

# contact

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## NEW MUSIC DIARY

### KEITH POTTER

This is the last instalment of the Diary in its present form and attempts to bring coverage up to mid-September. The main diaryist in the next issue will be Malcolm Barry.

*Contact 19* will also include an up-to-date examination of all the foreign and British periodicals which we have received for review or on exchange (see the list of material received for a preview of this). I shall therefore devote no further space here to 'non-events' (please take this the right way!), except to draw attention to a recently completed *A Table of Pitch-class Sets* which has been compiled by David Roberts, one of our editors. This should be of use to anyone interested in Allen Forte's set-theoretic approach to analysis; the following quotation is taken from the Introduction:

The purpose of the table is threefold: to function as a ready-reckoner for the identification of pitch-class sets, thus obviating time-consuming calculations that are susceptible to computational error, to provide a convenient and unique label for every distinct set form, and to facilitate the reckoning of transpositional and inversional relations of equivalent sets.

This is available at a cost of £1 (including postage) from David Roberts, School of English and American Studies, The University of Sussex, Arts Building, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9QN.

### Wednesday March 30

Henze's *The Bassarids* at the London Coliseum. Dionysian and Apollonian forces warring for two and a half hours without a break were too much for me on the last day of term. Several out of a large party of students from Goldsmiths' seem to have enjoyed it, but not being the holder of a complimentary ticket on this occasion, I slept peacefully.

### Sunday April 24

Decided to take some time off from regular concert-going over Easter. But I couldn't resist a trip to Olympia for what must have been the first time since I was a child to see what the Festival for Mind and Body was all about. Described in *Time Out* as 'the mystic's Jubilee bash', I found my Sunday afternoon not so much weird and wonderful as rather dull: I think the health foods were more interesting, as well as more expensive (in the restaurant anyway), than anything else and I at least came away with a few packets to provide some weird and wonderful breakfasts for the next few days.

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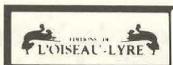
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CHRONOCHROMIE 4-3-4-3, 4-4-3-1, glock, xyl, mar, 3 perc, str	30 mins	QUATUOR POUR LA FIN DU TEMPS for violin, Bb clarinet, violincello and piano	60 mins
COULEURS DE LA CITE CELESTE 0-0-3-0-, 2-4-4-0, xyl, xylo, mar, 4 perc, piano solo	18 mins	THEME ET VARIATIONS for violin and piano	10 mins
DES CANYONS AUX ETOILES 4-3-4-3, 3-3-3-0, glock, xylo, 5 perc, piano solo, str	100 mins		
ET EXPECTO RESURRECTIONEM MORTUORUM 6-4-5-4, 6-4-4-2, 3 perc	25 mins		
HYMNE (Broude Bros) 3-3-3-3, 4-3-3-0, T, 3 perc, str	10 mins		
LES OFFRANDES OUBLIEES 3-3-3-3, 4-3-3-1, tp, 3 perc, str	7 mins		
OISEAUX EXOTIQUES (Universal) 2-1-4-1, 2-1-0-0-, glock, xyl, glock, 2 perc, piano solo, str	14 mins		
REVEIL DES OISEAUX 4-3-4-3, 2-2-0-0, ce-, xyl, glock, 2 perc, piano solo, str	22 mins		
SEPT HAIKAI (Esquisses Japonaises) 3-3-4-2, 0-1-1-0, 8 violins, xyl, mar, 4 perc, piano solo	18 mins		
LE TOMBEAU RESPLENDISSANT 3-3-3-3, 4-3-3-1, tp, 3 perc, str	12 mins		
TURANGALĪLA - SYMPHONIE 3-3-3-3, 4-5-3-1, tp, glock, cel, vib, 6 perc, piano solo, onde martenot, str	80 mins		
<b>Choral Works</b>		<b>Organ Works</b>	
CINQ RECHANTS for 3 sopranos, 3 altos, 3 tenors, 3 basses	20 mins	APPARITION DE L'EGLISE ETERNELLE	10 mins
O SACRUM CONVIVIVUM! 4-part motet to the Blessed Sacrament, with organ (ad lib)	3 mins	L'ASCENSION	30 mins
LA TRANSFIGURATION DE NOTRE-SEIGNEUR JESUS-CHRIST 5-4-5-4, 6-4-4-2, sax, 6 perc, str, SATB chorus (100 voices) Solo piano, 'cello, flute, clarinet, vibraphone, xyloimba, marimba	110 mins	LE BANQUET CELESTE	14 mins
TROIS PETITES LITURGIES DE LA PRESENCE DIVINE 18 women's voices, cel, vib, 3 perc, piano solo, onde martenot, str	30 mins	LES CORPS GLORIEUX	45 mins
		DIPTYQUE	10 mins
		LIVRE D'ORGUE	50 mins
		MEDITATIONS SUR LE MYSTERE DE LA SAINTE TRINITE	75 mins
		MESSE DE LA PENTECOTE	43 mins
		LA NATIVITE DU SEIGNEUR	55 mins
		VERSET POUR LA FETE DE LA DEDICACE	13 mins
		<b>Piano Works</b>	
		CANTÉYODJAYĀ (Universal)	12 mins
		CATALOGUE D'OISEAUX	
		Book 1: I - Le Chocard des Alpes	10 mins
		II - Le Loriot	9 mins
		III - Le Merle blue	14 mins
		Book 2: IV - Le Traquet Stapazin	17 mins
		Book 3: V - La Chouette Hulotte	7 mins
		VI - L'Alouette Lulu	8 mins
		Book 4: VI - La Rousserolle Effarvate	33 mins
		Book 5: VIII - L'Alouette Calandrelle	6 mins
		IX - La Bouscarle	12 mins
		Book 6: X - Le Merle de Roche	20 mins
		Book 7: XI - La Buse variable	11 mins
		XII - Le Traquet rieur	10 mins
		XIII - Le Courlis cendré	11 mins
		La Fauvette des Jardins	28 mins
		FANTAISIE BURLESQUE	10 mins
		ILE DE FEU I	2 mins
		ILE DE FEU II	3 mins
		MODE DE VALEURS ET D'INTENSITES	8 mins
		NEUMES RYTHMIQUES	5 mins
		LES OFFRANDES OUBLIEES	7 mins
		PRELUDES	60 mins
		RONDEAU	3 mins
		VINGT REGARDS SUR L'ENFANT JESUS	120 mins
		VISIONS DE L'AMEN for two pianos	60 mins

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Among the few sound experiences on hand, proving, I suppose, some kind of point about aural pollution in having to compete hopelessly against the full force of the gurus' cattle market in full cry, was an innocuous biofeedback person who hadn't heard of David Rosenboom<sup>2</sup> and the Californian Steven Halpern's music to meditate by. Halpern runs the Spectrum Research Institute from which a number of discs and cassettes of his work as well as various literature on it may be obtained.<sup>3</sup> Since his stall's location was hardly conducive to meditation, I bought a couple of his products to sample at my leisure at home. Perhaps it's proof of one of his points that I've hardly had time to do them justice, and it would possibly be doing Halpern a disservice to say that his sequences of little pieces, repetitive, usually not rhythmically so, but sparse and 'free' sounding, don't sufficiently divert the attention towards either themselves or anything else: perhaps this is exactly what he's trying to do.

It would have been easy to take away from this 'festival' an overall impression of a load of freaks mumbo-jumboing in a desperately inappropriate commercial context: being asked to sell complex mystical concepts as though they were soap powder. If this were so, it was more the fault of the organisers than of the participants, some of whom undoubtedly were fanatics, though we should be prepared to take their ideas seriously enough to find out what they're trying to do.

### Sunday May 1

Nikolaus Harnoncourt's *Concentus Musicus* of Vienna in the afternoon in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, doing Bach and Rameau, and then in the evening the contemporary chamber ensemble Spectrum under the direction of Guy Protheroe in the Purcell Room. Both events were part of this year's English Bach Festival, and the Spectrum programme contained its only contemporary music this year: a sad reflection on the EBF's finances as well as perhaps its present inclinations when you consider what was on offer contemporary music-wise a few years ago.

I've already referred to what I believe we're now supposed to call *Racine 19*, Pousseur's solo cello piece for Rohan de Saram, which was played for the first time in London in this concert, having received its premiere in Birmingham in March.<sup>4</sup> Two pieces by the EBF director Lina Lalandi's continuing guru Xenakis were more disappointing: *Linaia*, premiered at the 1972 festival, was here done 'properly' as a game but without the decency of a proper explanation (the sounds meant little by themselves); *N'Shima*, receiving its British premiere, was a very unpleasant setting of Hebrew. Of the two EBF commissions, John Marlow Rhys's *Four Musicians* was long, complex, very worthy and not without charm, while Naresh Sohal's *Tagore Poems 2* was an uncharacteristically unqualified mess. This programme was later broadcast on Radio Three.

### Monday May 2

An Air Gallery concert in what has by now become a fairly regular series at a useful venue which is more serviceable on fine spring evenings with the sounds of birds giving an impression of being miles away from Cambridge Circus, whereas it's only just down the road, than on cold winter ones when the heating jacks up and the lights fuse. Another programme from John Lewis and Dave Smith who took part in the first one there.<sup>5</sup> Familiar repertoire, though no Philip Glass or even Terry Riley or Steve Reich this time, and quite a lot of solo as well as duo playing. Smith played his arrangements of *Five Anti-fascist Songs* by Hanns Eisler and his own *Five Songs of Class Struggle* to inform us of his continuing political as well as systemic concerns, while Lewis played Satie's *Dances gothiques* and 'Emerson' from Ives' *Concord Sonata*, the latter with Ben Mason briefly on viola. More technical versatility here than in their previous programme perhaps, for those who didn't already know they are good 'traditional' as well as 'systemic' pianists (Smith, in particular, has a real virtuoso technique). The concert was also very interesting for including Richard Ascough's very fine *Atlantis Revisited* for two pianos and an 'early' Lewis/Smith offering, an improvisational *Continuum* dating from 1970.

### Sunday May 8

If the British premiere of *Monument, Selbstporträt, Bewegung* for two pianos was in some ways the highlight of the London Music Digest's all-Ligeti programme at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, it was Ligeti's two string quartets that provided the most solid fare: the First all Bartókian and a bit rambling, dating from the composer's Hungarian days ('the prehistoric Ligeti' he himself called it in a particularly engaging interval talk); the Second a fine and fully mature piece, one of his best. The Arditti String Quartet is a splendid group of splendid players and did a first-rate job on both, as did the Stockholm Wind Quintet on the familiar Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet and the early and unfamiliar Six Bagatelles for Wind Quintet (some of the very early *Musica Ricercata* piano pieces find their way into these: arranged for wind, they sound more engaging than in their original versions, which can be heard on record).<sup>6</sup> I find the Second Quartet a far superior work to the Ten Pieces, however.

The new work, played by Bruno Canino and Antonio Ballista, is vintage Ligeti in its blend of the traditional and the avantgarde and, not for the first time, the experimental in the narrower sense of the word. This is acknowledged in the full title of the second of these three pieces with an ironic and slightly self-mocking as well as an honest and self-revealing wit that is aptly and delightfully caught in the music itself: 'Self-portrait with Reich and Riley (and Chopin in the background)'. The allusion to a not-unrelated experimental present is almost as zany serious as that to a not-unrelated traditional past in the form of the finale of Chopin's Third Piano Sonata: both are so Ligeti-like (yes: in this context I *do* mean it that way round) that he doesn't need to quote directly from either. Such allusions to grandeur leave one with no illusions, however, about Ligeti's own. A thoroughly enjoyable evening in all respects. The composer's recent heart attack has unfortunately meant the cancellation of his first series of lectures as Xenakis's successor as Gresham Professor at The City University, London. I hope, however, that his first opera *Le grand macabre* will still be premiered in Stockholm next March and be seen here as soon as can be arranged after that. Ligeti remains for me one of the greatest living composers without any doubt.

### Monday May 23

I don't make a habit of reviewing concerts in which I myself take part, but I feel I *can* mention the Fluxconcert at the Air Galley organised by Rob Worby if only because it gives the opportunity to include a contribution here from another of the participants. I originally had grandiose plans to commemorate this nostalgia trip into the world of happenings and the Fluxus movement of the 1960s, and asked several of the participants to write up their thoughts and feelings in connection with the concert and what the movement in general meant to them today. In the event, only Howard Skempton, who spent the entire evening playing La Monte Young's 'Draw a straight line and follow it' on the accordion, gave me a contribution: if I remember rightly during the interval of the Stockhausen concert on June 12. Typically, it is very brief. Here it is:

The power of music to inspire confidence is more than equalled by its ability to alleviate anxiety. Through music we are no longer manipulated by time. We focus the moment and become the manipulation. We can stem the tide of time through the practice of repetition; or through silence, the last refuge of the fastidious.

Anyway, we already have an article on Young in this issue, which incidentally quotes from Michael Parsons' useful programme note for the concert on Young's *Poem*, which its author did give me permission to include in any retrospective collection of writings. The fairly substantial programme book also included a reprint of Michael Nyman's *Art and Artists* article on Fluxus.<sup>7</sup>

For me the Fluxconcert made some of the ideas which we normally consider old-hat today come alive, at least for the concert's duration, perhaps because of the qualities to which Skempton has referred. I learnt a lot from it (not least what it's actually *like* to saw a violin in half), but I know that not all the participants felt the same. For an outside report of the concert, see David Cunningham's review in *Musics 13*<sup>8</sup> (which includes a rude comment about me).

## Sunday May 29

Malcolm Barry's review elsewhere in this issue of the two records so far issued by Company on the Incus label gives some idea of the music that this loose-knit group of musicians collected together by Derek Bailey tends to play. My early evening visit to the Round House to catch the tail-end of a whole week of improvising, mainly at the ICA's Nash House, didn't catch the best things by any means; so I was told and so I've gathered from the various literature I've read, at least a couple of items of which I recommend to you:<sup>9</sup> for instance, I didn't think all that much of the American trumpeter Leo Smith, which I gather is something of an heretical statement. The best thing I heard was a duo from Derek Bailey and Evan Parker, with whose duo playing I was already familiar, and despite the fact that(?) Bailey broke strings from two different guitars which he finally abandoned. But it was also fascinating to hear that crazy cellist Tristan Honsinger in an interesting line-up which also featured his Dutch compatriot, the bassist Maarten van Regteren Altena; and Smith played with the other Dutch musician present, Han Bennink, whom the appellation 'percussionist' scarcely begins to describe even in terms of the instruments he plays. I hope no frictions prevent Company musicians from working regularly in this country: indeed, there have been Company events on a smaller scale since this extravaganza. There will be further Incus reviews in the next issue of *Contact*.

## Monday May 30

A programme of new and older pieces from Michael Parsons and Howard Skempton at the Air Gallery which was typical both with regard to the kinds of techniques (often, but not always, systemic) and styles (Parsons normally austere, Skempton more 'human', humorous even) these composers have developed and for a (perhaps unexpected) branching-out into something new: in this case Parsons' interest in Bartók's piano music, some of which he played, and his own resulting very Bartókian pieces, not all of which used the piano in the percussive way that he admires in his model (but then not all Bartók's piano music eschews lyricism). If, with one or two exceptions, I felt more attracted to Skempton's pieces or to Parsons' earlier piano music such as the delightful *Arctic Rag* from his ragtime-influenced period of three or four years ago, it was perhaps this lyrical quality which I was seeking.

## Sunday June 12

Stockhausen's first visit to London for some years was actually a (relatively) late replacement for, of all things, the cello section of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra which was to have given the Park Lane Group's concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on this date, minus Karajan but with a suitably elephantine programme. In the event, Karlheinz arrived in a manner which may have been calculated to explode his own myth (and the connection with Karajan): instead of the familiar battery of electronics and players there were only three musicians, the clarinettist Suzanne Stephens for *Harlekin* in the first half and Helga Hamm-Albrecht (soprano) and Karl Barkay (tenor) for *Indianerlieder* in the second.

Actually, in their flirtation with post-serial (post-avantgarde?) tonal simplicity and simplistic theatricality, both works seem typical of the recent Stockhausen. *Harlekin*, the newer piece, dating from 1975, I preferred since its theatrical naivety didn't seem to detract from its undoubted charm, though undoubtedly overlengthy charm, as music: Ms Stephens is required to prance about the stage dressed, not entirely to her advantage, in a Harlequin costume, doodling on her clarinet the while: undoubtedly a tour de force of co-ordination as well as breath control and sheer stamina. Undoubtedly it took Karlheinz far less co-ordination, breath control and stamina to write it.

*Indianerlieder*, dating from 1972 and complete with phoney pseudo-orientalism and imitation rose-petals, I had had the misfortune to see before, in Darmstadt in 1974. (It doesn't mean anything these days to say one's been to the Avantgarde Mecca, so I can say it without fear of being accused of one-upmanship.) I said to someone that I didn't think anyone would take either of these pieces seriously if they had *not* been by Stockhausen, but he took this to mean that Stockhausen was able to imbue even such apparently

unworkable notions with an undefinable something that made them interesting and somehow valid. At least I *think* that's what he meant... Stockhausen remains for me one of the greatest living composers with lots of doubts.

## Monday June 20

Having missed an electronic music concert the previous week which had apparently been fraught with technical disasters, I was glad to have my confidence in British Electronic Music renewed by Barry Anderson's West Square Electronic Music Ensemble's Round House programme. (Actually Anderson is from New Zealand, but that doesn't alter my point. Or does it?) Not all the music seemed to me of a high quality; in fact all of it disappointed me in terms of either inventiveness of material or, more frequently, in terms of control of overall form: the two versions of Anderson's own *En face de...* with Jane Manning (soprano) and Barry Guy (double bass) had the best of both in the programme, while Steve Montague's zany mixture of ideas in *Passim* didn't seem to add up to anything and Guy's own *Eos II* was more a catalogue of effects than a piece. But technically the concert seemed nearly faultless and nowhere more so than in the unusual vocal version of Stockhausen's *Solo* with Jane Manning, manipulating West Square Studio's twelve-channel tape delay feedback set-up to excellent effect. One carefully-prepared concert a year is worth much more than a host of ill-prepared events.<sup>10</sup>

## Monday June 27

Brian Dennis, who mounts fairly regular performances of his music at Royal Holloway College in Egham but whom we hear very little of in London itself, studied with Stockhausen and was apparently responsible for at least one technical innovation in the field of electronic music, but his own present style owes increasingly less to anything avantgarde or even anything experimental. His one-act opera *The Feather Mantle*, based on Oriental sources and scored for two singers and a small group of players, received its second concert performance at Holloway on this occasion: its premiere had taken place there the previous week. Dennis's brand of tonal and nowadays non-systemic lyricism is a joy to listen to: if for those who continue to support linear notions of history it seems an unadulterated anachronism, it's certainly among the *happiest* music being written today. And that isn't meant at all cynically.

Owing *everything* to the past, including a superb technique of pastiche which nevertheless comes alive in some splendid tunes, is something Christopher Hobbs makes a virtue of in his operetta *The Mountebanks*, which sets the libretto by W. S. Gilbert that Sullivan never used. Hobbs is also a first-rate deployer of his material, though it was a bit difficult to tell how well the piece works as a dramatic whole since this performance consisted of unstaged excerpts. But the music is really good, as good as some of Sullivan's own I should say, and this performance, coped with manfully, as was the Dennis, by student forces and the composers themselves (Dennis in fine baritone voice in *The Mountebanks*), clearly demonstrated the need for a fully-staged, fully-orchestrated performance. Hobbs did the orchestration soon after the piece was written about two years ago and has sent the score to D'Oyly Carte. I can't see any reason why they shouldn't do it.

## Thursday June 30

The programme put on by the Saltarello Choir under their present conductor Richard Bernas should earn top marks for enterprise by almost anybody's standards. By no means all their concerts are devoted to new music; indeed one of the most enterprising features of Bernas's programming is precisely the mixture of the new with some less-well-known old. But this evening at St. Andrew's, Holborn Viaduct consisted entirely of American experimental music: starting, admittedly, in the 19th century (though you'd hardly believe it) with *Ives' Psalm 67*, but continuing with Morton Feldman's *Christian Wolff in Cambridge* and *Chorus and Instruments II* and Robert Ashley's *She was a visitor*.

The highspot of the concert was typically (for all concerned) low-key. The British premiere of Cage's *Apartment Building 1776* hardly disturbed the peace of this

rather beautiful church with its discreet 'baroque' string quartet (ravishing playing), cassette tape recordings played back among the audience, an intermittent organ and similarly discreet contributions from the choir itself aloft. Cage says the piece is intended to create the effect that the sounds of an apartment building in 1776 would have had, 'had there been one'. Of course it doesn't appear to do anything of the sort, but its multi-layered aspect must be capable of a multitude of interpretations if the New York Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony have also tackled it.

### Monday July 11

At very short notice I was granted a complimentary ticket for the second performance of Michael Tippett's fourth and (he says) last opera *The Ice Break* at Covent Garden (the world premiere was on July 7). The Royal Opera House is even *more* difficult to get into when you're paying, so I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised to find myself forced to occupy a seat poised somewhere directly over Heather Harper's head (yes: she was on the stage; I wasn't) for the first act: after that I found myself a much better one from among the considerable number of unoccupied places in the stalls (the performance was officially 'sold out' by the way). Somehow I get the feeling that not only were they not particularly keen for me to review what must have been regarded as a major new work, but that it wasn't being made particularly easy for the public to pay to see it either, though the Garden can't be blamed if people buy seats or even obtain comps and then don't occupy them, which I gather is what sometimes happens.

My reaction on reading the libretto was relief that I understood at least something of what it was all about and that, despite the usual and much-commented-upon jarring and outdated colloquialisms ('What's bugging you man?/Cool and Jivey once:/Now, touchy and tight./You're a drag, Hannah's with it - and the others' is a fair sample), it seemed to hang together in a way that was likely to be more comprehensible on the stage (at least on one viewing) than *The Knot Garden*, the libretto of which I found very hard to take both reading it beforehand and on the stage. Even, that is, if the political issues of the new work seemed confused, or at least confusing, and (a related issue, of course) it seems hard to believe that anyone speaks or spoke in that language anywhere but in Tippett's mind: it's an easy question to ask, but think it must be asked whether Tippett is really in touch with present-day political realities, and whether he ever was with those of the 60s where the text seems to have its origins.

My reaction to the performance, economically produced by Sam Wanamaker and apparently excellently conducted by Colin Davis, was basically disappointment: concern over issues arising from the libretto certainly, but even more so a great disappointment with the music which lacked entirely or almost entirely, it seemed to me (Hannah's Act Two aria was the obvious possible exception in its rich-toned lyricism), the inventiveness, memorability and lyrical virtues of *The Knot Garden* score. The plot itself and any detailed criticism I have no space for: the piece has been well worked over in the press long since, of course, and I can recommend, with reservations, two articles in *Music and Musicians* as a starting point for the curious who didn't see the opera.<sup>11</sup> A fairly strong cast coped personfully (?) with all the problems, though I thought John Shirley-Quirk as Lev, the (presumably Russian) exile united with his family in a new land (presumably America), didn't have sufficient strength of character or of voice (both unusual for him) and, more seriously, Clyde Walker had the physique but not the voice for the 'black champion' Olympion. Beverly Vaughn (no, it's not a misprint unless it originated so early that everyone used it) as Olympion's girl friend Hannah practically stole the show with a strong and believable personality and a ravishing voice, though it must be said that Tippett gave her more chances than anyone else. At the time of going to press I've yet to hear the new Fourth Symphony, premiered in Chicago in October, but we will be having a preview of it in *Contact* before its British premiere at the Proms next summer.

### Tuesday July 12

I didn't go specifically as a reviewer to either of the two July events involving new scores by Harrison Birtwistle, but

## CONTEMPORARY MUSIC NETWORK

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- 5 Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester
- 6 Christ's College, Liverpool
- 7 Huddersfield Town Hall
- 8 Foxhills School, Scunthorpe
- 10 Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol
- 11 Bridgwater Arts Centre
- 13 Warwick University

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- 24 Town Hall, Birmingham
- 26 London
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Ligeti Monument, Selbstportrait, Bewegung  
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- 4 Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol
- 6 Aston, Centre for the Arts, Birmingham

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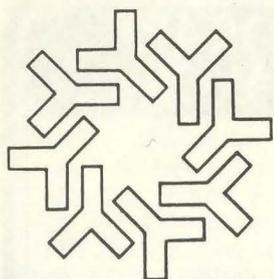
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Arts Council  
 OF GREAT BRITAIN

Spring Tours 1978



# YORKSHIRE ARTS

## NORTHERN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC CIRCUIT – YORKSHIRE DATES 1977/78 SEASON

**Gillian Weir Organ Recital:** Huddersfield Polytechnic School of Music 4 October, Leeds St. Bartholomews Armley 6 October

**BBC Northern Singers:** Bradford Cartwright Hall 8 November, Giggleswick School 13 November, Keighley Temperance Hall 15 November, Richmond Comprehensive School 26 November

**Brighouse and Rastrick Band** – Ampleforth College 13 November, York Temple Anderson Hall 20 November, Ingleton Ingleborough Community Centre 20 January, Leeds Town Hall 21 January, Huddersfield Town Hall 5 May

**Leonardo Piano Trio.** Scarborough Public Library 22 November, Horbury School 26 November

**Great Jazz Solos:** Barnsley Civic Theatre 22 November, Dewsbury Town Hall 23 November, Sheffield Hurlfield Campus 26 November, York Arts Centre 27 November, Ingleton Ingleborough Community Centre 3 December, Leeds Astoria Centre 4 December

**Lindsay String Quartet:** Huddersfield Polytechnic 12 January, Keighley Music Club 17 January, Leeds University 18 January, York Arts Centre 19 January, Richmond Comprehensive School 21 January

**Rijnmond Percussion Ensemble with Frans van de Wiel, Flute** (by arrangement with Gaudeamus Foundation Holland): Scarborough Technical College 23 January, Leeds University 24 January, Halifax Heath Grammar School 25 January, Wentworth Woodhouse Lady Mabel College 26 January, York Arts Centre 28 January

**Peter Donohoe Piano Recital:** Huddersfield Town Hall 6 February, Scarborough Public Library 7 February, Leeds City Art Gallery (lunchtime) 8 February, Sheffield Hurlfield Campus 14 February, Bradford Central Library (lunchtime) 16 February

**Richard Markham Piano Recital:** Leeds City Art Gallery (lunchtime) 1 March, Bradford Central Library (lunchtime) 2 March, Huddersfield Town Hall (lunchtime) 7 March, Doncaster Danum Grammar School 9 March, Sheffield Hurlfield Campus 10 March

**Dreamtiger Piano Trio:** Huddersfield Polytechnic 13 March, Keighley Temperance Hall 14 March, Sheffield University 15 March, Wentworth Woodhouse Lady Mabel College 16 March, York Arts Centre 17 March, Ingleton Ingleborough Community Centre 18 March

For full details of programmes, and copies of the special contemporary music leaflet, contact Richard Phillips, Music Officer, Yorkshire Arts Association, Glyde House, Glydegate, Bradford 5 (Bradford 23051).

## NORTHERN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC CIRCUIT 1978/79 SEASON

Details of tours under the Circuit are available to promoters from regional arts associations music officers in the North *now*.

## CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Plans are being made to hold a festival of contemporary music in Huddersfield centred on the Polytechnic there with the help of Kirklees Leisure Services and the Yorkshire Arts Association in September 1978, and the third competition for young Yorkshire composers will be tied in with this event. For further information contact Richard Phillips, Music Officer, Yorkshire Arts Association, Glyde House, Glydegate, Bradford 5 (Bradford 23051).

I should like to put on record my considerable enthusiasm for both of them. Ballet Rambert's Round House programme included Birtwistle's *Pulse Field* as the score for Jaap Flier's choreography for a piece called *Frames, Pulses and Interruptions*; indeed (and this of course brought all kinds of problems for its creators) an attempt was made to conceive the music and dance together and the musicians (on trombones, double basses and percussion) were incorporated to a limited extent into the stage action. The music was simple, strange and very beautiful; the dancing zany and often funny. This programme also included a neo-Debussian, rather than neo-Schoenbergian, score by Jonathan Harvey to Norman Morrice's *Smiling Immortal* (Morrice is now with the Royal Ballet, incidentally) and Christopher Bruce's *Echoes of a Night Sky* to three movements from George Crumb's *Music for a Summer Evening*. All the pieces were fairly new and the Morrice/Harvey collaboration had actually been premiered the night before.

### Wednesday July 13

Birtwistle's attempts to integrate music and theatre take a further step forward in *Bow Down*, which I saw in one of its last performances in the Cottesloe auditorium of the National Theatre the following evening as part of a triple bill with Rene Clair's famous film *Entr'acte* from the ballet *Relache* with music by Satie, the latter here arranged and played live by an ensemble under Dominic Muldowney, and a good attempt at a version of Mauricio Kagel's incredible *Repertoire* arranged by Muldowney, Glyn Perrin and others.

*Bow Down* explores the common territory of actor and musician, and is one of the countless refrains in only one version of the traditional and ancient ballad of *The Two Sisters*, says the programme note. This relates the work's origins clearly to similar sources in Birtwistle's own past, but instead of writing virtuoso music for virtuoso musicians as part of a music-theatre experience (as with, for example, the ten-year-old opera *Punch and Judy*, long overdue for a revival), the composer here attempts a simple, chiefly rhythmic and percussive kind of music played by musicians sitting in a circle around the actors and once again making some gestures in the direction of blurring the distinctions between the two: both actors and musicians speak, for example, at various points. As music-theatre *Bow Down* was magical and, I think, very successful: it augurs well for the future as the first-fruits of Birtwistle's and Muldowney's attempts to involve actors and musicians at the National in the creation of new kinds of music-theatre.

### Sunday July 31

The Creative Associates of the Centre of the Creative and Performing Arts of the State University of New York at Buffalo (can't they think of a shorter name?) gave a concert on an extremely hot Sunday afternoon to a packed upper room at the Whitechapel Art Gallery with Morton Feldman (*The Boss*). Arranged at very short notice, it was part of a brief visit to this country which also took in Dartington and the Harrogate Festival.

The group last came to Britain in February 1974. This time their programme was much better, though the performance of Satie's *Socrate* by Martha Hanneman (soprano) and Nils Vigeland (piano) left a lot to be desired. There was a new piece by Feldman, *Instruments 3*, which said nothing new really, and the composer himself played a group of early piano pieces including the very fine *Extensions III*. Typical of the mixed programming of this ensemble was the inclusion of Xenakis alongside Satie and Feldman with a piece for oboe and percussion called *Dmaathen* dating from 1976: this I liked very much even though the conditions weren't right for it, and it was notable for the very fine playing of Nora Post (oboe) and also Jan Williams (percussion).

But pride of place went to the flautist of the group Eberhard Blum's vocal virtuoso rendition of Kurt Schwitters' *Ursonata* (1922-32), a staggering and very musically structured piece of what we'd now call sound poetry which put everything else on the programme in the shade and was taken up as a curiosity by Radio Three's 'Music Now'. I hope a recording of this will be made: both the piece and Blum's performance certainly deserve it.

### Thursday August 4

Among the several riches of non-Western theatre and dance which were available at various times during the summer in London, I chose to go to Sadler's Wells Theatre, a regular venue for such things out of the main season, to see *Les danses sacrées de Bali* (no real justification for the French title that I can see) on their first British visit. The music and the dancing were marvellous, but as is so often the case when a unique and complex foreign art form is presented in thoroughly 'Western' circumstances, I felt more an observer than a participator, peering through the proscenium in an effort to transcend barriers that I knew really couldn't be transcended in these circumstances. When there *did* seem to be a real communication between performers and audience — most obviously the 'ooh-aah!' reaction to the entry of the beautiful and very young girls (most of the dancers were men) — I for one felt that it was of the wrong, or at least partly irrelevant, kind. Perhaps I shouldn't have worried so much and I might have enjoyed myself more. And the last thing I should wish to do would be to say anything against 'authentic' groups like this coming to Britain: the more we see them and the more we learn how to accommodate them (in our minds as well as in our theatres) the better.<sup>12</sup>

### Proms 77

I went to eleven Proms this year and heard at least parts of several more on radio or TV. This in itself reflects the, for me at least, much higher quantity of interesting programmes as compared with the 1976 season when, admittedly not living in London, I didn't go to a single one. Quantity of interest didn't necessarily result in quality of music or of performance, and at least one enlightening decision — that to bring the entire Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra and Chorus to this country for a single performance (the British premiere) of Berio's *Coro* under the composer's direction (September 1) — must be considered to have been an expensive mistake, especially when the only other visiting foreign orchestra this season was the Rotterdam Philharmonic, a worthy band, no doubt, but not in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw's class (which, by the way, went to the Edinburgh Festival the week before the Rotterdam orchestra played at the Proms: couldn't some way have been found of getting them to the Albert Hall too?). But overall it was a very worthwhile season, and 20th century, if not necessarily new, music fared particularly well, certainly by comparison with recent BBC form.

I'm not able to mention everything: indeed I didn't get to everything. So I'll be very selective here and start with the commissioned works. What some seem to have found the best of these I unfortunately had to miss, being away at the time and not able to get to a radio. John Buller's *Proença* (Sarah Walker (mezzo-soprano), Timothy Walker (guitar), BBC SO/Mark Elder; August 6) looked an intriguing work from the score and promised to be at least as good as his *Le Terrazze* which I much admire. It's amazing that Buller is 50 this year, but gladdening that the BBC have now 'taken him up' and he at last has a publisher (Schirmer). I still haven't managed to get to hear this piece, so I hope a second hearing will be made possible: I gather a recording was made before the first public performance.

The other major 'BBC Jubilee commission' was Maxwell Davies's second oper *The Martyrdom of St. Magnus* (The Fires of London and soloists directed by Murray Melvin and conducted by the composer; July 25). This had actually received its first performance on June 18 at the first St. Magnus Festival in Kirkwall, in St. Magnus Cathedral where the saint's remains are supposed to have been embedded right in the pillar next to which Davies stood while conducting the work (how's that for local colour?), but for everyone who hadn't a few hundred pounds to spare or wasn't paid to join the metropolitan invaders of what was 'officially' a festival for the Orcadians themselves (some hope), this was their first chance to see it and a packed Round House was the result (incidentally quite justifying two performances which would have provided a much securer box office draw than did Henze's *The Raft of the Medusa* in the Albert Hall three days later and allowed the BBC to provide your reviewer with a complimentary ticket).

One of my editorial colleagues was among the lucky invaders and so I'll direct you to him for a detailed review.<sup>13</sup> For my own part, I added another work to my list of

'disappointing British operas seen this summer', since the whole thing seemed so unmemorably lacking in continuous musical interest and dramatically flat and unengaging. If Davies was trying to write 'the fourth church parable' (if this seems a crazy notion, try to get to one of the Contemporary Music Network's performances of it in January and you'll both see and hear what I mean), then he needs a canner sense of the ways to integrate music and drama if he's to match, or even come anywhere near matching, Britten (whose works I have never been accustomed to fall over myself about in the past). Perhaps a better production would help: the dramatic timing seemed all wrong (for instance at Blind Mary's exit at the end and in general in the way scenes ended and succeeding ones began). Each singer took several roles quite convincingly, but Mary Thomas, spending most of her time as Blind Mary, the central figure of the opera and far more dramatically telling than Magnus himself (which itself seems almost a flaw), stood out by virtue of her performance as well as the roles she undertook.

Richard Rodney Bennett's *Acteon* for horn and orchestra received its world premiere on August 12, which I did not hear, but the only other commissioned work was a worthy but very unremarkable orchestral piece from Edwin Roxburgh called *Montage* (RLPO/Charles Groves; July 23). Finished only just in time for the performance and, it seems, well coped with by the Liverpool orchestra, the piece was responsible for this year's most enduring 'Promenaders' remark': 'Don't worry, it'll be all right on the night'. (This was *after* the performance, by the way. Or perhaps the best one came after Birtwistle's beautifully desolate *Melencolia* for clarinet, harp and strings on August 13: 'If that's melancholia, give me depression'.)

On to British premieres next. The two most 'notable' (ie. most prestigious and most expensive) of these each took up a whole concert in the 'Contemporary Masterworks Series' of four programmes which represented yet another variation on the attempt to make the Prom audience take contemporary music seriously. If the size of the audience for any of them except, predictably, for Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage* (which received a concert performance excellent in every respect except for some fluffs in the brass from the Welsh National Opera Company under Richard Armstrong on August 19) was an adequate judge of the success of this idea, it'll bite the dust, which may be a pity. (Back to Glock's old 'Schoenberg Violin Concerto and Beethoven 7' formula with which he packed 'em in in 1961 and 62.)

Henze's *The Raft of the 'Medusa'* received an astonishingly well-prepared and committed performance (well, certainly for a Prom programme) from BBC forces and soloists consistig of the magnificent Phyllis Bryn-Julson (Boulez' favourite soprano) as Death, John Shirley-Quirk (baritone: yes, *again*) as Jean-Charles and Gerald English (also ubiquitously) as the Narrator, the whole thing coordinated by David Atherton who deserves a medal for his dedication to Henze (and will probably get one). But it left me absolutely cold, unable to get involved on any level other than the vaguely curious: why does he do it? The background to the piece<sup>14</sup> is more interesting than the piece itself, it seems to me. But I seem to have been making an occupation of failing to understand Henze this summer, being totally baffled by the recently-released record of his *Tristan*.<sup>15</sup> (And HWH's Italian festive goings-on in the name of socialism seem more suspect than PMD's second Aldeburgh.)

I seem to be having trouble with Berio too, whose *Coro* (already alluded to; September 1) struck me as a surprisingly badly-calculated, even badly timed, even downright flat and dull and certainly incomprehensible, offering from this master craftsman, aural trickster and normally impeccable new-timer. I can understand at least *something* of the musical, even the political, reasoning behind Henze's *Raft*, but what is Berio trying to achieve in *Coro* other than to fail (for it must be equally obvious to him that it's not another *Cries of London*) to write yet another piece that is both accessible and avantgarde, to use the already overworked terminology? What has been described as 'Berio's inability to escape from the narrow world of post-serial complexity'<sup>16</sup> left his profusion of folk texts and Pablo Neruda standing, not naked in the glare of the composer's razor-sharp interrogation-lamp (if one can have such a thing, Berio assuredly *has* one) but fully clothed with confusion. Nudity would have been more interesting; just a *little* clothing

would have been most revealing of all.

Sandor Balassa's Quartet for Percussion (The London Percussion Ensemble/Lionel Friend; August 15) was incidentally interesting rhythmically, occasionally texturally, but completely overshadowed by Barraqué's *Chant après chant*, despite a less than adequate performance which was, I think, not very accurate and felt more like a sight-reading (hope it wasn't ...) than a performance and surprised me by revealing Jane Manning's bad French pronunciation (confirmed by a French-speaking acquaintance). And completely so by a wizardly performance of Bartók's Sonata for two pianos and percussion by Dezső Ránki and Zoltán Kocsis (pianos) and James Holland and Tristan Fry (percussion) in the second half of this Round House concert. But in some ways this programme was better than the other Round House offering on August 29 (London Sinfonietta and BBC Singers/Elgar Howarth and Kerry Woodward), which contained some very substandard playing and singing of works by Messiaen, Boulez, Stockhausen and Xenakis. The only other British premiere was a desultory orchestral Sinfonia by Tristan Keuris (Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra/Edo de Waart; September 14): good that the orchestra should bring a native work by a young composer as well as, on the previous evening, Diepenbrock's *Entr'acte: Marsyas* (whose turn-of-the-century amalgam I rather enjoyed), but there are much better contemporary Dutch pieces than this.<sup>17</sup>

Other notable performances included Maxwell Davies' *St. Thomas Wake* (BBC SO/Groves; August 9) which I saw in all its gaudy 20s glory (hammed up by the players) when it turned up on TV; an evening of Schoenberg ('The Song of the Wood Dove' from the *Gurrelieder* and the First Chamber Symphony) and Stravinsky (*Pulcinella*, complete with voices) and a Mozart hors d'oeuvres, all mostly very well performed to an almost empty hall (London Sinfonietta/Simon Rattle; August 22); a very laudable attempt on Gerhard's Concerto for Orchestra (which still comes up fresh; why don't they reissue the record which uses the same forces?) but a very scrappy Schoenberg *Verklärte Nacht* (BBC SO/Norman del Mar; August 30); and two BBC SO/Boulez programmes in the final week (September 12 and 15) which were most notable for another chance to hear Boulez' own perplexing and still to my mind not entirely successful *Rituel: in memoriam Maderna* and some sparkling Bartók (Michel Béroff in the Second Piano Concerto) and Stravinsky (the complete *Firebird*).

#### NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> See Spencer Bright, 'Inward Bound', *Time Out*, No. 368 (April 15-21, 1977), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> For reviews of some of Rosenboom's work see *Contact 14* (Autumn 1976), pp. 34-35 and *Contact 16* (Spring 1977), pp. 23-25.

<sup>3</sup> The address of the Spectrum Research Institute is P.O. Box 1584, Palo Alto, CA 94302, USA. Readers are invited to send there for a free catalogue. The record I have, called *Spectrum Suite* (SRI 770), is, according to information on the sleeve, distributed by SRI Records, 231 Emerson Street, Palo Alto, CA 94301, USA. I have no information to hand on prices. The record sleeve advertises its contents as 'The Meditation Environment Recommended by ESP Magazine, New Directions, Yoga Journal & New Age Journal'.

<sup>4</sup> See New Music Diary, *Contact 17* (Summer 1977), p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> See New Music Diary, *Contact 16* (Spring 1977), p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> BIS LP-18. The quartets and the Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet are also available on record; all except the First Quartet (BIS LP-53) are in the *Gramophone Classical Catalogue* (September 1977).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Nyman, 'The Experimental Tradition', *Art and Artists*, Vol. 7, No. 7 (October 1972), pp. 44-49.

<sup>8</sup> David Cunningham, '2 Concerts of Experimental Music, Monday 23rd May 1977', *Musics 13* (August 1977), p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> There is extensive coverage of Company Week in *Impetus 6* in the form of interviews with the musicians and further information in *Musics 13*; also in *Time Out* (see Malcolm Barry's review in this issue).

<sup>10</sup> For more information on the West Square Studio see Barry Anderson's article in our 'Electronic Music Studios in Britain' series, *Contact 17* (Summer 1977), pp. 24-26.

<sup>11</sup> David Fingleton, 'The Ice Break', *Music and Musicians*, Vol. 25, No. 11 (July 1977), pp. 28-30; review by Andrew

Clements, *Music and Musicians*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (September 1977), pp. 42-44.

<sup>12</sup>A useful introductory article to both the music and the dancing of this group is Jan Murray and David Toop's 'Dance of Worship', *Time Out*, No. 383 (July 29-August 4, 1977), p. 13.

<sup>13</sup>David Roberts, 'Maxwell Davies in Orkney', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 118, No. 1614 (August 1977), pp. 633-635.

<sup>14</sup>For an examination of this see Kevin Stephens, 'The Raft of the Medusa', *Music and Musicians*, Vol. 25, No. 11 (July 1977), pp. 24-26.

<sup>15</sup>DG 2530834.

<sup>16</sup>Brian Dennis in his review, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 118, No. 1617 (November 1977), p. 934.

<sup>17</sup>I shall be reviewing some Dutch music, including Peter Schat's new opera *Houdini*, in the next issue of *Contact*.