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25th March : Birmingham and Midland Institute,
Margaret Street, Birmingham.

Lunchtime concert of works by Laurence
Williamson, Peter Bullock (first performances)
Poulenc, Horowitz and Holborne, given by
students from Birmingham University.

I have unfortunately mislaid my original draft for the review of this concert and so I shall confine myself to a few remarks of a general nature.

The concert was devised and arranged by Peter Fairhurst and consisted largely of brass music played by the Lusingando Brass Consort. They began with a suite by the 16th century English composer Antony Holborne and ended with a 20th century suite, Joseph Horowitz's "Music Hall Suite" (an amiable enough romp through music hall clichés which are curiously underplayed by the composer - the result is therefore generally less than comic) Three members of the consort gave a rather ill-prepared performance of two movements from Poulenc's Sonata for trumpet, horn and trombone.

The most interesting part of the programme consisted of first performances of works by two third-year students in the music department at Birmingham University. The brass consort played Laurence Williamson's Brass Sextet - a work which I leave a later reviewer to tackle since it obviously suffered from its performance on this occasion - in the third movement in particular where the composer's intentions were not at all clear. At points, however, the piece struck me as original and well-managed; its overall structure was obviously secure - an impression which I am assured the second performance did much to substantiate.

Peter Bullock's setting of T.S.Eliot's "The Journey of the Magi" for countertenor, flute and string quartet seemed, by contrast, to have received an excellent performance from Andrew Giles, Laurence Joyce and a string quartet from the university. It is a work that I look forward with much pleasure to hearing again and I am sorry that I cannot do it justice here. As with the Williamson piece, "The Journey of the Magi" is (so I am informed) strictly serial; this did not prevent Peter Bullock from indulging in some beautiful lyrical writing for voice and flute (treated as equals) and some fine and sensitive string writing. Nor did it prevent him from including a spoken central section - a particularly moving and effective idea. If Mr. Bullock can write serial pieces of this quality let us hope that he will not carry out his intention of abandoning the technique altogether.

KEITH POTTER