describe Cage, in considerable and strenuously humorous detail, as a bloody bore and have done with him is to turn one’s back on musical history, on music today. Cage has proved a powerful force in contemporary art, musical and extra-musical: is it not up to a musical journal to try and explain why? I myself, with my type of ear and my musical background, am not even able to regard him as a composer or a musician; yet I would not deny him a touch of genius. What has to be explained, among many other things, is his influence on highly musical musicians—an influence which by now is Western-world-wide.

At the same time as this fatuous review appeared in *Music & Letters*, we had a thoughtful article on Cage’s two books in *Composer* (Edwin Roxburgh), and an equally responsible review of them in *Tempo* (Brian Dennis), as well as a conversation on closely related subjects, entitled ‘The Contemporary Pianist’, between John Tilbury and Michael Parsons in *The Musical Times*. It is fascinating to observe that these pieces in no way duplicate each other, whereas what the reviewer in *Music & Letters* has to say about Cage has been said a thousand times over. Prof. Westrup may or may not sympathize with it; if he does not, he would delight us if he invited a realistic and reasoned article on Cage for a future issue of *Music & Letters*—nor, in this instance, need he fear any mathematical formulae and diagrams.

But does Professor Westrup think that, say, Alfred Nieman’s fascinating ‘A Fresh Look at Webern’ in the Winter 1968/9 issue of *Composer* is diagrammatical and ultimately purposeless? Most contemporary composers are, in fact, immeasurably more articulate conceptually than were most composers of the past; now, more than ever, is the time to let the composer himself speak, even if you are disinclined to let his ‘propagandists’ have a say. Does *Music & Letters* want to succeed with its implied battle cry, ‘Stop the world! I want to get off’? Should we all get off?

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

In his article ‘Who’s exhausted?’ (*Tempo* 87, Winter 1968/69) Mr Tim Souster writes: “Boulez, Amy, Barraqué, Stockhausen—and ‘the avant-garde camp is exhausted’ (Peter Stadlen, *Daily Telegraph*, 2/12/68).” Later on Mr Souster renders the charge more explicit: “I have stressed the differences between the music of Boulez, Amy and Barraqué, differences systematically minimised by those who brand the avant-garde ‘exhausted’.”

In my review, which was headed “Rich music of 7 min. Boulez ‘Variation’”, I praised the re-composition of the first movement of ‘Livre pour Quatuor’: “. . . artful additions not of bars but of parts . . . carry new thought . . . offer much richer fare to the mind and indeed to the senses. . . comes from the ear and hence reaches the ear . . . Mr Boulez emerges as a badly-needed revolutionary force in the exhausted avant-garde camp.”

Mr Souster, a critic malgré lui, tells us that he would have preferred to write a piano piece rather than his article. No doubt he is trying to save time and trouble by quoting from memory.

Yours etc.

Peter Stadlen
The Operas of Benjamin Britten
Patricia Howard

Although Benjamin Britten's dramatic works dominate the repertoire of contemporary English opera, performances are far from frequent and the average listener cannot readily form an impression of the scope and development of the series nor absorb all the riches of individual works simply from his experiences in the opera house. The majority of opera-goers, moreover, have the chance of seeing any one opera by Britten only once or twice in a lifetime. This book is designed to enable them to make the most of these occasions, since it not only briefs the reader on the events - on stage and in the orchestra - but also prepares him for the experience of becoming involved in the drama.

There is a chapter on each of Britten's dramatic works including Noye's Fludde and the Parables for Church Performance, excluding the edited Dido, revised Beggar’s Opera and the early Paul Bunyan. There is also a general survey of all Britten's musico-dramatic art.

254 pp., 112 music examples 40s.

Composition with Twelve Notes
related only to one another
Joseph Rufer

translated with a preface by Humphrey Searle
The authoritative exposition of the Twelve Note method, by Schoenberg’s pupil and friend.
Second Edition, revised text and music examples 35s.

Richard Strauss: Volume Two
Norman del Mar

This eagerly awaited second volume, of the definitive critical commentary on Strauss’s Life and Works, begins with Ariadne auf Naxos and ends with Arabella, dealing with the Strauss- Hofmannsthals relationship, which reached its climax in the symbolic Die Frau Ohne Schatten.

464 pp., 355 music examples, 8 pp. photographs 75s.

Write for our complete music list

Barrie & Rockliff: The Cresset Press