

contact

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

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

Citation

Potter, Keith. 1977. 'New Music Diary'. *Contact*, 16. pp.29-33. ISSN 0308-5066.

NEW MUSIC DIARY

KEITH POTTER

Three months (November 1976 to the beginning of February 1977) to cover in this issue, as opposed to only just over one month in *Contact 15*, so my comments will be somewhat briefer, even though the density of events attended was quite a lot lower for this period.

So many of the 'established' ('establishment?') new music concerts attract so many of the same type of audience (or rather, so many of the so few) that one comes to accept this state of affairs as perfectly natural. Surely it shouldn't be? No wonder that many of the more experimental musicians have for some years now been seeking venues other than, for example, the South Bank and even such formerly staunch centres of experimentalism as the Round House: too entrenched nowadays? This despite (because of? no, that can't *directly* be true, of course) the changing policies of the London Orchestral Concert Board under its chairman of one year, Sir William Glock, who's now fighting the same battles on the London orchestral concert scene that he fought as Controller of Music at the BBC more than 15 years ago: on behalf of the European avantgarde composers of the 50s and (just) the 60s. It's a pertinent comment, I think, not only on the state of Royal Festival Hall concert programming (Beethoven, Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Brahms, Beethoven, in that order), which people like *The Observer* critic Peter Heyworth have been (rightly, I believe) knocking for years; it's also a comment on the state of our 'agencies for good' (the advancement — in at least two senses — of new music: note the word 'new', please) that someone like Glock should be needing to (wanting to?) fight the same battles twice. The arguments will be good ones, but they've been heard before. Meanwhile the musical centres of gravity have changed: or haven't these people noticed yet? Perhaps we should accept the sorts of distinctions to which I'm alluding here by making the demarcations obvious, as New York does with its clearly distinctive 'uptown' and 'downtown' cultures (e.g. Pierre Boulez on the one hand, Philip Glass on the other). If we're not happy to live with that kind of cleavage (if you see what I mean), then we've perhaps got to find another alternative. Less talk and more action? Can *Contact* do anything but provide another forum for the debate?

Monday November 8

Rather remiss of me to attend the pre-concert and not the main concert itself, but I was only able to get to the 6pm recital at the Queen Elizabeth Hall by Ronald Lumsden that preceded another onslaught on Stockhausen's *Hymnen* at 8pm by Triquetra-Plus, a group who I'd previously heard do the piece (with slightly different personnel and instrumentation) in the Round House in August 1975. Lumsden's piano recital included some Debussy études, Boulez' Third Piano Sonata and Mario Davidovsky's *Synchronisms 6* for piano and tape (also heard in Stanley Haynes' concerts before; this was instead of Luc Ferrari's *Und so weiter* . . . which I'd looked forward to hearing). There was also the first performance of *Pyramids* for piano and live electronics by Stanley Haynes; a piece which, while being satisfying structurally, relied overmuch on *Mantra*-type modulated rhythmic clichés. Of Haynes' interesting projects for the present season, including his concert in the ICA series on November 21, this concert is the only one that's gone ahead that I have been able to attend.

Sunday November 14

After getting to all the first five of the Institute of Contemporary Arts' most worthwhile Sunday series,² I had to miss several of the later ones, including the Progressive Cultural Association's 'Support the Irish People' concert on November 7. However, I attended Melvyn Poore's solo tuba recital the following week, which provided an interesting and not unentertaining case for the tuba as a solo instrument with some good pieces, the composers concerned being the Americans David Reck, James Fulkerson and Earle Brown (the latter represented by a very individual interpretation of *December 1952*), the American John Schneider and the English composer Simon Emmerson, both of whom have written works especially for this player, and a piece by Poore himself, as well as a Stephen Foster medley of his own devising by way of an encore. Open-form Schneider (*TBA*) and very-open-form Brown came off better than (on this occasion) academically-respectable Reck (*Five Studies for tuba alone*); I also liked the way Poore dealt with Fulkerson's minimalist *Patterns III*. Close collaboration between player and composer paid off with Emmerson's *Variations* as well as with the Schneider and, predictably, even more so when composer and performer were the same (Poore's *Vox Superius*). As a continuation of 'performer/instrument extension' into the realms of a much maligned instrument, what Poore is doing seems worth pursuing, but in the end exhibits more limitations (or at least less than an apparent infinitude of possibilities) than, say, Bertram Turetzky's double bass, to take another 'lowly' instrument (in at least two senses). Poore's performing skill, his commitment and his engaging but unaffected platform manner should win him more audiences than he's currently getting. He combines his work as a player (with a trio of flute, tuba and piano as well as solo and other

work) with being Musical Director at the Birmingham Arts Laboratory. This, the sole survivor of the 60s Lab scene, has, incidentally, recently started music publishing in a small way with Emmerson's *Variations*.

Monday November 15

The first of two concerts entitled 'Boulez at The Round House' put on by the BBC. In spite of recent, and not so recent, flops in audience attendance at this BBC new music series, there was quite a good crowd for this one, at any rate (the other, on November 29, I didn't attend, nor did I catch its broadcast later: it included the British premiere of the young Italian Giuseppe Sinopoli's *Drei Stücke aus Souvenirs à la Mémoire* and Elliott Carter's *A Mirror on which to Dwell*, as well as Schoenberg's *Serenade, Op.24*). Michael Finnissy's *Pathways of Sun and Stars* was the new (commissioned) work on this occasion. We don't hear much of this 30-year-old English composer in this country: like Brian Ferneyhough (with whom he's often been confused) he's found that his complex, 'European'-influenced style goes down better in Europe. This piece wasn't overcomplicated, though; in fact it was rather beautiful in parts. Boulez was represented as a composer as well as a conductor with the Labèque sisters' rendering of his *Structures, Book II*, a piece I find less hard to take than *Structures, Book I*, though that's not necessarily saying much.

Three Varèse works, *Octandre*, *Hyperprism* and *Intégrales*, occupied a vivid and exciting second half, though the performance of *Octandre* went askew and was replaced in the deferred Radio Three broadcast by a record. Varèse's relevance to contemporary composers was the intermittent subject of a conversation I had after the concert: I'm finding *more* in Varèse these days, but can see why some composers more experimental (even more 'minimal'?) than I are finding less in him. Varèse has in the past been taken up by both avantgardists (Boulez) and experimentalists (Cage); does it indicate that the parting of their ways has been taken a step further if those who feel themselves closer to Cage than to Boulez can't agree about Varèse any more? Or is it perhaps indicative of the opposite?

Saturday November 27

One of Goldsmiths' College's School of Adult and Social Studies Saturday Schools contrasts the approaches to electronic music of Hugh Davies, performing on his own instruments such as the shozyg, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, the film of whose lecture 'Four

UNIVERSITY OF KEELE AMERICAN MUSIC M.A. COURSE

This one-year course (full-time) or two years (part-time) ranges from nineteenth century pioneers to the Avant garde and includes popular music and aspects of American culture.

All students offer either a recital or a dissertation.

Applications for higher degrees by thesis are also invited.

Further details from the Postgraduate Prospectus available from:

The Registrar,
University of Keele,
Staffordshire ST5 5BG,
England.

Criteria of Electronic Music' as given in May 1972 at the Oxford Union was shown. It's always interesting to hear — and see — Davies play his instruments and to learn of the philosophy behind them, which is in many ways antithetical to that of Stockhausen, of whom he was formerly an assistant. Stockhausen's dissection of *Kontakte* and his (literal) tracing of its unfolding sounds in the air are built into a discussion of some of the composer's most seminal and most influential ideas concerning electronic music.⁴

Sunday November 28

The only one of the three 'political' concerts in the ICA series that I was able to make, this had a public debate afterwards in which the usual views were aired with the usual mixture of clear and muddled thinking, calm and (increasing) animosity that makes these occasions — however worthwhile, however necessary, however cathartic — ultimately deeply depressing. I'm not saying that we should shirk the issues, but *public* destruction of young composers' music and views (in this case a group now only loosely involved with the Royal College of Music in London and calling themselves the 'RCM Composers' Collective') is not a pretty sight, even if one agrees with many of the points made. It's a difficult one, I know: the issue of how to conduct the debate almost as much as the content of the debate itself (form and content: pertinently — as well as inevitably — raised here with respect to the Collective's piece). And I don't think that the problem has ever been solved by shirking trenchant criticism either.

But rather than give an extended, personal critique of Christian Wolff's *Wobbly Music*, Frederic Rzewski's *Struggle Song* and works by John Marcangelo and Erhard Grosskopf as performed by an instrumental group directed by Cornelius Cardew (who also chaired the discussion) and Singcircle directed by Gregory Rose, I'll do better by promising not only more on Rzewski from me in a future issue but also that I've asked one of the RCM Composers' Collective to write about the Swiss political music conference last November for which the group's piece was originally prepared. I would also like to direct readers' attention to an article by Cardew in an issue of *Studio International*⁵ to which I shall have cause to refer again later, which, while being centred on notation, discusses the social implications and explications of music and a whole range of topics including some of those I've raised briefly in this column so far; this article also contains a description and evaluation of Wolff's *Wobbly Music*. Finally in this list of forthcoming or recommended reading, there's Adrian Jack's very perceptive preview article to this concert in *Time Out*.⁶

A Course of Constant Delight

A week of Experimental Music
in the country

Playing it, Writing it, Talking about it.

Furniture Music
Verbal and graphic scores
Systems
History
No nasty electronics
No stuffy academics
Environmental musics
Lots of doings (no softies)
Non "musicians" welcome

A residential week at the Beaford Centre in
North Devon, under the eyes and ears of
Michael Nyman, Stuart Marshall and John
White.

Write or phone for further details to :-
The Beaford Centre, Beaford, Winkleigh,
North Devon. Beaford 201/202

Wednesday December 1

Quite a lot was made of Elisabeth Lutyens' opera *Isis and Osiris* before it was finally put on under the musical direction of Michael Graubart and the stage direction of Mike Ashman at Morley College (first night: November 26) that I felt I really should see it for myself. It's a pity that we *always* talk of this composer in terms of 'that indomitable lady triumphing over adversity and public neglect' — however true that may be. Lutyens was 70 last year and she certainly had a good share of commissions and performances then, at least, with broadcasts resulting from them spreading into 1977. It's also possibly a pity that we had to judge her only full-length opera to have made the stage so far on the valiant but inevitably under-financed resources of Morley — particularly noticeable in the stage presentation of what should really have been a thundering great epic so far as I could see. Lots of credit all round, but I'm afraid I *don't* think Lutyens is a good composer for the stage as it turns out and as far as it was possible (in terms of dramatic timing, suitability of and memorability of the music, for instance) to tell on this occasion. (Perhaps she shouldn't have written her own libretto.) In fact she did what she said in print⁷ that she was afraid of doing to her audience: bored the pants off me.

Monday December 6

Concert No. 2965 at the Royal College of Music (who's counting?) was a performance by almost entirely student forces of Boulez' mighty *Pli selon pli* (what a lot of Boulez we've been hearing over the last month). This remarkable feat was brought off by Edwin Roxburgh, who conducted, and the college's Twentieth Century Ensemble as a follow-up to their by all accounts very successful *Gruppen* a while back. Among the large body of players, the only listed professionals were Jane Manning (soprano) and Hugo D'Alton (mandolin), both parts quite understandably not taken by students, though in fact Jane Manning stood in at very short notice (and how many times must she have done *that?*) for, I think, a student singer. The performance, apparently and evidently scrupulously prepared, was marred only by the omission of the central section of 'Tombeau'; Roxburgh's conducting of this extraordinarily difficult work appeared secure and almost effortless. The conductor said in his programme note that *Pli selon pli* was more difficult to prepare than *Gruppen*: this performance raised the question of where this group of players can go now.

Concert No. 2965 seemed among the most optimistic things on the London concert scene, since if students can tackle works like this with apparent enthusiasm, surely the indifferent attitude of so many professional orchestral musicians to most 20th century, never mind *new*, music must in time undergo some kind of change for the better. How I wish this performance had been made part of London University's contemporary music series held in the same hall only a few weeks earlier.⁸

Tuesday December 7

A night that sounded like a real curiosity seeker's evening, shouldn't — in the sense that this is normally meant — have been one, but in the end turned out to be so. I refer to Yonty Solomon's performances at the Wigmore Hall of four earlyish piano pieces by Kaikhosru Sorabji, none of which had been played in public for over 40 years, if at all, and were only now on exclusive release to Solomon by permission of their extraordinary octogenarian composer.

Sorabji was an associate of such early 20th century English composers as Delius and Bernard van Dieren, but his music has, unlike theirs, been 'frozen', forcibly stored away from public ears, so that it now comes as something of a surprise and, indeed, in terms of present concerns, remarkably 'advanced'. I said that Sorabji shouldn't be regarded as a mere curiosity because I think that even those who may not have taken such intermittently 'over-ripe' but incipiently 'avantgarde' music seriously in the past are learning to do so now; such music of the 'alternative traditions' — alternative, that is, to those of us brought up on a direct line leading from Brahms and Wagner to Schoenberg to Webern to Stockhausen — now has a hold of a kind that is, and should be, influential compositionally today, just as much as Schoenberg is (or was).

At the same time, I said that in this instance Sorabji *did* turn out to be more of a curiosity than an actuality — at least he did so for me. This is no doubt due in part to our lack of knowledge of Sorabji's output as a whole: the gushing of the special pleaders (e.g. 'amongst the most important composers for the piano since Chopin' — Alistair Hinton in the extensive programme book for the occasion) needs to be checked by extensive listening. With which Solomon is reputedly going to help us, plans for performances of parts of the massive *Opus clavicembalisticum* being mentioned for the future.

Until then, *Le jardin parfumé* (1923; first performance since 1931), *In the Hothouse* (1918) and *Toccata* (1920; both this and *In the Hothouse* being the first performances authorised by the composer) and the incredible *Fantasie Espagnole* (1919; first English performance authorised by the composer) will remain as fragrant blooms of an architecture strange to behold and stranger still to hear (to mix my metaphors thoroughly). But *not* irrelevant.

This recital also included the first London performance of the

revised version of John Rushby-Smith's Second Piano Sonata and the first performance of Wilfrid Mellers' *A Fount of Fair Dances*. Both were in keeping with the voluptuous pianistic mood of the evening, but were vastly less original, less interesting and less relevant than Sorabji.

Friday December 10

One of the new venues I've been exploring is 2B Butlers Wharf, a rented space hard by the Thames which is slowly building a reputation as a kind of 'alternative South Bank' dedicated mainly to performance work of various sorts and open to any experimental artist or musician who wants to put on a show.

The first of my two visits there was to sit, stand and walk about shivering (it's *bloody* cold up there in the depths of winter) while Paul Burwell and David Toop played the closing stages of what was reputed to have been a five-hour improvisation. While Toop performed on flutes of various sorts, sometimes playing them into a trough of water, Paul Burwell used not only an incredible collection of percussion but also his own 'installation' of piano wires stretched throughout the dark space from pillar to pillar (treacherous for the perambulating listener) and hung with variously resonating objects such as packing cases, a milk churn etc., which had been part of the performed-on exhibition during the week. The 'presence' generated by the sounds of the performers, the slides on show, the audience huddled in dark corners, remote and communicating only through the music (so far as I could see) the sense of togetherness that only being in a freezing warehouse by the Thames on a Friday night can bring, the occasional far-off sounding of industry and shipping outside: this was in fact very real and contributed to a unique kind of experience.⁹

Saturday December 11

A triple bill of one-act operas put on by the Department of Theatre Design at Croydon College of Design and Technology in conjunction with the Department of Music at Goldsmiths' College and held at the Croydon college's Denning Hall. This provided a chance to see Hindemith's *Hin und zurück* ('There and back again'), a piece of naughty 20s formalism which turned out to be far less good than I had expected, though fairly amusing. Geoffrey Bush's *The Cat who went to Heaven* was a rather inconsequential piece, uncertain of its direction or purpose, it seemed to me, but Stanley Glasser's *The Gift* showed a real dramatic and comic flair and even beat Hindemith on his own ground. The sets and production for all three operas by members of the Croydon college under Arnold Dover were splendid; the conductor for the evening was Peter Moore.

Sunday December 12

A visit to the Serpentine Gallery in the afternoon to catch the last day of an exhibition called '6 times', a group of performances and installations exploring change and duration. The six artists included Max Eastley, whose sound-sculptures are now fairly familiar to those in the musical world. Earlier in the fortnight for which the exhibition ran Eastley had got improvising musicians such as Evan Parker and David Toop over to play in the setting of his installations; I missed the performances, but the sculptures themselves, made of coloured wood and metal and mechanically operated to emit whirring and clattering noises, and a series of slides held my attention for quite some time.

The only other exhibit to do so was Charles Garrad's *A Room Remembered*, a partial reconstruction of a Mexican hotel room with changing lights to effect the passage of day and night, altering one's perception of ordinary objects and surroundings, the whole being filtered through the memory of the artist and one's own.

Musicians are starting to use gallery spaces more in this country now, as they have been doing in the States for many years. Artists like Eastley can effect a useful communication between the different worlds which are still surprising themselves at how much they have in common.

Then in the evening to the last in the ICA series to which I was able to get. By this time, and following on all the nonsense that was put around during the affair of Mr. P. Orridge, news of the imminent closure of the ICA Theatre had filtered through; now this is already a part of the history of closures of experimental theatres in various parts of the country. It doesn't seem immediately apparent if and how music at the ICA will be affected, for this very enterprising Sunday concert series was the first really serious effort at putting on music that Nash House had made for some time, and there were no plans for another this season at any rate. Meanwhile the occasional concert is going ahead. We shall have to await the outcome, but it will be more than just a pity if the Institute of Contemporary Arts doesn't include music on a regular basis in its future plans.

In this concert the American pianist and composer Stephen Montague included works for piano, tape, slides and various mixes of media in a typical mixed-bag programme which (deliberately?) set out to grind no axe or leave any particular style or mode of presentation untouched, from the post-Webernian *Music for Magnetic Tape and Piano Solo* by Andrzej Dobrowolski to Terry Riley's *Keyboard Studies II* to a realisation of John Cage's *Songbooks* for performer, slides, electronics and tape, Krzysztof

Zarebski's *Performance II* for grand piano, slides, 16mm. film, ultraviolet light, prepared objects and tape, pieces by Franklin E. Morris, Montague himself in collaboration with his brother John and, to end with, Tom Johnson's *Scene for piano and tape* in which a loudspeaker takes on an independent personality and challenges the pianist's authority which the player finally asserts by pulling out the plug on it.

All this resource, both personal and mechanical, let down Montague only rarely, and yet I rather agree with Brigitte Schiffer¹⁰ that the pieces and his manner of presenting them were strangely old-fashioned. It's the old, anything goes, American 60s turned up again, and perhaps aspects of it are coming back into fashion once more (see the end of this column). But perhaps, like mini-skirts, these things have to be worn in inverted commas, as it were, in order to gain acceptance with the more sober 70s.

Monday December 13

A trip over to Egham, Surrey to Royal Holloway College (part of London University) for a lunchtime concert given by T.H.E.M.E. (The Holloway Experimental Music Ensemble). Since Brian Dennis went to the college it's become quite active in experimental music, though since the place isn't very easy to reach and since their events aren't too well publicised not all that many people outside Holloway get to them.

On this occasion the group played two pieces by Dennis, *Seven Poems of the Wang River* and *Two Rituals and a Fishing Song* (these two works were repeated at a lunchtime concert at Goldsmiths' College on March 1), *Three Pieces* for vibraphone and four psalteries by Howard Skempton and three piano pieces by Jonathan Parry, a Holloway student. Dennis's music is in the experimental tradition, but suffused with techniques owing something to European avantgarde music and with a tonal and textural aura that could almost be described as decadent. It's slightly strange, almost disconcerting music to listen to, since its roots are so apparent and so apparently disparate. But therein also lies its originality. Like Dennis's *Seven Poems*, which is in fact an extended arrangement of the song-cycle *Poems of Solitude II* with a clarinet playing the vocal line, Skempton's pieces use four psalteries, an imaginative and evocative touch of ethereal experimentalism which suits his style very well. Parry's pieces were more straightforwardly tonal, and possibly quite unambiguous in intent.

Other recent concerts at Holloway have included a recital of John White's piano sonatas by the composer, and there are plans to

All books and music reviewed
in *Contact* can be obtained from

Philip Martin

MUSIC BOOKS
22 HUNTINGTON RD
YORK YO3 7RL
TEL. (0904) 36111

Fast personal service

Catalogues of new and out-of-print
musical literature available
on request.

Wants lists/items for sale always welcomed.

stage Christopher Hobbs's operetta based on the W.S. Gilbert libretto that Sullivan never set, a concert performance of which was presented last year.

Saturday December 18

To 2B Butlers Wharf again for Stuart Marshall's *Heterophonics*. If possible it was even colder than on my previous visit, and to add to it Marshall's piece for three performers using first large woodblocks and then aerosol klaxons (which emit not spray but what has been adequately described as a 'ferocious honk'),¹¹ involved opening the large doors of the warehouse to let in the frozen night and the sounds of the klaxons as their players spread out down the river and, in one case, over nearby Tower Bridge. The whole piece lasted less than half an hour. Its premises were very simple but its ramifications in terms of perception of musical spaces and even 'social spaces' were more complicated and led naturally on to discussions that were continued in the local pub for some time afterwards.

Marshall has worked with Alvin Lucier in the States and his ideas bear some obvious relationships with such works as Lucier's *Vespers*. His own recent work has been more in video than in 'musical' performance art, I believe, and his background as an artist who has entered the fields of music and performance art allows him, like Max Eastley, to step over the barriers without any conceptual confusion. A good description and evaluation in context of *Heterophonics* written by David Toop appears in *Readings 1*,¹² some of Marshall's recent performances in his present home, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, are discussed by Kevin Stephens in *Music and Musicians*,¹³ and Marshall has contributed a useful study of Alvin Lucier's work to the already-mentioned issue of *Studio International*.¹⁴ This last is significantly referred to by Michael Parsons in his article about his own *Echo Piece* in this issue, which obviously has connections with the work of Lucier and Marshall.¹⁵

Friday January 7

After the Christmas break my first musical excursion of the New Year (excepting a furtive visit to *Twilight of the Gods* at the Coliseum) was to the real South Bank, to the last of the Park Lane Group's 'Young Artists and 20th Century Music' series in the

Purcell Room. The young oboist Lorraine Wood played solo pieces by Isang Yun, Bruno Maderna, Niccolò Castiglioni and Vinko Globokar; having studied with Heinz Holliger she was well equipped to deal with the technical dexterities and trickery of most of the pieces, but in Maderna's *Solo* for musette, oboe, oboe d'amore and cor anglais the reliance on more purely musical virtues of planning formal organisation successfully (the piece is a kind of mobile) and the leaning of the work towards traditional forms of expressive playing found her, to my mind, wanting.

Alternating with the solo oboe works, a now three-man improvisation group called Accord, consisting of Christopher Heaton (piano), Richard Burgess (percussion) and Roger Cawkwell (electronics) played two extended sets: some good, loud but thoughtful playing from a group of musicians experienced in both jazz and various 'serious' fields who should be heard more than they have been to date in this country. Good to see the Park Lane Group taking improvisation seriously; I hope others take the cue from this quite successful venture.

Tuesday January 11

John White and three friends play two concerts at the National Theatre, the one at 6pm being the first concert to take place in one of the actual auditoria, the second happening immediately afterwards in the foyer, which has been the scene for quite a lot of varied musical activities in the past year or so and to which I've now finally managed to get.

Systemic pieces for percussion, double bass, tuba etc. go down in a rather strained fashion in the Cottesloe theatre, but in the foyer are only heard as background music to the clinking sounds of the bourgeoisie enjoying itself. No doubt this sort of music helps the drinks go down, but I'd hoped for more signs of audience involvement than on this occasion. Loud music goes down best; but the idea's still a good one. White's music varies somewhat in quality (doesn't that of most composers?): the best of his systemic pieces are very good and his easy-going attitude to the 'procedural' severities he adopts is refreshing. It will be interesting to hear how his music and that of Christopher Hobbs develops now that they have split up as a duo.

Sunday January 30

The more commercial end of the systemic spectrum gets under way with the return of 'Steve Reich and Musicians' to London, where they play the first of two sold-out concerts at the Round House under the agency of Allied Artists' London Music Digest between a British tour of *Drumming* on the Contemporary Music Network scheme. The only work in this concert is the new *Music for 18 Musicians*, receiving its British premiere. It's a really splendid hour's listening, one of Reich's best pieces to date, I think, and quite rivetting from beginning to end. This seems to be due to the extensions of typical Reichian techniques into the fields of subtler harmonic control and, in terms of rhythmic organisation, the combination of the more familiar regular rhythmic repetitions with pulsing notes played or sung for the length of a breath, in the composer's words 'gradually washing up like waves against the constant rhythm of the pianos and mallet instruments', a technique Reich apparently intends to explore further.

The harmonic basis of the whole piece is a cycle of eleven chords played at its beginning and end; each chord is then stretched out in turn 'as the basic pulsing melody for a five minute piece very much as a single note in a cantus firmus, or chant melody of a 12th Century Organum by Pérotin might be stretched out for several minutes as the harmonic center for a section of the Organum', to quote the composer in his programme note once again. The relationship of changing harmonic rhythm to constant melodic pattern is both ingenious and, while apparently new, is also an extension of familiar principles of process music. Most of all, though, it is the fascinating attention to texture and textural detail that makes this piece stand out as a landmark in Reich's development, an opulence of sound that is nevertheless carefully and purposefully controlled, the 'wave' motions of string instruments, clarinets and voices and the effective combinations of the latter two to create new, integrated timbres being particularly successful. I hope *Music for 18 Musicians* will soon be available here on record.¹⁶

Monday January 31

Back to the more modest English experimentalists with the first concert at another new concert venue, the Air Gallery in Shaftsbury Avenue.¹⁷ The John Lewis/Dave Smith duo (electric organs) played some of their by now familiar repertoire of music by Philip Glass (*Two Pages* and *Music in Similar Motion*) and themselves, and Michael Parsons (piano) played a selection of pieces by John White, John Cage, Howard Skempton and himself. A large audience attended this concert which, arranged in a new venue at very short notice, bodes well for future events (see the end of this column).

Sunday February 6

The second Steve Reich concert contains familiar material with the ubiquitous *Drumming* as its conclusion. *Clapping Music* and *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ* were, like

WALTER ZIMMERMANN

DESERT PLANTS

Conversations with 23 American musicians.

Morton Feldman, Christian Wolff, John Cage, Philip Corner, Jim Burton, Phil Glass, Steve Reich, Robert Ashley, Alvin Lucier, Joan La Barbara, Pauline Oliveros, David Rosenboom, Richard Teitelbaum, Larry Austin, James Tenney, Conlon Nanarrow, La Monte Young, Charlemagne Palestine, Charles Morrow, Garrett List, Frederic Rzewski, John McGuire and Harry Partch.

400 pages (100 pp. Illustrations) Among the Illustrations are many first printings of scores, sketches and drawings, some of historical value, like the pages of Nanarrow and Partch and also one page of CHARLES IVES' UNIVERSE SYMPHONY.

MICHEAL VON BIEL designed the Cover for DESERT PLANTS, a book which provides a profound understanding of the structure of thinking, characteristic for the American music-avant-garde.

The book is written IN MEMORIAM HARRY PARTCH, who was the most independent so far. And Harry Partch gave the motto to DESERT PLANTS: "There is no free vibrating air just anyplace!"

Orders can be filled either through the author/ or directly through the publisher.

Author's address:
Walter Zimmermann, Im Stavenhof 18, D 5 KÖLN 1, West Germany.

Publisher's address:
A. R. C., Aesthetic Research Center of Canada,
P. O. Box 3044, Vancouver B. C. V6B 3X5 Canada.
(Price: 9.50 Dollars)

Drumming, heard on the group's last British tour in 1974, but *Piano Phase* turned up in a version for two marimbas that wasn't, however, entirely successful. For those, like me, who've played systemic music, it's consoling, at least, to find players of such professional skill and experience making elementary mistakes (any mistakes sound elementary in this kind of music) in several of the pieces during the evening. This music is so hard yet sounds so easy to those who haven't tried to play it. The experience is a salutary one. More Philip Glass next time, please;¹⁸ and whatever happened to Terry Riley?

Among the many things that could appear in this column, I should particularly like to mention the work of the London Musicians' Collective, which will, I promise, be the subject of a full report in the next issue of *Contact*. At the time of writing they have applied for a grant to rent some premises and hope to be putting on events there shortly if everything works out. Their secretary is Paul Burwell,¹⁹ from whom a regular newsletter can be obtained; No. 3 (February 1977), the latest one to hand, contains details about the premises and past and future events as well as quite a lot else. There's also a plan to make available their mailing list of colleges, magazines and other interested bodies to whom subscribers can send publicity material when putting on a gig; the LMC are very concerned about communication channels and should be a good one themselves. Since the autumn they have presented quite a lot of events in various venues, including a recent season at Action Space;²⁰ now they are particularly concerned to find work outside London for musicians: a good move which I hope will have some effect in connecting various bodies, such as other collectives and co-ops, with one another, a thing that the National Musicians' Collective doesn't yet seem to have done much towards. Further information is awaited; meanwhile subscription to the London Collective costs only £1. Write to Paul Burwell at the address below.

Among the material on tape which we hope to cover in a future issue are four cassettes issued in association with LMC and called simply *Blank Tapes*, various improvisations from various people including the Eddie Prevost Band, Item 9, Crystal Palace, Miru and Amnesia and Friends. Now that cassettes have improved so much in quality, buying experimental and improvised music this way seems a good alternative to records provided distribution channels can be set in motion. More information from the producer of this series, Robert Carter, at the address below.²¹

The latest issue of *Musics* magazine²² available at the time of going to press was No. 11, which contains a lot of news and reviews of many of the LMC events up to their press date; also lots of records and tapes are reviewed and listed, as well as lots more besides. From the same stable a new magazine called *Readings* has now appeared, being a bi-monthly publication like *Musics* and 'devoted to writings on (reviews of) recent work that has no existence in time beyond its own structural duration — dance, performance, music, film etc.'. Some of the ground is the same as that covered in *Musics*, but there's a good deal of other material, and some reviews, notably the one of Stuart Marshall's piece already mentioned, are very good. The address to write to for a subscription (£1 for three issues or £2 for three issues by airmail to the USA or Canada) is the same as that for the LMC.

Also available on cassette is a 60-minute recording from *Audio Arts* produced in connection with the already-mentioned November/December 1976 issue of *Studio International*. *Audio Arts* is a quarterly magazine produced in the form of a cassette which normally contains interviews with or audio works by visual artists. The present issue includes pieces by Gavin Bryars, Christopher Hobbs, James Lampard, Michael Nyman, Michael Parsons, Howard Skempton and John White; we hope to review it in a future issue of *Contact*.²³ I also hear that another batch of *Obscure* records should be on the way soon; Tom Phillips' opera *Irma* has recently been recorded for the label.

Two forthcoming events to note. First a concert of Fluxus pieces at the already-mentioned Air Gallery on Monday May 23. Organised by Rob Worby, this will include such time-honoured favourites as LaMonte Young's *X for Henry Flynt* and *Poem*, Toshi Ichihyanagi's *Piano Music No. 6* and excerpts from George Brecht's *Water Yam*. Then a Mediamix concert at the University of York on Wednesday June 1, which includes pieces for various media and mixes of media by Trevor Wishart, Bruce Connor, Hal Clark, Tom Endrich, Mark Lockett, Glyn Perrin, Lyndon Reynolds, Paul Johnson and David Jones and Keith Potter.

Finally readers may be interested to listen out for a whole week of English experimental and improvised music on France Musique (Radio France's equivalent to BBC Radio Three). The details and dates aren't fixed yet, but the series will, I hope, produce an interesting perspective on the work of younger musicians in this country for a foreign audience.

NOTES:

¹See Stanley Haynes, 'Experimental Arts Productions', *Contact* 14 (Autumn 1976), pp.42-43.
²See the New Music Diary in *Contact* 15 (Winter 1976-77, pp.42-46).
³Write to Melvyn Poore, Birmingham Arts Laboratory, Tower Street, Birmingham 4 for further details of this and of forthcoming events there.
⁴This film is available on hire from Allied Artists Agency, 36

fluxconcert fluxconcert fluxconcert
 AIR GALLERY SHAFTESBURY AVE. W.C.2.
 fluxconcert fluxconcert fluxconcert
 MONDAY MAY 23 AT 7.30 P.M.
 fluxconcert fluxconcert fluxconcert

WORKS BY: brecht
 higgins
 schmit
 kosugi
 ichihyanagi
 yoko ono
 la monte young
 and others.....

fluxconcert fluxconcert fluxconcert
 fluxconcert fluxconcert fluxconcert
 fluxconcert fluxconcert fluxconcert
 AIR GALLERY SHAFTESBURY AVE. W.C.2.
 fluxconcert fluxconcert fluxconcert
 fluxconcert fluxconcert fluxconcert

Beauchamp Place, London SW3 1NU.
⁵Cornelius Cardew, 'Wiggly Lines and Wobbly Music', *Studio International*, Vol. 192, No.984 (November/December 1976), pp.249-255. This issue is devoted to 'Art and Experimental Music'. See also Michael Parsons' article in this issue of *Contact*.
⁶Adrian Jack, 'For whom?' *Time Out* No. 349 (November 26-December 2, 1976), p.13.
⁷See Richard Fawkes, 'Incest and Murder at Morley College', *Classical Music Weekly* (November 20, 1976), p.7.
⁸For a discussion of this series in the context of other recent student and/or college-based performances in London, see Simon Emmerson, 'Student Music', *Music and Musicians*, Vol.25, No.6 (February 1977), pp.20-21.
⁹Annabel Nicholson writes a review of the performances on Paul Burwell's installation in the first issue of the new magazine *Readings* (February 1977), p.11. In the same issue David Critchley gives an introduction to the work at 2B Butlers Wharf (p.13); write to him at 2B Butlers Wharf, Shad Thames, London SE1 if you are interested in the venue either as a performer or as a spectator.
¹⁰Brigitte Schiffer, 'ICA Sundays', *Music and Musicians*, Vol.25, No.7 (March 1977), p.52.
¹¹By David Toop; see footnote 12.
¹²David Toop, 'Heterophonics', *Readings* 1, op.cit., p.3. For details of this magazine see above and footnote 9.
¹³Kevin Stephens, 'Newcastle', *Music and Musicians*, Vol.24, No.11 (July 1976), p.57. These included what appears to be the same piece as *Heterophonics* under the different title of *Idiophonics*, also Marshall's *Transparency Studies* and works by Alvin Lucier.
¹⁴Stuart Marshall, 'Alvin Lucier's Music of Signs in Space', *Studio International*, op. cit., pp.284-290.
¹⁵See this and footnote 9 above.
¹⁶For two recently published interviews with Steve Reich by Michael Nyman including discussion of *Music for 18 Musicians*, see 'Steve Reich: Interview', *Studio International*, op. cit., pp.300-307 and 'Steve Reich', *Music and Musicians*, Vol.25, No.5 (January 1977), pp.18-19.
¹⁷Air Gallery, 125-129 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2, tel. 01-240 3149. Contact Moira Kelly there for details of forthcoming events: see also above. The gallery is very keen to promote more music events of an experimental nature: write or ring if you have a project to offer.
¹⁸For a review of Glass's recent opera *Einstein on the Beach*, see Brigitte Schiffer, 'Paris: Festival d'Autonne' (sic), *Music and Musicians*, Vol.25, No.4 (December 1976), p.58.
¹⁹His address, to which all enquiries concerning the London Musicians' Collective should be sent, is 86 Auden Place, Manley Street, London NW1, tel. 01-722 1164.
²⁰For Action Space information, get in touch with Martin Mayes, Action Space, The Drill Hall, 16 Chenies Street, London WC1, tel. 01-637 7664.
²¹Flat 1, 55 Brooke Avenue, South Harrow, Middlesex, tel. 01-864 7378.
²²See *Contact* 14 (Autumn 1976), p.41 for an introduction to this. *Musics'* editorial address is 48 Hillsborough Court, Mortimer Crescent, London NW6.
²³This issue of *Audio Arts* (Vol.3, No.2) is available from 30 Gauden Road, London SW4 6LT at £3.40 (Europe) and \$8.00 (all other countries, airmail).