

NEWS SECTION

Prom Commissions

The BBC has commissioned two orchestral works for this year's Promenade Concerts: *Montage* by Edwin Roxburgh and *Proença* by John Buller.

Montage will be played on 23 July by the RLPO conducted by Sir Charles Groves. Edwin Roxburgh has provided the following note:

'Elgar once said that his music was already alive in the atmosphere; he simply reached out for it. *Montage* takes its starting point from this notion of selecting and distilling musical ideas into a crystallized form—casting light on a prism. The work treats the orchestra as a galaxy of changing colours which merge into a montage of sound at the close.'

John Buller writes:

'*Proença*—for large orchestra, mezzo-soprano and electric guitar—will be performed at the Albert Hall on 6 August by Sarah Walker, Timothy Walker and the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mark Elder. It uses Provençal texts from the 12th and 13th century troubadours, illustrating a society finally wiped out by the mediaeval equivalent of big-power politics (Northern Frank and Church) combining in the so-called Albigensian 'Crusade'. In a way, the piece is about 'song', and how 'song' always reflects the moment, from the early troubadours with their spring-like desire to sing new songs, and 'make it new' to the 'last of the troubadours'—after the collapse—singing only that he was born too late. Inevitably, too, the piece is in the context of political and spiritual violence, showing again how human joy is time and again destroyed in envy and in fear. Norman Mailer in 'The Siege of Chicago 1968' described the electric guitar and its music—in the context of the political violence in Lincoln Park—as a 'variety of true song' and in the piece it joins with the soprano and then takes over in the highly mannered language of Arnaud Daniel'.

Composers

DOMINICK ARGENTO. The British première of *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf* was given by Carole Rosen accompanied by Paul Hamburger on 1 May at Somerville College, Oxford.

MALCOLM ARNOLD. *Fantasy on a Theme of John Field* for piano and orchestra, op.116, was premièred in the Festival Hall on 26 May by John Lill (the dedicatee) and the RPO conducted by Lawrence Foster.

RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT. The first performance of *Actaeon* for horn and orchestra will take place at a BBC Promenade Concert on 12 August (Barry Tuckwell with the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Walter Susskind).

BERNARD BENOLIEL has completed a far-reaching revision of his String Quartet, superseding the original version performed at Tanglewood in 1970. He is currently writing a Piano Quintet commissioned by Dreamtiger with Funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

LUCIANO BERIO. The world première of the complete version of *Coro* is the closing event of the 1977 Holland Festival; the Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Cologne Radio Choir are conducted by the composer. The same performers will give the British première at a Promenade Concert on 1 September. A new version of *Opera* was premièred at the Maggio Musicale in Florence on 27 May.

HARRISON BIRTWISTLE. The première of a work for the Ballet Rambert, a collaboration with the Dutch choreographer Jaap Flier, will take place at the Aldeburgh Festival on 26 June. *Bow Down*, a music-theatre piece specially written for the National Theatre, will be premièred on 4 July.

HENRY BRANT has recently completed his *Spatial Concerto* ('Questions from Genesis') for pianoforte solo with orchestra divided into widely separated groups, and ensemble of 8 sopranos and 8 altos. The text is by Patricia Brant.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN. Britten's last work (completed in August 1976) was *Welcome Ode* for young people's chorus and orchestra. It will be performed by the Suffolk Schools' Choir and Orchestra on the occasion of the Queen's visit to Ipswich on 11 July. There are five movements: March ('Summer Pastimes' from 'The Sun's Darling' by Thomas Dekker and John Ford), Jig, Roundel (anonymous text), Modulation, and Canon ('Ode to the New Year' from 'The Historical Register for the Year 1736-7' by Henry Fielding).

The 1975 arrangement of *Lachrymae* for viola and strings was premièred in Los Angeles on 11 May by Myra Kerstenbaum and the Los Angeles Chamber Ensemble conducted by Neville Marriner. The first British performance was at Aldeburgh on 21 June (Cecil Aronowitz and the Northern Sinfonia conducted by Stuart Bedford).