
Letters to the Editor

From Laurence Hughes

With reference to Robin Holloway's enjoyable review of the new recording of Britten's *Gloriana*, may I say how very much I agree with him in his assessment of the piece itself as a major operatic work, and its worthiness to take place in the canon of Britten's operatic masterpieces.

I would, however, venture to upbraid Mr. Holloway on one point – his use of that obnoxious expression 'cowpat school' in relation to British composers of the first part of this century. I think we have now reached the stage where we can appreciate just how good and original much of the work of composers like Vaughan Williams, Holst and Delius – yes, and Bax, Finzi, Moeran and the rest – actually was. The obscuring (obsurantist?) mists of the post-war avantgarde are finally clearing, it seems to me, and a general re-assessment of earlier figures is now taking place. In this context it is surely unhelpful to perpetuate a glib and superficial epithet of this sort? It is the kind of language resorted to by increasingly insecure 'academic modernist' composers, who presumably resent the fact that so much of the music of the pre-war period demonstrates a memorability and musical appeal so manifestly lacking in their own work. As Robin Holloway is clearly *not* one of these, I fail entirely to understand his allying himself with such dismal querulousness.

Let us take it as a slip of the pen – occasioned by overwork, perhaps? I hope very much we can assume that this kind of language, and the sort of thinking that lies behind it, will henceforth be consigned to the oblivion it deserves.

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From Dr. Gilbert Park

It has surprised me, and no doubt others too, that in the Centenary Promenade Concert celebrations, amid the well-earned adulation given to the memory of Henry Wood, its first conductor, no mention is made of his friend and patron Dr. George Cathcart who conceived and launched this important national music venture and was its first financial backer. Edinburgh-born Cathcart

was a bachelor, an arts devotee well respected at Covent Garden where he was Consultant Laryngologist to the Opera House and also a consultant at the London Throat Hospital.

As a medical practitioner it is of personal interest to note that when inaugurating the Promenade idea George Cathcart combined his skill as a Laryngologist to that of his interpretive musical expression, stipulating that instruments should be tuned to the French pitch and not to the higher concert pitch. In order to meet this condition he purchased at and imported the necessary orchestral instruments from Brussels and eventually members of the orchestra acquired them from him. Of course, as a Laryngologist he knew that the higher concert pitch was a great strain on the human voice.

May I suggest that Dr George Cathcart, the founder of this great tradition should be remembered by a special 'Cathcart Concert' so that his noble cultural contribution is not consigned to that of a forgotten partner, a role to which his young friend Henry Wood would not have approved.

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From Christopher Saward

It was generous of you to devote such considerable space to Robin Freeman's review of recent CD releases of Richard Barrett's music (*Tempo*, September 1994 issue).

However might I correct a couple of points?

Throughout the article the solo cello piece *ne songe plus à fuir* is incorrectly referred to as 'ne cherche plus ...'.

Secondly the guitar solo part of *colloid-E* is for a ten-stringed instrument rather than the more common twelve-stringed guitar (important here because of the wider pitch range available). The twelve-stringed guitar is only employed in *ensteltt*, the last movement of the *negatives* cycle.

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From Robin Freeman, in reply to the above letter and to those of Peter Seivewright and Colin Matthews in our previous issue

My apologies to Peter Seivewright for a *lapsus calami* in my review of the Antasten Festival in Heilbronn last year. He it was indeed who played Steve Ingham's First Piano Sonata and *Van Horn Boogie* (as well as Rory Boyle's *Moduli*, praised in the same review), and not Ortwin Sturmer. Sturmer played Ingham's Second Sonata which was commissioned by and written for him, and has in fact recorded it this year with pieces by Radulescu and Flammer he played in the same programme.

Since I chatted at length with both Seivewright and Ingham after the concert and recall asking the origin of the *Van Horn* title, I have no excuse but inattention. The same goes for my deformation of the title of Richard Barrett's *Ne songe plus à fuir* in *Tempo* 190.

As for Colin Matthew's letter re my remarks on the NMC recording of Tony Gilbert's *9 or 10 Osannas*, I feel on safe ground. My criticism refers only to unevenness encountered when programming certain alternative versions of the piece. It should not discourage anyone from buying what is an excellent CD in terms of music, performances and sound reproduction. I appeal to Herbert Hencke's notes to his own recording of Boulez's Third Sonata. Listener's can, he says, construct different versions of the piece using his recorded performance but their value will be relative only in terms of the composer's intention.

As to the errors mentioned above, I promise *Tempo* readers a better copy book in future.

Highbury Fields
London

News Section

Composers

JOHN ADAMS. *John's Book of Alleged Dances* (première)—19 November/Escondido, California/Kronos Quartet.

ELEANOR ALBERGA. *Snow White* (première)—1 December/London, Royal Festival Hall/Griff Rhys-Jones, Geraldine James, LPO c. Franz Welsler-Most.

LOUIS ANDRIESSEN. *Rosa* (première)—2 November/Amsterdam, Netherlands Opera/Lyndon Terracini, Jenny Drivala, dir. Peter Greenaway with Schoenberg and Asko Ensembles c. Reinbert de Leeuw. *De Staat* (French première)—19 December/Paris, Theatre du Chatelet/Ensemble Inter-Contemporain c. David Robertson. *Zilver* (première)—11 January 1995/Los Angeles/California EAR Unit. *De Snelheid* (German première)—11 March 1995/Cologne/Ensemble Modern.

RICHARD BARRETT. *negatives* (first complete concert performance)—12 October/Milan/Elision Ensemble c. Sandro Gorli. *air* (Italian première)—21 October/Rome/Susan Pierotti (vln). *dark ages* (UK première)—20 November/Huddersfield Festival/Francis-Marie Uitti (vlc). *vanity* (première)—21 January 1995/London/BBC Symphony Orchestra c. Arturo Tamayo.

GERALD BARRY. String Quartet (première)—4 November/Rotterdam, Confrontations V/Leonardo Quartet.

SALLY BEAMISH. *Walking Back* (première)—11 October/London, Royal Festival Hall/Academy of St Martin in the Fields c. Sir Neville Marriner. Violin Concerto (première)—January 1995/Glasgow, City Hall/Anthony Marwood (vln), BBC Scottish SO c. Martyn Brabbins.

GEORGE BENJAMIN. *Sudden Time* (US première)—5 October/San Francisco/San Francisco SO c. Hugh Wolff.

MICHAEL BERKELEY. *Laus Deo Semper* (première)—3 December/London, St. Michael's Cornhill/St. Michael's Singers c. Jonathan Rennert. Berkeley is composing a new piano work for Peter Donohoe.

SIR HARRISON BIRTWISTLE. *The Second Mrs. Kong* (première)—24 October/Glyndebourne, Sussex/Glyndebourne Touring Opera c. Elgar Howarth. *The Cry of Anubis* (première)—16 January 1995/London, Queen Elizabeth Hall/Owen Slade (tba), LPO c. Elgar Howarth.

JOLY BRAGA SANTOS (d.1988). Sinfonietta for strings (UK première)—9 November/London, Clerkenwell Music Series/New London Orchestra c. Ronald Corp.

DIANA BURRELL. Viola Concerto (première)—6 October/Norwich Festival/Jane Atkins (vla), Orchestra St John's Smith Square c. John Lubbock.

MARTIN BUTLER. *Night Machines* (première)—4 November/Oxford Contemporary Music Festival/Festival Ensemble. *Hootenanny* (première)—27 January 1995/Amsterdam, De Ijsbreker/Orkest de Volharding.

GAVIN BRYARS. *One More Bar than Joe Can Sing* (première)—10 November/London, Queen Elizabeth Hall/Nexus. *On Photography* (première)—20 November/Huddersfield Festival/National Youth Chamber Choir c. Michael Brewer.

FRIEDRICH CERHA. *Nachtstücke* (UK première)—25 November/Huddersfield/Klangforum Wien c. Beat Furrer.