmes of works by participants in the course come chiefly during the last days of the Ferienkurse, when one is already less receptive than earlier. There is, presumably, no alternative, since pieces must be selected, prepared and programmed during the summer school itself; or can pieces *really* not be selected, at least to some degree, in advance? I heard argument rage on all sides about this during the Ferienkurse, but the fact remains that composers who have organised their performers in advance have much more chance of getting a work on a programme than those who, following the rules, turn up with their scores in hopeful anticipation of a performance; so why not attempt to bring in a little more democracy here too?

However overwhelming the need is to present long programmes in quick succession at the end of the summer school to allow participants' works to be heard and performers to be heard as well, for the listener the effect is disastrous. Not only are long concerts placed end to end from at least the early evening onwards, but it is quite clear that no-one has any idea of *how* long these programmes will actually be. The knock-on effect not only reduces the conscientious listener to pulp by around one o'clock in the morning; it is, more importantly, unreasonably unfair on both composers and performers. Particularly, I'd say, on the performers, who are anyway, it seems, being asked to do far too much in too short a time; performers expect to be in a sense the servant of the composers, but the decent limits of this are being overshot as things stand. Planning such matters is never easy, but when I sat through (very nearly to the

end) a concert in a large church in nearby Speyer (the only break we got from the venues in town, a relief in itself) and heard some 40 pieces in turn without any interval and without having been given the opportunity to get anything proper to eat since lunchtime, I realised that there was nearly no planning at all. If anything, things got worse from then on, until one realised in despair that the point of the whole thing, whatever it was exactly, certainly had nothing to do with being able to listen to and assess the music for itself.

Once again, an endless parade of egos and images was being put on view for the glorification of the participants only. The troubles were, it seemed to me, that glory was in short supply anyway in such conditions and that, more importantly, any educational purpose the summer school may have intended was utterly lost. One might argue that these concerts were not for listeners in the way most concerts are supposed to be. But even if the only reasons for putting on so many performances were to give the composers the chance to hear their own music and the performers the chance to practise their skills on new work, the circumstances under which these performances took place reduced the opportunity of learning anything from them, as I have already indicated, to nearly zero: apart, that is, from some insights into how *not* to arrange things and, perhaps, into how human nature operates under such conditions. Besides, everyone was potentially a listener for the majority of the time, so the frustration of inadequate listening conditions affected all. In this case I have no solution except to programme more carefully, which means more selectively, thus cutting out even more composers than is already the case. At least this would give the performers a better deal, which seems important since it is apparently becoming harder to persuade good players to submit themselves to the Darmstadt experience; word has got around about how they get treated, so something must be done.

The Kranichsteiner Musikpreis for composition this year was, unusually, awarded to a single composer, the 32-year-old German Klaus K. Hübler (not to be confused with the veteran Klaus Huber). Accounts of the process by which the prizes are awarded at Darmstadt inspire one with even less confidence than usual about the fairness and usefulness of music competitions. But in this case the decision seemed a just one, since the short programme of Hübler's compositions offered during the course suggested a serious and individual talent in the field of New Complexity. Works such as, most notably, *Arie dissolute* (1987) for viola and nine instruments offer something emotionally quite different from the music of his teacher Ferneyhough; Robin Freeman's assessment, in his review of Darmstadt 1986, of Hübler as 'a talented and ambitious composer who is taking his time to mature'⁶ seemed accurate; I hope British listeners are given the opportunity to hear that talent maturing.

For the first time in several years no British composer shared in the Kranichsteiner Preis, though Roger Redgate was one of two regular participants who were commissioned to write a work for the 1990 Ferienkurse (the other was the Canadian Rodney Sharman). Performer prizes were, though, given to two British players, the pianist James Clapperton and the clarinettist Colin Honour (the other one went to the American soprano Lisa Jablov).

In conclusion, I'm glad I went back to Darmstadt after fourteen years, and the experience was in several

ways salutary. But I'd have to have a strong reason for returning again in the near future. Without some changes, on the planning front at least, those going next time are doomed to the frustration of a great deal of good energy going to waste.

- ¹ See the following: Roger Heaton on Darmstadt 1980, *Contact* 22 (Summer 1981), pp. 33-6; Christopher Fox on Darmstadt 1982, *Contact* 25 (Autumn 1982), pp. 49-52, and Darmstadt 1984, *Contact* 29 (Spring 1985), pp. 44-7; and Robin Freeman on Darmstadt 1986, *Contact* 31 (Autumn 1987), pp. 35-8.
- ² Paul Mounsey, 'Music in Brazil: Willy Corrêa de Oliveira and Gilberto Mendes', *Contact* 31 (Autumn 1987), pp. 21-6.
- ³ Richard Toop, 'Four Facets of "The New Complexity"', *Contact* 32 (Spring 1988), pp. 4-50.
- ⁴ Lev Koblyakov, 'Pierre Boulez "Le marteau sans maître": Analysis of pitch structure', *Zeitschrift für Musiktheorie* (1977), pp. 24-39.
- ⁵ Konrad Boehmer, *Zur Theorie der offenen Form in der neuen Musik* (Darmstadt: Tonos, 1967). [A second edition is now available from the same publisher; appearing in 1988, its main text is identical to that of the original. The address of Tonus International Music Editions is D6100 Darmstadt, Ahastrasse 9.]
- ⁶ Freeman, op. cit., p. 37.

David Kosviner

New Music-Theatre in Stuttgart (und Kagel ist auch dabei)

Tage für Neue Musik, Stuttgart, 17-30 November 1988

Since its humble beginnings almost a decade ago, the *Tage für Neue Musik, Stuttgart* (Stuttgart New-Music Days) has grown into a low-key festival lasting a fortnight. Low-key only because it has not yet managed to become a drawing card similar to the festivals in Donaueschingen, Witten and Darmstadt. The Stuttgart festival has a different theme each year, which may either be a featured composer or new music combined with another genre. In 1984 the focus was on Iannis Xenakis, in 1985 on Helmut Lachenmann; in 1986 the theme was 'Music and Film', in 1987 Bernd Alois Zimmermann; 1988 was devoted to 'New Music-Theatre', and Heinz Holliger will take his turn in 1989 (the year in which he turns 50). The usually independent composer's studio (*Atelier*) that the South German Radio annually presents was, due to a rather major overlap, incorporated into the *Tage für Neue Musik*: their featured composer for 1988 was Mauricio Kagel.

The first concert was titled 'Hommage à György Ligeti' and was the only concert to be repeated – twice, in fact. Mostly earlier pieces by Ligeti, either little known or known only by reputation, were performed by students of the Stuttgart Musikhochschule. *Rondeau* (1976) for an actor is more theatre than music although the *rondo* form of the title is wonderfully preserved throughout. A tape recorder, which he activated every so often, was the only company that the actor had on stage. The piece is slightly absurdist, witty, thought-provoking and

entertaining. It asks questions about life in general and takes pot-shots at certain sacred cows. Stephan Moos, who is not a student at the Hochschule but appeared as a guest, gave a brilliant and excellent performance. The *Trois Bagatelles for David Tudor* (1961) are quite obviously Ligeti's 'answer' to Cage's 4'33", except that Ligeti's piece has one note played right at the beginning. This 'staged' version (by the pianist David Mattingly) included a page-turner, two bravo-callers in the audience as well as the pianist. As the composition contains only musical instructions, the theatrical elements were the invention of the performer. Mattingly played the part of a stiff and arrogant soloist who had to nod his head demonstratively before the page-turner noticed him and came over from her chair (she was sitting rather far away from the piano) to flip over to the next *bagatelle*. The accessories and affectations of concert soloists were ruthlessly examined, but how much of this detracted from Ligeti's conceptual work about music *per se*? I, for one, would have been happier with a 'straight' performance instead of Mattingly's theatre-piece which seemed to tell us a lot more about what was going on in his head rather than in Ligeti's.

The *Aventures* (1962) and *Nouvelles Aventures* (1962-65) were excellently sung/laughed/hissed/etc. by Stephanie Field (contralto) and Naoki Ota (baritone), both students at the Musikhochschule's opera school, as well as by Monika Meier-Schmid (soprano), who stepped in at the last minute for the indisposed Gail McGowen. Whereas *Aventures* places more emphasis on theatrical gestures, *Nouvelles Aventures* becomes musically considerably more demanding. In *Aventures* Ligeti concerns himself with parodying speech, gestures, singing, singers, social intercourse and society itself. A sense of refinement then enters into *Nouvelles Aventures*; the theatrical elements now result from the music-making rather than the other way round. The percussionist smashing a whole tea-service (tray and all), into a box that seemed to have been designed for this very purpose, elicited spontaneous outbursts of laughter from some members of the audience who were obviously not prepared for such an occurrence. Michael Zilm conducted the young and enthusiastic ensemble with conviction and was thereby very convincing.

The musical, and possibly theatrical, high point of the evening was the *Poème Symphonique* (1962) for 100 metronomes. On stage were five tables each with twenty metronomes. Five 'players' (one per table) carefully wound up the instruments, the conductor appeared, gave a highly exaggerated cue, and the metronomes were set in motion. Then – again very carefully and quietly – the conductor padded off, the 'players' soon following suit. By this time, of course, some members of the audience were giggling, and it would have now been very difficult to convince them that a serious, perhaps even deadly serious, piece were being performed. It is about decay and therefore possibly about death; it is about listening into a single sound: putting it under a microscope, as it were, and then perceiving the tiny but numerous differences between the metronomes; it is about incredible rhythmic complexity resulting from the layering of many periodic pulses. In a way, this composition examines some of the very origins of music and simultaneously points the way in which other composers' music would go or had already gone: Helmut Lachenmann, Giacinto Scelsi, Conlon Nancarrow and Harrison Birtwistle are names that

come to mind. The reaction of the public was most interesting. Soon after the start, the giggling turned into conversation: many people simply assumed that the clatter of 100 ticking machines may have been worthy of being called 'background music', but did not warrant the attention that active listening demands. Some were convinced that this was nothing but a gag, others thought that it was a downright cheek to present such a piece to a paying public! Some interested listeners tried to hush the talkers, but did not have much success. However, towards the end of the piece, as the metronomes fell out one by one, the audience became silent and actually started hearing the music that was emanating from the stage. The serious listening atmosphere that the piece had created was destroyed by placing the last metronome left ticking on a pedestal and giving it a victor's bouquet!! This ridiculous and tasteless act (whose perpetrator should never again be engaged for similar concerts) was not repeated at the subsequent performances.

Quintett (1984/88) by Hans-Peter Jahn (born 1948) was in fact a double quintet for five actors and five string players. The composer/author describes his composition as a 'theatre-piece with music'. This should not lead to any false assumptions that the music is only incidental – on the contrary, it is essential for the realisation of the composition as a whole. In his programme notes, Jahn describes, to a certain extent, how the piece is constructed: it is in five acts with 25 scenes, to which fifteen music-pieces or movements have been composed. The music has been constructed so as not to act as an illustration of the scenic/dramatic events, with the individual movements being divided into three quintets, three quartets, three trios, three duos and three solos. The action took place on two levels: the actors performed on a slightly raised, square platform (thereby limiting their mobility) with the string quintet being higher up and behind them on a 'proper' stage. The contrast between the actors, performing in mud and dust, and the string players, immaculate in their tails, was obviously also part of the theatre. The play reflects a very strong awareness that many writers have nowadays concerning the destruction of the environment and the threat of nuclear disaster. Jahn also writes about that peculiarly human ailment of being in a negative situation but not doing anything to make it positive because it is still, in spite of its negativity, somehow comfortable. The five characters, whose conditions are partly of their own making, all belong in this category. They seem to be survivors on a post-apocalyptic hell-island . . . or perhaps they are already dead. Throughout the play they do have opportunities to change, but only one actually finds the courage to move on to something different.

Jahn's music is very interesting in that I cannot put a label on it, nor place it in any particular category. Consonance and tonality are present, but not in the manner one expects them to be. Jahn exploits the ambiguity that is inherent in, and basic to, tonality. Certain tonal formulas, well known from harmony lessons, are resolved 'incorrectly'. At one point the music sounded as if it could have been Richard Strauss and, just as I began to ask what this late Romanticism was doing there, it took a sudden turn and went off in a completely different direction. The music could be described as 'traditional' in that it is very rhythmic – almost Stravinskyan in parts – without being motoric, and tonally consonant without being conventional.

The harmonic language because of the unexpected twists and turns, remained fresh and full of surprises. The theatre, which I found gripping, was well integrated with the music. They were equal partners: sometimes together, more often alternating with one another, but always complementary.

How can one adequately translate the punning title *Schach dem Dreiklang* into English? The answer is that one can't. *Schach dem König* literally means 'putting the King into check' or, as English-speaking chess-players are wont to exclaim: 'Check!' The title that Ulrich Süsse (born 1944) chose for his composition can therefore best be translated as 'putting the triad into check', and that is what he did during his two-hour happening. The action, quite naturally, took place on a gigantic chess-board. The black pawns were represented by soprano and tenor saxophones, the white pawns by violins and violas. The castles were represented by horn players, the knights by oboists, the bishops by flautists, the kings by double-bass players and the queens by two contraltos. In the programme, the conductor is referred to not as such, but as the referee. In addition to the above-mentioned participants there were also two chess-playing 'personalities' (in this case, an ex-beauty queen and a boxer), a chess commentator as well as the use of live electronics, tapes and video. An interesting aspect of this composition is that most of the music is directly derived from the actions. Each square on the chess-board is identified by a set of co-ordinates one of which is a numeral (from one to eight) and the other a letter from A to H). The letters then determine the pitches to be played (in German, 'H' is the nomenclature for 'B'), and the pieces, when moving, then change pitch accordingly. In addition there were different motifs indicating whether a piece was in a defensive or offensive position, and there was a short theme played to indicate the intention to move.

The performance fell into two sections: the first was a through-composed piece based on a game that had already been played, then after a short interval, another game was played live. The first half was much better as fewer factors were left to chance. During the second half the 'personalities' played a rather boring game, and the musicians (who needed to be aware of their positions, as well as their functions, at any given moment) did not seem particularly interested in responding to the situations as they changed from move to move. I am sure that they would have preferred playing 'with dots' – they may then have had to practise more but not think nearly so much. Pre-recorded video and audio tapes were introduced at appropriate moments, as were live electronics and video. The pre-recorded material once again demonstrated Süsse's irreverent and mischievous way of taking on venerated customs of the past in an attempt to illuminate the present. Even though his intentions may have been above criticism, the realisation of them, or attempt thereof, was not. The composer commented after the performance that rehearsal time was, as ever, sorely lacking. Perhaps another performance, this time with better rehearsal conditions, could be mounted to demonstrate what potential still has to be realised.

The '*Atelier* Mauricio Kagel' consisted of a question-and-answer session with the composer, followed by three concerts. The musicologist Werner Klüppelholz, who has written extensively about Kagel's music, chaired the first event. Kagel spoke eloquently and with humour about the theatrical elements in his

music, emphasising that he composed *music-theatre* and not *music-theatre*. He spoke, naturally, with special reference to the compositions that were to be performed in the subsequent concerts, as well as about certain themes which pervade almost all of his work. These included, in addition to music, his interests in religion and society – their similarities, their differences and ways in which he tried to make them interact with one another. This ‘conversation with the composer’ also included a screening of the film version of *Dressur* which was to be performed the following evening.

The percussion trio, Le Cercle (Jean-Pierre Drouet, Willy Coquillat and Gaston Sylvestre) began the first concert with a performance of *Exotica* (1972) for non-European instruments. The Rumanian pan-pipe virtuoso, Gheorghe Zamfir, may be surprised to learn that his instrument – one of which was included in the performance – is not European and, by implication, neither is he nor his country of origin! During the quasi-shamanistic rituals that ensued, I could not help thinking that this cultural banditry did nothing but belittle the music of other cultures. *The Hippocratic Oath* (1984), for piano played by three hands, had the members of Le Cercle all playing with their left hands only, and each sitting on his own piano stool. As soon as the players seated themselves, it became clear that the stools were at different levels: the one furthest from the audience was too high, the one in the middle was correct and the nearest one was too low. Some giggling rippled through the audience. The piece ended with the players piling their hands one on top of another à la the Three Musketeers: all for one and one for all! I’m afraid that I cannot write anything about the music as it proved to be immediately forgettable. *La Trahison Orale* (Oral Treason) of 1983 was presented in an instrumental version completed in the same year. In this piece the performers were shoeless as well as having their left socks missing. I am still asking why. As the narration (in French) was probably of prime importance, I can only assume that three-quarters of the piece went over my head as I don’t understand any of the language. The music sounded like a combination of French *chanson* and film-music – some parts sounded uncannily like the music to a slightly less-than-serious television series about a *fin-de-siècle* French rogue (naturally of the lovable, good-hearted type.) Here the players did not limit themselves to percussion instruments but played piano, synthesizers and dulcimer as well. The last piece of the evening, *Dressur* (Dressage), dates from 1977 and is called a ‘percussion trio for wood instruments’. As can be discerned from the title, Kagel has drawn an analogy between musical performance and the circus. The instruments played were of an incredible variety: the usual wooden instruments that every percussionist is expected to play were there, as were the more unusual non-European instruments and certain instruments that are not generally considered as such: chairs, sticks and clogs. The piece was humorous, but the humour was only in the theatre and not in the music. This composition, as well as many others by Kagel, lives from its theatrical aspects: if the music were removed, the theatre could still stand on its own, but if the theatre were removed, the remaining music would not be substantial enough to support itself. A few words must be said about the performers. The Parisian percussionists were thoroughly professional: both their competence and *engagement* are to be highly praised.

The second Kagel concert featured the internationally well-known Saschko Gawriloff (violin), Siegfried Palm (cello) and Bruno Canino (piano), as well as Mie Miki (playing accordion even though the programme says it was a bandoneon) and Kagel himself as tango singer. This more traditional chamber-music concert featured three works from the 1970s as well as the Piano Trio dating from 1983-85. The earliest of the pieces, *Siegfriedp’* (1972), was the one that appealed most to me. The dedicatee performed it superbly with the required virtuosity and conviction. Kagel calls this piece his contribution to the virtuoso tradition and indeed it is. As in a great deal of contemporary music, the player has to make some vocal interjections in addition to the usual playing. This piece sounded the most modern of those played and one of the few that sounded as though it had something original to offer, in contrast to the many helpings of rehashed older music – with a supposedly new sauce – that were dumped onto our plates. *Klangwölfe* (1979) for violin and piano (extremely well played by Gawriloff and Canino) has very little dynamic range, being mostly around *pianissimo*. This is a natural consequence of the violin playing with a *Tonwolf* mute: a device invented to enable violinists to practise almost inaudibly, thereby not offending any people in their immediate vicinity. None of the musical elements in the piece were particularly interesting, the violin writing relying mostly on romantic gestures – what is known as composing ‘idiomatically’ for the instrument. The *Tango Alemán* (1978) for voice, violin, bandoneon and cello is . . . well, what can I say – I simply prefer Astor Piazzolla. Even if this composition is supposed to be a critique of the tango, its forms and conventions, it doesn’t work: the difference that one is supposed to perceive is so subtle (if existent at all) that it is not perceptible. The Piano Trio (1983-85), with which the concert ended, was composed just after *La Trahison Orale*, and the material already encountered in that piece has simply been put into another instrumentation and had a few modern techniques – such as piano strings being muted and plucked – added to it. This composition is another example of idiomatic writing for a classical combination. This implies that neither barriers nor new ground were broken. The composer preferred to remain in his self-made prison where he, even though incarcerated, knew every nook and cranny and was wonderfully comfortable.

In the third and last Kagel concert, the composer conducted the South German Radio Symphony Orchestra in compositions from the 1980s, including the German première of *Quodlibet* (1986-88) for soprano and orchestra. The soloist, Martine Viard, proved to be an excellent singer-narrator-chanteuse, having the ability and agility to change voices with incredible speed and precision. Kagel used *chanson* texts dating from the 15th century, but no melodies from this period appear in the work. Nevertheless, Kagel does more than hint at the music of this era, but they remain only hints. The violins, violas and cellos were replaced by eight cellos seated in a semi-circle directly in front of the conductor. An electric organ has been included in the instrumentation, not as a substitute for a pipe organ, but as a means of extending the already available mixtures and colours. Orchestral colour does play a large role in this composition, with the harp and piano making unusual and interesting additions to what many people have long considered a dead area. The other works on this programme were

the pieces for winds, double-basses and percussion from *Rrrrrrr . . .* (1982), *Szenario* (1982) for strings and tape and *Finale* (1981) in the version for large orchestra. All these pieces try to be humorous and to work in a very direct manner. They are, as is most of Kagel's output, examples of 'musique impure'. The character pieces (the composer's own description) from *Rrrrrrr . . .* sounded like, amongst others, neo-classical Stravinsky and Mussorgsky, with low brass and bells. In *Szenario*, written originally to accompany the silent film *Un chien andalou* of Buñuel and Dalí, the dog of the title that is always absent eventually makes its appearance – on the tape that Kagel provided for his composition. In *Finale* shades of Mahler could be heard, then it sounded as if the 'Dance of the Cygnets' from *Swan Lake* was about to start. In a percussion cadenza, car horns à la Gershwin's *An American in Paris* were present as was a xylophone part that sounded as if it had escaped from a piece by Kabalevsky. Then the conductor, while conducting, 'collapsed'. The orchestra stopped, stood up, looked at his prone form and then the concert-master directed the proceedings until the end of the piece. The *Dies Irae* was played, and rolls on a muffled side-drum were also there – all of them being musical symbols or representations of death. As a farewell gesture for Clytus Gottwald, the South German Radio's retiring new-music editor, Kagel and the orchestra played a variation from his *Variations without Fugue* for large orchestra on 'Variations and Fugue on a theme of Handel' for piano op. 24 by Johannes Brahms 1861/62 (wow, what a title!).

This large survey of Kagel's output from the seventies and eighties made it very clear that he, having chosen his titles, then takes them very literally. Good examples are the pieces from *Rrrrrrr . . .* and, of course, the conductor collapsing in *Finale*. This, unfortunately, also ensures a lack of subtlety and depth. The 'found objects' with which Kagel works are always being presented in a manner that leaves no room for ambiguity, no room for listening deeper into the pieces – everything is on the surface because the surface is all there is. The two exceptions for me were, as I have already mentioned, *Siegfriedp'* and *Quodlibet*, neither of which tried to be too humorous, nor too direct, but which did attempt to use diverse materials and a certain amount of compositional depth.

Peter Eötvös (born 1944) is well-known as a leading conductor of (mainly) contemporary music, but less familiar as a composer. The last concert of the festival therefore provided a good opportunity to see and hear his *Harakiri*. This piece is written for two alto flutes (the performers sitting Japanese style and making their instruments sound like shakuhachis), a Japanese singer, a pantomime clown (European) and, in the middle of the stage, a 'percussionist' who chopped wood. As the piece of wood is cleaved over and over again, so its pitch rises in proportion to its diminishing size. Unlike Kagel's *Exotica*, this piece does not leave a bad after-taste. Eötvös juxtaposes different cultures, as well as musical processes and tendencies, and lets them interact with one another. Both the theatrical and musical results are interesting, genuinely humorous and thought-provoking. The composer has managed to get under the skin and not just scratch the surface.

Unfortunately, many pieces that were performed seemed, in comparison, to be either sub-standard or a mass of lost opportunities. Yuval Shaked's *Spiegelbild einer Vision* (Reflection of a Vision) was rather ambiguous: an actor was gripping in his delivery of the text, but the music (provided by a string quartet)

proved to be motoric and not particularly interesting. *Klangzeitspektakel* (Sound-Time-Spectacle) by Erhard Karkoschka and Thomas Arns consisted of music with slide-projections, both of which were trying hard to teach the audience something – a little too pedantic for my tastes. The Wasteland Company presented two pieces by William Osborne: *Miriam* (1988) and *Rockaby* (after Samuel Beckett's theatre-piece). Osborne does not have anything new to offer – his music sounds mostly like Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. *Miriam* was nothing but a vehicle for the multi-talented Abby Conant, to prove that she can act, sing and play the trombone. The piano (the only other instrument present) was always played with the damper pedal down so that a pseudo-impressionistic fog ensued. *Did yer hear that* for a pianist by Volker Heyn had a grand piano and the pianist semi-suspended from some scaffolding. The pianist was swathed in bandages and first put plastic gloves on his hands before playing. This piece aimed at being provocative, though not in a positive sense by inviting the audience to experience new musical and theatrical possibilities, but by trying to be 'meaningful' and 'critical', by trying too hard to make a 'statement' about the state of the art and the world. Well, it didn't work and proved to be nothing but primitive and assaulting. Friedhelm Döhl's *Anna K.* was obviously well-meant, wanting to be politically and socially relevant, but did not quite succeed. The piece proved to be predictable after the first few minutes and was not without pretensions.

The Théâtre Européen de Musique Vivante from Brussels presented a rather mixed programme: some of it exceedingly good, some of it hopelessly weak. The main aim of this group (consisting of Annette Sachs, Dominique Grosjean and Piotr Lachert) was to provide humorous and subtle provocation. They also demonstrated that music-theatre pieces do not have to have an extra-musical significance, but that the meaning and the theatre can be derived directly from the music and the actions involved in its performance. *Boleromaniaque* by Dieter Kaufmann elicited a virtuoso solo-performance from one of the female members of the group (the programme did not specify which one.) Dadaistic events had to be performed with great co-ordination and speed, and the effect was truly breathtaking. *Piotr Lunaire* by Boudewijn Buckinx also proved to be great fun although the *Patchwork*, a collage of 90-second compositions by eleven different composers, was weak and disappointing. The most pedantic, most pretentious, most primitive and most boring piece of the festival was Iraj Schimi's *TopoKredo* for string quartet and an actor. Political texts concerning power, deception, the state, violence and the glorification thereof, were delivered by the members of the quartet. The texts were broken down into phrases which were then intoned by the first violinist, then by the second violinist, then by the viola player and then by the cellist. The first violinist then started over again. Needless to say, there were 'significant, pregnant' pauses between the phrases. The musical gestures, which included playing *saltando ad nauseam*, were also extremely primitive. Both the music and the theatre were totally superficial with not one iota of subtlety.

It is to be expected that, during a festival of this length and scope, not only masterpieces could be performed. This and other festivals fulfil the need, not only of presenting the current work of our contemporaries, but also of acting as sieves to sort out the better from the not-so-good. Even if disappoint-

ment is registered about works that are considered sub-standard, there can be no denying that an excitement is present that cannot be found at any festivals devoted exclusively to the output of musical geniuses of the past.

Christopher Fox

The 1988 Huddersfield Festival

As Harold Wilson didn't quite say, ten years is a long time in contemporary music. The Huddersfield Festival celebrated its tenth birthday in November 1988 with a marvellous array of events spreading across two weekends and the intervening week, a long way from the first five day-long Festival in 1978 and a remarkable achievement for Richard Steinitz, who has given artistic direction to the Festival throughout its lifetime. However, this is not the place for an extended historical survey of the enterprise¹: suffice it to say that, of England's two contemporary music festivals, Huddersfield is less clubbish, more didactic, less hyperbolic, more respectable and quite a lot colder. Whether any of this matters is a question for individual taste: Steinitz's success in steadily building up the reputation of the Festival, gradually acquiring more funding, more venues and – most important of all – ever more spectacular star composers, is beyond criticism.

Nevertheless, it is probably fair to say that Huddersfield does not take very many risks: the star composers are *very* stellar by the time they get invited to Huddersfield (since 1983 Henze, Berio, Maxwell Davies, Kagel, Birtwistle, Ferneyhough, Xenakis, Carter and, in 1988, the starriest of them all, Stockhausen² and they are set amongst galaxies in which less familiar foreigners mix with promising native talent, all equally safe bets (in 1988 Judith Weir, Robert Saxton, George Benjamin, Louis Andriessen, Isang Yun, Kaija Saariaho and Toru Takemitsu). So Huddersfield is not a festival at which a relatively unknown composer is going to be 'discovered' and catapulted into the international spotlight. On the other hand, the sort of retrospective attention that Huddersfield can focus on a composer's work is always instructive and Steinitz regularly devises fascinating juxtapositions, either of different composers or of different periods of work within the output of one composer.

In 1988 it was the juxtaposition of pre-1960 Stockhausen with works from his *LICHT* period which I found particularly interesting. Stockhausen was in attendance and had brought 'his' musicians and his own sound diffusion system to present a series of three 'Stockhausen Celebrations' in Huddersfield Town Hall. The first of these celebrations was also the most lavish and consisted of *Telemusik* (1966) as an appetiser for the chamber ensemble version of *Michaels Reise um der Erde*³ (1984), the middle act of *Donnerstag aus LICHT*. Readers of *Contact* 32 may remember the problems I had in Berlin with *Luzifers Tanz*⁴, another *LICHT* extract; they may even remember that on that occasion I vowed to avoid *LICHT* altogether in future. On this occasion, Stockhausen's pre-concert intro-

duction to the work and the prospect of hearing a multi-channel presentation of *Telemusik*, one of my favourite Stockhausen pieces, were enough to keep me in Huddersfield. Stockhausen introduced the various melodic 'formulae' that are the source of all the material of *Michaels Reise*; in answer to a question from the audience as to how he perceived his own development from the post-Webern serial works of the early 1950s to the formula-based works he has been writing since *Mantra*, he claimed his current method as the most advanced link in a musical chain that ran from the cyclic rhythms of Indian music to European isorhythmic composition to Bach to Webern.

For Stockhausen, the sophistication of the 'formula' method would seem to lie in its retention of the classic serial principle of an equality amongst pitches – all twelve chromatic pitches are present in each formula – while at the same time allowing some pitches to be more equal than others, both because passing notes are permissible within the system and because particular pitches, together with the characteristic articulation they have been assigned, can be dwelt on at length. Furthermore, each formula is, in theory at least, sufficiently distinct from every other formula to be recognised readily – essential in *LICHT*, since each formula is the calling card of a particular protagonist in the epic. Stockhausen evidently believes that the formulae in *Michaels Reise* are distinct, although he thoughtfully provides new listeners with extended introductions to both the 'Michael' and 'Luzifer' formulae, the two which dominate the work, before plunging us into a protracted contrapuntal debate between them. But while I was able to hear that a number of melodic figures were being manipulated into a sort of counterpoint in passages of *Michaels Reise*, my ears resolutely failed to grasp these figures as component parts of identifiable melodies.

Indeed the most striking features of *Michaels Reise* had little to do with either the 'drama' of which the work is part or with the compositional techniques Stockhausen has developed to articulate that drama. Instead, as with *Luzifers Tanz*, I was impressed by the extraordinary musicianship of the ten members of Stockhausen's ensemble: Markus Stockhausen ('Michael', trumpet), Kathinka Pasveer (flute), Michael Svoboda ('Luzifer', trombone) and Suzanne Stephens ('Eve', clarinet) were as committed as ever as the central characters and Lesley Schatzberger and Ian Stuart (clarinets and basset-horns) gave quite delightful performances as a pair of clowns. The fluent grace of their movements as, in the closing stages of the piece, they mimic a love duet between Michael and Eve, made a charming contrast to the rather more studied gestures of Stockhausen and Stephens.

Ian Stuart returned two days later to dance and play his way through father Stockhausen's *Harlekin* (1975). Although I fail to see any reason for the existence of this piece this was another excellent performance and it is a tribute to Stuart's dedication to his task that *Harlekin's* 45 minutes passed as quickly as they did. But, excellent as Stuart was, his performance was overshadowed by quite superb playing from Bernhard Wambach and Andreas Boettger earlier the same evening. Wambach played *Klavierstücke V, VII, VIII and XI* (1954-6), Boettger played *Zyklus* (1959) and, together, they played *Kontakte* (1959/60). In the wake of *Michaels Reise* and Stockhausen's use of pitch centres in that work it was instructive to hear these techniques anticipated in *Klavierstück VII*, particularly in a performance of such tonal sensitivity as Wambach's. Boettger played *Zyklus*

from memory – a feat in itself – and after the interval proceeded to do the same with *Kontakte*. The resulting performances took the interpretation of post-war music to new heights: not only were both players totally in command of the music's demands on their own techniques, they were also entirely familiar with each other's parts and, most importantly, they obviously knew every detail of the tape part. Stockhausen's intention for this work was that the live musicians should 'react freely during the performance'⁵ to the tape; in this performance that illusion was created and, through their absorption in the electronic soundworld Wambach and Boettger also sustained the fundamental illusion of the work, that 'contacts' really can be made between synthetic and acoustic sounds. *Kontakte* is a marvellous piece – full of incident and yet so subtly developed – and, in a performance as magical as this one, quite capable of lifting the listener gently out of his seat.

There were also excellent student performances of early Stockhausen (*Kreuzspiel* (1951) and *Kontrapunkte* (1952/3)) by the Royal College of Music Twentieth-Century Ensemble and of *Sternklang* (1971), by student ensembles from Cambridgeshire College of Technology, City University, the Guildhall School and Huddersfield Polytechnic. Stockhausen connections abounded elsewhere in the Festival programme: for example, *Michaels Reise* was preceded by a concert of works by Gavin Bryars, whose uncanonical realisation of Stockhausen's *Plus-Minus* (1963) is commemorated in the third volume of Stockhausen's collected writings.⁶ Bryars led his own ensemble in performances of his *My First Homage* (1978), *Out of Zaleski's Gazebo* (1977/8), *Les Fiancailles* (1983) and *Dr Ox's Experiment* and the Balanescu Quartet played *String Quartet No. 1 (Between the National and the Bristol)* (1985). *My First Homage* is a particularly lovely piece and although the two versions of the piece in which a tuba takes the bass line retain a special place in my heart,⁷ this version, with plucked double bass providing the attacks to sustained bass clarinet notes, nearly displaced them. Perhaps the rest of the concert was a little too even-paced harmonically for some members of the audience to resist the effects of the more soporific pieces; in *Dr Ox's Experiment* (an excerpt from a forthcoming opera of the same name based on Jules Verne's novel of the same name) the music's generally sedate progress made it especially hard to retain any sense of what sort of sentence the string of words intoned by soprano Sarah Leonard might be forming themselves into.

The Bryars Ensemble was passing through Huddersfield on an Arts Council Contemporary Music Network tour and the Network has regularly provided Huddersfield with a couple of subsidised concerts which would otherwise have been beyond the Festival's budget. In 1988 the other Network concerts were the inevitable London Sinfonietta with the inevitable George Benjamin, Robert Saxton and Colin Matthews and a rather more adventurous offering of music from Mali and India by the Dunya Ensemble. Another Huddersfield tradition is a concert by one of the BBC orchestras, with the BBC usually (but not I gather on this occasion) subsidising the cost of the concert. On this occasion it was Edward Downes and the BBC Philharmonic on duty, opening the Festival with a most attractive programme in which Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894) and *La Mer* (1905) framed Yun's *Muak* (subtitled 'Dance Fantasy for large orchestra') (1987), Messiaen's *Poèmes pour Mi* (1936) and Takemitsu's *I Hear the Water Dreaming* (1987) for flute and orchestra. *Muak* (the title is apparently Korean for dance music) is

in three sections, in each of which there is a gradual development from solo instrumental writing (violin at the start of the piece, oboe at the beginning of the two subsequent sections) to ensemble writing. At the same time there is a gradual accumulation of rhythmic energy, generated in particular by some thrilling passages for unison strings. What I found especially striking was Yun's reconception of orchestral sound in this piece: in ensemble passages the winds are often deployed as a densely textured, multi-timbral choir, while the strings tend to coalesce into a single musical strand. The other British première of the evening, Takemitsu's *I Hear the Water Dreaming*, contained rather less to surprise the listener, partly because Takemitsu's name appears much more frequently in our concert and broadcast schedules than Yun's, partly because his use of the forces at his disposal is much closer to standard practice. Here he was writing for solo flute (the admirable Robert Aitken, who returned the following weekend in a real dog's breakfast of a flute concerto by R. Murray Schafer) and orchestra. As always in recent Takemitsu the music was ravishingly scored and curiously boneless in structure, a sort of filleted memory of Impressionism which sounded even more unfathomable than usual when placed in such close proximity to the real thing.

The programme book made much of the fusion, interpenetration, mutual influence, or whatever, of the musics of East and West. Quite what this means I am not sure – what is the music of the West? Plainchant? Michael Jackson? – although it has been a recurrent theme at Huddersfield ever since George Crumb was the focus of the 1978 Festival. It does seem a little ingenuous to continue to feign surprise at the interaction of different cultures, particularly when the people feigning surprise are usually the descendants of the colonialists who first brought these cultures into contact with one another. Surely by 1988 it should be possible to acknowledge that the so-called blending of East and West is not a unique phenomenon but is, rather, another manifestation of the demise of post-Renaissance sensibilities in Europe and America, something which has probably as much to do with Einstein's proposal of a space-time continuum as with the presence of a Javanese gamelan at the 1889 Paris Exhibition. If anything, those composers who consciously aim to 'integrate' the music of non-European cultures into their own work are the real heirs of our imperialist ancestors.

With so much oriental mystery in the air the inclusion of a number of Judith Weir's works, so soon after her triumphs with *A Night at the Chinese Opera*, made admirable sense. As a refreshing antidote to the ill-digested exoticism on display in a number of other composers' music at Huddersfield, Weir's music is actually *about* the ways in which we perceive musics from beyond the Western European concert music tradition. In recent years she has especially focussed her music on that of the Balkans, China and Scotland and in Lontano's Huddersfield concert we were presented with *A Serbian Cabaret* (1984) in one half and a (quasi-) Yuan drama, *Consolations of Scholarship* (1985), in the other. The juxtaposition was telling: rather than being struck by the distinctions between works whose apparent influences are so geographically removed from one another, it was the similarities that hit home, the conciseness of expression, the clarity of form, the good humour. Unlike Bartok or Finnis, who wholeheartedly adopt and inhabit other musics as if they were their own, Weir maintains a critical, almost classical, distance between her sources and herself so that we are always conscious of how alien cultures other than our own must remain.

In *A Serbian Cabaret*, for example, with its alternation of declaimed texts and fantasias on the tunes to which those (translated) texts were originally sung, we laugh at the texts and their 'illustrative music background in the manner of film music'⁸, not out of a feeling of superiority (as previous generations did when presented with black-face 'Minstrels'), but out of a sense of the absurdity of this attempted cultural transposition. Weir's is a project not without danger – she regularly flirts with whimsy and she can be a little *too* neat and tasteful – but its realisation is so delightfully wry that I find it irresistible, particularly when performed with the vitality and precision that Lontano and Linda Hirst brought to *Cabaret* and *Consolations*.

Huddersfield is my local festival and being a local, I tend not to give it the undivided attention I give to other, more distant festivals: as a result my experience of Huddersfield is perhaps closer to that of the Yorkshire music-lover than that of the *parachutiste*⁹ new music buff. After all, if I don't particularly like the look of the next concert, or it's raining, or I've run the gamut of the town's very meagre supply of decent eateries, the temptation to take the M62 east to home, warmth and my own work can be overwhelming. Whatever the excuse, the truth is I didn't go to much more of the 1988 Festival than I've already mentioned, missing a lot of Andriessen (including Huddersfield students in the UK première of *de Stijl*) and quite a lot of Kaija Saariaho. However, I was there for the Tenth Birthday Gala Concert with which the Festival closed, so I did hear Saariaho's *Verblendungen* (1982/4) receive its UK première, in a performance by the English Northern Philharmonia (Opera North's orchestra) under Diego Masson. *Verblendungen* is a beautifully judged synthesis of computer-manipulated concrete sounds and orchestral textures: or so I thought – my (non-composing but musically sophisticated) companions both pronounced it uninteresting and very unsatisfactory for the orchestra, who they heard as entirely subjugated by the tape.

Like a lot of Galas, this one was rather long and not as coherently planned as less celebratory occasions, so after *Verblendungen* we heard the Schafer concerto mentioned earlier, a group of Messiaen organ works, his *Reveil des Oiseaux* (1953) and Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin Suite* (1918). The organ works were something of a curiosity; presumably they were included here because no celebration of Messiaen's music would be complete without some organ music, but they sat rather awkwardly in the middle of an orchestral concert that was quite long enough. And although Jennifer Bate played with characteristic authority, extracting appropriately Messiaenic timbres from the Huddersfield Town Hall organ, why did she play a series of five unrelated pieces from 1928 to 1969, four of which were single movements from much larger works, when a single work (say the whole of the *Méditations sur la Mystère de la Sainte Trinité* (1969) from which we heard just the sixth movement) would have made a much more satisfactory, separate recital? Pondering this mystery, but with fine performances of *Reveil* and the Bartok also ringing in my head, it was time for Samuel Smith's, the M62 and bed.

¹ Keith Potter's review of the 1983 Festival in *Contact* 28 (Autumn 1984) includes an account of the Festival's development over its first five years. The first two Festivals were covered in *Contact* 20 (Autumn 1979) and *Contact* 21 (Autumn 1980) by John Shepherd and Hilary Bracefield, respectively.

² Messiaen's music was also a feature of the 1988 programmes but its composer was not present.

³ The programme book anglicised this title as *Michael's Journey*, although Stockhausen himself referred to the work as *Michael's Trip* in his pre-concert talk. Elsewhere, and equally unnecessarily, Messiaen's *Reveil des Oiseaux* became *Awakening of the Birds*.

⁴ Christopher Fox, 'A Berlin Diary', *Contact* 32 (Spring 1988), p. 71.

⁵ Quoted in Robin Maconie, *The Works of Karlheinz Stockhausen* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 144.

⁶ Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Texte zur Musik 1963-70*, Vol. 3 (Köln: Verlag M. DuMont Schonberg, 1971), p. 47-50. See also John Tilbury's account of the same realisation in Michael Nyman's *Experimental Music* (London: Studio Vista, 1974), p. 135.

⁷ I first heard *My First Homage* in 1979 at an SPNM Weekend at York University; Bryars and Dave Smith (pianos) with John White (tuba) gave what Bryars now calls his 'ghetto' concert. The work is also to be heard on *Hommages* (Disques de Crepuscule), a disc devoted to Bryars' music, where vibraphones and sizzle cymbal are added.

⁸ From the composer's programme note.

⁹ See Keith Potter's review, *op. cit.*, for an extended debate on the merits and drawbacks of *parachutisme*.

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Christopher Fox writes music and words about music. His most recent works are *stone. wind. rain. sun* for flute, saxophones and trombones and *Leap like the heart* for chamber ensemble.

Andrew Hugill Thomson (b. 1957) gained an M.A. in Composition from Keele University in 1981. He is now Head of Music at the Dept. of Performing Arts. He has written music for theatre as well as concert works and his music has been played in Europe and North America as well as Britain. In 1983 he founded the performing ensemble *George W. Welch*, which is still active, and he also has an expanding literary career.

David Kosviner was born in 1957 in Johannesburg and now lives in Stuttgart, where he studied composition with Helmut Lachenmann. In addition to composing he also conducts, teaches, copies parts and occasionally writes reviews. He is at present working on a commission for the 1990 Tage für Neue Musik Stuttgart.

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Pamela Smith gained her first degree from Durham University in 1985. The composition of a tape piece *Fiddler's Dream* as part of her final submission stimulated an interest in electroacoustic music which led to doctoral research, again at Durham, into the works of Jonathan Harvey, Denis Smalley and Trevor Wishart. Her thesis on the subject is due for completion in 1990.

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