

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

from DAVID SCHIFF

In his review (TEMPO 143) of the recording of Elliott Carter's *A Symphony of Three Orchestras*, David Harvey appears to attribute the idea of 'tonic register positions of intervals' to me. In fact the idea comes from the composer as does the chart of intervals found in my book. The 'effective status' of this idea and the 45-note tonic chord Carter uses in the work is thus perhaps less questionable than Mr. Harvey implies. The chord itself is gradually, but explicitly, revealed throughout the work, most clearly at climactic gestural moments. The effectiveness of such a procedure in Carter's music from the Double Concerto on can be demonstrated if the tonic chord for each work is played on its own; I have found that listeners familiar with the music invariably identify each work by the sound of its tonic chord. Such chords, moreover, are part of a large scheme of harmonic motion; to say that the tonic is not effective because it does not appear everywhere is like saying that the *Eroica* is not in E flat major because over half of its opening movement moves in other tonalities. Mr. Harvey is not the first theorist to accuse Carter of not doing what he says he is doing. At Princeton in 1959 a graduate student told him that he could not possibly have used the all-interval tetrachord in the First Quartet because the student had just discovered it. Such a lack of perspective would be laughable were it not so commonplace. Theorists as intelligent as Mr. Harvey should be more aware of how very primitive harmonic theory is today, before they use it to question music of such obvious grandeur and refinement. Just as it took music theory 100 years to explain Beethoven's principles of harmonic motion, I think it will take an equal amount of time to appreciate Carter's vast expansion of chromatic harmony.

Mr. Harvey's suggestion of an analysis of 'textural density' is interesting in itself but is an evasion of the issue of large scale harmonic motion with which Mr Carter has been so concerned. In this music the notes really matter; one of Carter's great accomplishments has been the re-activation of the linear function of pitch in highly chromatic music. The more one knows the music the more persuasive and inevitable its harmonies sound. I might add that the vocabularies of academic serialism and set theory tend to obscure the harmonic processes of Carter's music.

Reed College
Portland
Oregon

from HANS KELLER

THE TROUBLE about Paul Rapoport (*Towards the Infinite Expansion of Tonal Resources*, TEMPO No. 144, pp. 4ff.) is that he theorizes instead of listening, and sneers instead of thinking. What is valid in his revelations has always been part and parcel of every true musician's physiological and instinctive equipment.

(1) A lie is an intentional false statement. Mr. Rapoport's opening sentence—'So pervasive is this lie that we think nothing else is possible'—is devoid, therefore, of the remotest meaning.

(2) One of the central reasons why the string quartet developed into the most complex, most widely differentiated, most substantial form of Western instrumental music is that its masters never composed in terms of twelve equal intervals. It isn't only, as Mr. Rapoport naively suggests, 'that G \sharp and A \flat are not usually the same' where they represent, in fact, the sharpest possible difference, but that there are, of course, different G \sharp s and A \flat s according to their harmonic and melodic function: at the Yehudi Menuhin School, I am in charge of all string quartets, none of which ever moves anywhere near twelve equal intervals, which would make any textural blend and balance as impossible as they prove, alas, in chamber music for strings and piano.

(3) Rapoport tells Schoenberg that dissonances 'need not be dissonances at all', which is precisely what Schoenberg demonstrated: Rapoport has missed Schoenberg's implied inverted commas round the very concept.

(4) Equally, he labours under the illusion that Schoenberg composed in terms of twelve equal dissonances. If he will listen not only to Schoenberg's tonal, but also to his atonal and 12-tonal accidentals, he will discover that it isn't practicability that is their determinant, but, invariably, the very difference between G \sharp and A \flat retained in the tonical background of Schoenberg's anti-tonal harmonies—a background whose unconsciousness only heightened its precision and efficacy: see my *Schoenberg's Return to Tonality* in the *Journal of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute*, V/1 (1981), pp. 2ff.

(5) 'Western music lost the ability to be really in tune. Musicians lost the power or even the desire to make various pitch distinctions of the utmost importance both melodically and harmonically'. Mr. Rapoport is living on the moon, i.e. in the attractive Music Department of McMaster University (where,

the other year, I spent an enjoyable term as Visiting Professor), the showing off of whose Scalatron seems to be the basic motive of his article. If he will pay a visit to the world of music, perhaps even to my string quartets at the Yehudi Menuhin School or, for that matter, at the Guildhall School of Music, he will discover that we have lost nothing.

(6) He will then realize that to speak of current 'advances on traditional non-keyboard instruments' is to talk about the charting of well-charted territory.

(7) In short and in sum, his article is not fighting other people's ignorance and limitations, but his own: a worthwhile undertaking in all conscience—which, however, could have been conducted in private.

For the rest, I used to enjoy Paul Rapoport's musical company, whence I hope that my letter won't terminate our music-conscious contacts.

*3 Frogna! Gardens
London NW3 6UY*

from PAUL RAPOPORT

MY COLLEAGUES and I well remember Mr. Keller's visit to McMaster University, where his pronouncements were marked by the same contentiousness and irrelevance seen in his two recent letters to TEMPO. When he was here, he also recorded a programme for the CBC, part of which was about Schoenberg, on whom Mr. Keller is a World Expert. In 40 or 50 minutes he said nothing while giving the impression he was saying things of Great Importance. He even got the number of variations wrong in Schoenberg's *Variations for Orchestra*.

Concerning this composer and Mr. Keller's point No. 3 above, he should know that Schoenberg died in 1951; hence, I am not telling Schoenberg anything. Mr. Keller should also read the 1½ sentences which precede and the two which follow his quotation from my article. The six words of mine he quotes are the apodosis of a condition contrary to fact which has a reference back and an explanation following. The second sentence in the next paragraph in my article is relevant as well. In ignoring these things, Mr. Keller ascribes a confused idea to me which is his own fabrication. His letter excels in the deceit of altering meanings by ripping things out of context.

In the rest of his letter, he goes on about string quartets, which have very little to do with any points I made. I agree that they are capable of all kinds of interval distinctions and may not play in 12-tone equal temperament, but 1) music for string quartet does not constitute the entire literature of recent western music, and 2) how many string quartets can play in other equal temperaments or a 3 × 5 × 7 just tuning? A few can and do, but if Mr. Keller thinks this is 'well-charted territory', he is wrong, as everyone who is involved in this subject realizes.

Mr. Keller's ignorance of the subject of tuning is almost as deplorable as his vain attempt to disguise it. Nonetheless, there may be some hope for him—if he first learns to read and to count.

*Department of Music
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario*

from ROBERT SIMPSON

MARTIN ANDERSON (TEMPO 145) draws a false analogy between a musical phenomenon (tonality) and a probably fatal aberration of human behaviour (capitalism). He says that we are stuck with capitalism, warts and all. Are we stuck with tonality, warts and all? The opponents of capitalism (and, it seems, its advocates, too) can observe flaws in this device. Tonality can have neither faults nor virtues; these can reside only in the artistic imagination.

Mr. Anderson supposes that the elimination of capitalism requires a fundamental change in human nature. 'Human nature' cannot be defined in agreed terms, even by an economist. I would agree with Einstein in saying that under present circumstances (which cannot have been brought about by socialism, since no such thing has ever been practised on any scale in the history of the world) the survival of the race depends on a deep change in the way people think.

That such a change seems unlikely compels the apprehension that humanity is doomed, not only by its inability to climb out of the competitive jungle, but by a concomitant predisposition to violence, now that capitalism has presented it with the means of self-destruction. And it cannot even be sure of preventing this means from functioning by accident.

Capitalism's supply of material improvements in the 'living standards' of the so-called 'advanced' countries has been contrived at the cost of a catastrophically widening gap between the poor and the rich parts of the world.

These questions are not normally the concern of a musical journal, though they ought to be central in any field of discussion if human thought is to continue at all.

*Chearsley,
Bucks.*

from MARTIN ANDERSON

ROBERT SIMPSON's response to my letter (TEMPOS 145 and 147) risks dragging us into an area that is not the concern of a magazine on modern music. My letter offered a simple analogy between capitalism and tonality—both systems of organisation founded, in essence, on basic human responses to natural phenomena. Only a hero or a cretin would argue with Dr Simpson about the nature of tonality; but his reaction to the term 'capitalism' is somewhat more romantic than his approach to his art, and I feel I must clear up some very basic (extra-musical), misconceptions.

All human activity occurs within an economic framework, that is, a social structure susceptible to economic analysis. And economies of varying types are best viewed as part of a continuum, ranging from anarchy (read, very 'approximately, 'capitalism') to complete state control of resources (read, equally widely, 'socialism'). Dr Simpson fears that capitalism has dragged us to the brink of destruction; and yet it is plain even from the most cursory glance at a newspaper that it is not capitalism which threatens to roast us all but *governments*, that international tension occurs least where trade flourishes between countries (if the USA and USSR were more active trading partners, their daily slanging matches would not be anything like as heated), and (largely) that third-world countries which have adopted capitalist policies are vastly better-off than those which have attempted to ignore them.

To claim that socialism has never been practised 'on any scale in the history of the world' is simply fallacious: governments had been interfering with the economic activities of their citizens long before the pentatonic scale was ever stumbled on. It is precisely capitalism that has never been allowed to flourish, because governments (composed, like any other organization, of self-interested individuals) cannot resist the urge to control, tax, plan, legislate the daily lives of their citizens. The more the world economy is socialised, the more governments interfere with the allocation of resources through suppressing markets (and, by the way, multi-nationals usually occur where governments offer protection from competition), the closer the statist (Andropov and Reagan alike) will drag us to the brink. And the more it is liberated, the more that potential conflict is resolved little by little in market exchange, the sooner the bombs will be dismantled.

I swallow hard before I tackle Dr Simpson and Professor Einstein on the scope for change in human nature, but I would suggest that the human race is more likely to survive if we stop staring at the moon. More capitalism, not less, freer markets, not more controlled, will prevent the world edging its way towards extinction. We should rejoice that serialism cannot kill—but socialism (as defined above) can, as millions have discovered.

'Economic Affairs'
2 Lord North Street
London SW1P 3LB

from GERARDO S. TANGO

For a biography of the late Maestro Egisto TANGO, guest conductor with many European opera companies 1893–1927, and Director of the Budapest Opera (1911–1919) and the Royal Danish Opera (1927–1951), we would appreciate hearing from anyone with personal recollections, letters, photographs, or other relevant materials (NB, regarding his British and early German debuts).

*Geophysical Research Laboratory
Department of Physics
University of New Orleans
New Orleans
Louisiana 70148
USA*