Composers

JOHN ADAMS. I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky (première)—3 May/University of California, Berkeley/dir. Peter Sellars, c. composer.

JULIAN ANDERSON. Dark Night (première)—22 April/London, Barbican/BBC Symphony Orchestra c. Oliver Knussen.

MICHAEL BERKELEY. Dark Sleep (première)—4 January/Birmingham, BBC Pebble Mill/Peter Donohoe (pno).

SIR HARRISON BIRTWISTLE is composing a Saxophone Concerto for John Harle, a work for the Arditti String Quartet, and a piece for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

GAVIN BRYARS. The East Coast (première)—24 January/Winnipeg/Lawrence Cherney (bass oboe), Winnipeg SO c. Bramwell Tovey.

ELLIOTT CARTER. Espirit Rude/Espirit Doux U (premiere)—30 March/Chicago/Richarde Gref (fl), John Yeh (cl), James Ross (marimba). Figment for solo cello (première)—8 May/New York, Thomas Demenga (vle). Carter has recently completed a song-cycle and is writing a new orchestral work, designed as the third panel of a triptych with Partita and Adagio tenebroso.

JAMES DILLON. Black Nebulae for 2 pianos (première)—25 March/Brussels, Ars Musica Festival/Le Bureau de Pianistes.

MICHAEL FINNissy. Shameful Vice (première)—28 March/London, Blackheath Concert Halls/Vocem & Endymion Ensemble.

ELENA FIRSOVA. Before the Thunderstorm (première)—16 March/London, Purcell Room/Nash Ensemble.

ANTHONY GILBERT. . . . into the gry of a madder dance . . . (première)—21 January/Manchester/Halle Orchestra c. Lawrence Foster.

HENRYK MIKOLAJ GÓRECKI. Concerto-Cantata (US première)—2 March/Chicago/Richarde Gref (fl), John Yeh (cl), James Ross (marimba). Holmboe has completed his Thirteenth Symphony and has begun another orchestral work.

JOHN McCABE. Symphony No.4, Of Time and the River (UK première)—17 May/London, Royal Festival Hall/BBC Symphony Orchestra c. Eduardo Mata.

SIR PETER MAXWELL DAVIES. Strathclyde Concerto No.9 for 6 woodwind instruments (première)—10 March/Glasgow/Scottish Chamber Orchestra c. composer. The Beltane Fire (première)—3 April/Boston/BBC Philharmonic c. composer. Trumpet Concerto (US première)—19 March/Los Angeles/Hakan Hardenberger (tp), BBC Philharmonic c. composer. Symphony No.5 (UK première)—9 April/New York/BBC Philharmonic c. composer.

JOHN MAXWELL GEDDES. Oboe Concerto (première)—26 February/Glasgow, RSAMD/Jonathan Small (ob), Paragon Ensemble c. David Davies.


THEA MUSGRAVE. Simón Bolívar (première)—20 January/Norfolk, VA/Virginia Opera c. Peter Mark.

CONLON NANCARROW. Study for Orchestra (première)—23 April/New York/New Juilliard Ensemble c. Joel Sachs.


ELIS PEHKONEN. An Orkney Calendar (première)—5 March/

STEVE REICH. City Life (première)—7 March/Metat Ensemble InterContemporain c. David Robertson; (German première)—11 March/Cologne/Ensemble Modern c. Stan Edwards; (UK première)—10 May/London, Queen Elisabeth Hall/London Sinfonietta c. Markus Stenz.

WOLFGANG RHIHM. Time Chanti (UK première)—3 May/London, Royal Festival Hall/Anne-Sophie Mutter (vn), Philharmonia c. Semyon Bychkov.

CHRISTOPHER ROUSE. Symphony No. 2 (première)—4 March/Houston, Texas/Houston Symphony c. Christoph Eschenbach.

AULIS SALLINEN. Songs of Life and Death (première)—18 January/Helsinki/Jorma Hynninen (bar), Helsinki Opera Festival Chorus, Helsinki PO c. Oikku Kamu.

ROBERT SAXTON. A Yardstick of the Stars (première)—28 February/Durham/Nash Ensemble.


TAN DUN. Ghost Opera (première)—17 February/New York/Kronos Quartet with Wu Man (pips).


MICHAEL TORKEN. King of Hearts, television opera (première)—12 February/Channel 4 Television broadcast.

JOAN TOWER. Concerto for Chamber Orchestra (première)—23 January/Los Angeles/Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra c. Christoph Pek. For the Uncommon Woman (première)—27 January/Lake Forest, Illinois/Lake Forest Symphony c. Paul Anthony McCrae.


JUDITH WIR has been appointed Fairbairn Composer in Association by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. She is currently composing a new orchestral work for the CBSO.

GRAHAM WILLIAMS. A Song for Christina Rossetti (première)—26 February/London, Jacksons Lane Theatre/Kirsten Sprat (fl), Rachel Bolt (vla), Ruth Holden (hp).

Books received

(A listing in this column does not preclude a review in a future issue of Tempo.)


Edward Elgar – A Source Book compiled by Stewart R. Craggs. Scolar Press, £45.00.


Pet Shop Boys versus America by Chris Heath with photographs by Penne Smith. Penguin, £10.00.


Femenologia della musica sperimentale by Angelo Orcalli. Sonus Edizioni Musicali, Potenza, L.28.000.


obscurity that Munro has no idea where her unpublished music may be) to post-avant-garde impressionism by Gordon Kerry (b.1961) and abrasive, flintily dissonant sonatas by Keith Humble (No.3, in memory of Bill Hopkins, is especially impressive). There are also civilized, enjoyable works by Peter Sculthorpe, Malcolm Williamson (how deft, how companionably Stravinskian, his early first Piano Sonata sounds!) and Roger Smalley. When one recalls the Smalley of Intermodulation, erstwhile white hope of the British avant-garde in the early 1970s, it seems scarcely credible that by the late 80s he was composing a Variations on a Theme of Chopin, an Alkanesque-cum-Godowskian fantasy on a Chopin Mazurka in a vein one would imagine more congenial to – well, Ronald Stevenson, say. Perhaps pianist-composers are ever drawn back to the re-polish the cornerstones of their literature. At all events it’s an impressive feat of bravura composition, with a suddenly-stilled poetic epilogue of uneasy pathos. The whole programme is excellently played and recorded; Tall Poppies have an extensive catalogue of modern piano music,* and I hope to review more from the same source.

Calum MacDonald