Editorial

A Short History of Tempo (II): 1946–1962

Tempo appeared in a new guise, with the name of Boosey & Hawkes banished except as an advertiser, with the issue of September 1946, which in the old numerical ordering should have been No. 16 but instead called itself No. 1 of the New Series; the December 1946 issue showed less courage of its convictions, proclaiming itself ‘No. 17 (No. 2 New Series)’, but afterwards the New Series numbering prevailed. These were a remarkable pair of issues, not least for their attempt at a comprehensive redesign of the magazine: they abandoned double columns for a single-column format, daringly rendered easy on the eye in No. 1 by non-central placing on the page, cartoons and colophons, eccentrically wide margins and even more eccentric marginal sub-heads; ‘No. 17’ dropped these in favour of the solid wide column that was to be the bane of readers’ eyesight for the next 42 years. They also featured textured cover-paper, for a pair of variously evocative cover-paintings by Bernard Greenbaum: a severe Stravinskyan abstract for No. 1 and a touching study of a typical composer toiling in his garret for ‘No. 17’. With No. 3 (March 1974) such visual delights were banished and a new standard cover made its appearance, to persist unchanged (save that it began in various two-colour combinations; after a few issues the second colour was always black) until No. 60 (Winter 1961–62). A back cover announcement in No. 1 indicates that it was not a settled intention that the magazine should remain a quarterly: it was hoped that it would ‘appear more frequently as paper restrictions are relaxed’ – but there never seems to have been any serious attempt to change the arrangement.

Ernest Chapman remained Editor until No. 14 (Winter 1949–50). After a few issues of highly miscellaneous contents (Caryl Brahms on ballet, Hans Keller on Britten’s Quartet No. 2, Ralph Wood on Sprechgesang, Andrzej Panufnik – writing from Poland – on Polish composers, W.H. Haddon Squire on the Indian dancer Ram Gopal) he produced a succession of single-composer issues which remain required reading in their subjects. The first of Tempo’s several Stravinsky numbers was No. 8 (Summer 1948), and this was followed by Copland (No. 9), Prokofiev (No. 11), Richard Strauss (No. 12) and two successive Bartók issues (Nos. 13 and 14).

Anthony Gishford took over as Editor with No. 15 (though Chapman long remained an occasional contributor); he used the single-composer theme more sparingly, though the Rachmaninoff issue (No. 22, Winter 1931–2) and Delius issue (No. 28, Winter 1952–3) remain important achievements, as well as perhaps reflecting Gishford’s rather more conservative stance. Another strand was the production of numbers which devoted maybe half their space to a major opera of the day; for example No. 20 on The Rake’s Progress (including W.H. Auden’s ‘Some Reflections on Opera as a Medium’), No. 21 on Billy Budd (with Eric Crozier’s essay on ‘The British Navy in 1797’), and No. 28 on Gloriana. Erwin Stein remained a regular contributor (on Berg, Schoenberg, Britten and Stravinsky); John S. Weissmann was frequently...
to be found as an authoritative commentator on Bartók, Kodály and more recent Hungarian music; distinguished composers who wrote included Arthur Copland (on Latin-American Music), Arthur Bliss (on Finzi), Franz Reizenstein (on Walton's Troilus and Cressida), and Matyas Seiber (on Arthur Benjamin). Two frequent writers were the leading enfants terribles of the 1950s UK musico-critical landscape and erstwhile editors of Music Survey, Hans Keller and Donald Mitchell. If one is forced to pick a single plum from their many and varied contributions, it should probably go to 'Strict Serial Technique in Classical Music' (Tempo 37, Autumn 1955), Hans Keller's most nearly definitive statement of the historicity of the 12-note method. For two issues (Nos.47 and 48, Spring and Summer 1958) Donald Mitchell's name joined that of Antony Gishford at the mast-head, as Assistant Editor; with No.49 (notable for its obituary of Erwin Stein by Lord Harewood), he became Editor in turn.

Mitchell's editorship lasted until No.61-62, a double issue (Spring-Summer 1962) and a Stravinsky 80th birthday number, the only single-composer number he put together. But the pursuit of (especially) Britten's and Stravinsky's work (especially, the only Stravinsky 80th birthday number, the only mast-head, as Assistant Editor; with No.49, notable for its obituary of Erwin Stein by Lord Harewood), he became Editor in turn.

Tempo No.60 - not the least interesting of whose items was an article on Delius's stylistic development by a new contributor, Anthony Payne - and No.61-62 both had Robert Henderson as Assistant Editor; but when Donald Mitchell laid down the Editorship it was not for long. Colin Mason, a contributor since New Series No.1, who came forward to steer the magazine through the turbulent 1960s.

(To be continued. Of the period described above, we retain back numbers for sale of Nos.44, 47, 53/54, 59, 60, and 61-62, all of which retail at £1.80 per copy plus postage. We can also supply photocopies of any issue no longer in stock, or any article from these issues, at a charge of £1 per page plus postage and VAT. A detailed listing of the principal contents of all issues since 1939 is available from our editorial address on request.)