# TONIC

## The Journal of the ROBERT SIMPSON SOCIETY

Vol.1, No.3

Summer 1981

EDITORIAL ..... MJA 1
THE RECORDING FUND ..... JB 2
60TH BIRTHDAY REPORT ..... JDG 3
BELATED GREETINGS ..... 4
NEW BOOK ..... 5
FORUM ..... 6
PROOF READERS REQUIRED ..... 6
60TH BIRTHDAY INTERVIEW ..... 6
TWO REPLIES:
TO HANS KELLER ..... Brian Duke 11
TO BAYAN NORTHCOTT ..... Lionel Pike 17
FROM THE PRESS ..... Centre
WORKING WITH RS ..... John Underwood 18
RS IN THE BIRS ..... 22
LETTER TO THE EDITOR ..... 25
SIMPSON ANTAGONISTES ..... 26
STOP PRESS ..... 26

THE ROBERT SIMPSON SOCIETY

Patron: Sir Adrian Boult

COMMITTEE 1980-81

Chairman: Professor J. D. GILLETT, OBE, 'Heronsmead', Abbotsbrook, Bourne End, Bucks SL8 5QS

Vice-Chairman: R. L. EDWARDS, 52 Priory Street, Colchester, Essex CO1 2QB

Joint Secretaries: JOHN and SYLVIA BROOKS, 3 Engel Park, London NW7 2HE

Treasurer: GEOFFREY SEDDON, 102 Park Avenue, Ruislip, Middx HA4 7UP

Editor, TONIC: MARTIN J. ANDERSON,* 41 Nansen Road, London SW11 5NS

Members

Mrs PAMELA BACON, 'Maplewood', 52 Foxdell Way, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks
KEITH BENNETT,* 214 Gilbert House, Barbican, London EC2Y 8BD
Professor IAN CRAFT, 12 Coval Gardens, London SW14 7DG
BRIAN DUKE, Merchant Taylor's School, Sandy Lodge, Northwood, Middx HA6 2HT
Dr LIONEL PIKE,* 31b Armstrong Road, Englefield Green, Surrey
PHILIP POTTER, 2 Ampthill Rise, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 3AU
Miss DAWN WILLIAMS, 'Sundown', Bangor Road North, Iver Heath, Bucks

* Members of the Projects Sub-Committee

THE ROBERT SIMPSON SOCIETY

Membership Rates per annum
Individual: £5.00 Joint: £7.50

Application for membership and other enquiries should be sent to the Joint Secretaries (address above).

TONIC ISSN 0260-7425

Published quarterly by the Robert Simpson Society



TONIC is issued free to members of the Robert Simpson Society. Extra copies, back numbers and non-members' copies are available at 50p each, plus postage. All proceeds from such sales will go into the Society's Projects Fund.

All correspondence concerning TONIC should be sent to the Editor (address above).

# EDITORIAL

MARTIN J. ANDERSON

The late appearance of this issue requires a few words of explanation. TONIC is produced through the good offices of friends and well-wishers, not least Alfred Lengnick & Co, at very little cost to the Society. (Our reserves are slowly building up for what we hope will result in the issue of things larger, flatter and blacker than TONIC.) But, never raining but chucking it down, both post-editorial stages of the production process were affected, the printing by mechanical failure, and the reproduction at Lengnicks, through no fault of theirs, since the initial delay caused our schedule to over-run into staff holidays. My apologies to all impatient readers; I hope that the next issue will appear with a promptness that might induce forgiveness.

The series of concerts by the Delme Quartet at the Greenwich Festival took place in June; and fortunately attendance figures were higher than early bookings promised. The Salon was two-thirds full and upwards, but RSS members were conspicuous by their absence. There is no incentive for concert promoters to feature works they feel will not be 'good box', no matter how great the stature of the music. If we could point to the crammed auditorium of Ranger's House as an example of the drawing power of RS's music, it would be a powerful piece of propaganda for further lobbying. Relative neglect by the 'musical establishment' may be insufficient excuse for apathy among the general public, but coupled with the low level of publicity that limited budgets necessarily entail it may just suffice. What excuse, then, do locally based RSS members have for their absence, when these concerts were billed several months in advance in TONIC, and when publicity for the concerts was mailed round all members? There may be occasional causes for absence (I confess that I, too, could not attend all of the concerts), but, surely, only those with religious practices or other regular duties are bound to be occupied every Sunday night out of four. It was intended that recordings would be made of the four Quartets performed at Greenwich by the Delme String Quartet, but this has been postponed for a short while to allow the RSS to garner the funds required to bring the project to fruition (on which John Brooks is eloquent below). Perhaps one source of money might be the concerts themselves: if every absent member whose conscience distance or impracticality has not left clear contributes to the recording fund the cost of the tickets he would have bought (plus whatever extra he can afford), it might go some way to bringing these very important recordings closer to daylight. There are, of course, some members who will have attended the concerts and who have also made a donation to the recording fund, and to them, our thanks.

The first performance of the new Quintet for clarinet, bass clarinet and three double basses (it lasted sixteen minutes) left no doubt that it was the finest work in that programme. The concert in the Wigmore Hall was mentioned in The Listener of 21 May in a marvellous article by Hans Keller which reproduced in part in the centre of this issue. Let us hope with Mr Keller that a studio recording may soon make this remarkable work known to a wider audience than the packed Wigmore Hall could accommodate in April. RS tells me that he is considering reworking the Quintet for more conventional forces - but I hope that the popularity of the new version will not prevent the London Double-Bass Ensemble giving many and frequent performances of the original.

Our Chairman, Professor Gillett (JDG), reports below on the successful Birthday Celebration held at the end of April. Apart from the artistic, social and culinary success of the evening, and the delivery by RS of a line that was an automatic choice for this issues's 'Simpson Antagonistes', I would like to add here my thanks to Michael Chapman for a fine job of binding on our birthday present. One of the guests was the conductor Harry Newstone, who gave me a postscript to Harold Truscott's article in the last TONIC. Speaking of the fact that RS had written his Piano Sonata to defy Harold's sight-reading powers, Harry said: 'Harold seems to have forgotten that I was present when he first played the work. He wasn't exaggerating his sight-reading ability. Bob had said to me with a grin beforehand: "Harold will never read this" - but he did!' And I confess that I owe Harold an apology for a mistake in his article. The whole point of it was that his playing stimulated RS's imagination to write music for the piano. It was rather careless of me, then, to omit possibly the most important word in the entire article. Six lines into the third paragraph on page 14 is a sentence that should read: 'The piano he did not play...'; to omit that negative turned the sense of the article rather on its head, and I offer my apologies to author and to confused readers.

The Third String Quartet was given an unexpected airing at Colchester on Saturday, 6 June. The Delme String Quartet, called in to replace the Aeolian, whose 'cellist was indisposed, gave a performance of the Quartet that they performed at Greenwich the following evening.

It is hoped that we shall be able to include a complete list of members' names and addresses in the next issue of TONIC to facilitate exchange between you. It may be especially useful to members living outside London to know whether there are any like minds living nearby. We shall, of course, omit the names and/or addresses of any who wish to preserve their anonymity. Can I have notice of any such wish within two weeks of receipt of this TONIC, please?

My repeated plea in the last TONIC for contributions and letters seems to have fallen on deaf ears. Even if you do not wish to put pen to paper yourselves, whether for just a few lines of correspondence or to produce a lengthy and trenchant piece of analysis (has it occured to anyone that by the third issue only one musical example has appeared in TONIC?), you must have some idea of subjects you would like to see covered here. I must apologise if TONIC now seems to contain nothing but exhortations to work and pay, but it is mainly through the efforts of individual members that, collectively, the Robert Simpson Society will be able to help give its eponymous composer's music the currency it merits. Do something.

---

## THE RECORDING FUND

---

### JOHN BROOKS

To those who have already been generous in the cause we must apologise for having to return to this subject, but we urgently need more money for the Recording Fund. So far we have raised £770 from the most welcome donations of 30 members (less than one-third of the membership), but we need £2,500 before we can really consider ourselves in business. We now have over 100 members: if everyone gave at least

£20 - not a great sum these days, when one considers that it will buy less than four full-price records - we should, with the donations we have already received in excess of that sum, be able to reach our target.

We now appeal to those of our members who have already been kind enough to donate to raise their donations to £20; and those who have not yet donated to send us at least that sum. The Havergal Brian Society recently appealed to its members for funds to bring about a performance of Brian's opera The Tigers; asking for £50 per member (it has nearly 200), it has raised nearly £3,000. Let us put them to shame. Of course, the Society would be deeply grateful if any member could put us on the track of a rich musical benefactor who might be able to give us the whole sum of £2,500, but failing such a fortunate chance we, the membership, shall have to raise the money by our own efforts.

If we can finance the recording of these Quartets ourselves, we shall be in a much stronger position to approach charitable foundations and business sponsors for help in recording the orchestral works. We now anticipate recording String Quartets Nos. 3, 6, 7, and 8 shortly, having postponed the sessions once already, and must be in a position to proceed with them soon. So, please, let us have your full-hearted financial support for this enterprise.

---

## 60TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION: A REPORT

---

On 28 January, 1828, a small group of friends gathered to play and listen to a new work by Franz Schubert. This was only one of such 'Schubertiads', as they were known; how inspiring it must have been to be present with the composer on those moving occasions. Well, on Saturday evening, 25 April, 1981, a group of friends gathered at Conway Hall, London, for the first 'Simpsoniad', at which the Delme Quartet gave a private performance of Robert Simpson's Eighth Quartet in the presence of the composer and members of the RSS. The composer talked about this work immediately before the performance with live 'illustrations' of salient points from the Delme. Bob Simpson's characteristic, informal, easy manner failed, as usual, to mask the interest and sheer erudition of what he had to say.

This tremendous work with its great fugal first movement was understandingly and beautifully played by the Delme Quartet, Galina Solodchin and Jeremy Painter, violins, John Underwood, viola, and Stephen Orton, 'cello. I can presume to say this because I know that the composer, too, was delighted. At one time when planning this celebration we had thought of a recorded performance of, and talk about, his works. But how much more satisfactory having this live performance of this newest Quartet; the Delme have established a special rapport with the composer and it was most fitting that they were present and typical that they generously gave their services virtually free.

It was also especially fitting that Galina Solodchin should present Bob Simpson with the Society's birthday present, a mere token of the regard and affection members feel for Bob. It was a bound book of 30-stave manuscript paper of truly gargantuan proportions, almost more than Galina could lift.

To one person present the occasion was made doubly moving because he was not only the fortunate but quite undeserving dedicatee of this Eighth Quartet but during the evening he was presented with the autograph score by the composer. To have a quartet dedicated to one is one thing but to have such a quartet dedicated to one is quite another. He was too overcome to say anything coherent at the time. In one respect, however, one could almost say that the dedicatee scored over the composer for his manuscript paper was anything but empty.

After the performance and the presentation members talked to the composer and partook of the really excellent fare provided. We grateful to all who helped with this splendid occasion, and especially to Sylvia Brooks. But our main gratitude must go to the Quartet and to the composer; thank you, Delme, and bravo, Bob. We await the Ninth with bated breath - and not just the quartet.

J.D.G.

---

## BELATED GREETINGS ...

---

Only a day or two after we had prepared for printing the 'Birthday Hansel' that occupied the centre of the last issue of TONIC, I had four more messages in the post, one from Sir William Walton apologising for having replied too late for inclusion, another from the American symphonist William Schuman, asking where he could come across more of the music, and two others which are quoted below:

Dear Bob,

All best wishes for your birthday and for many more fruitful years.

ANTHONY MILNER

Dear Robert Simpson,

My warmest greetings on your birthday, with my best wishes for your future, and sincere thanks for your Carl Nielsen books, which opened the musical world for our Danish symphonist.

MOGENS WÖLDIKE

To anyone who would have liked to send a note but whom I failed to ask, I must apologise for not sending a request and fall back on blaming the constraints of time. -Ed.

## NEW BOOK

Just as the last TONIC announced the appearance of a new piece of music, this issue heralds the publication of a new book by RS. Called The Proms and Natural Justice (and subtitled 'A Plan for Renewal') the book examines the effects on the Proms programmes of the personal monopoly of the BBC's Controller, Music. Arguing from his conviction that there is always a practical alternative to what is wrong, RS proposes that, rather than return to artistic stagnation of the old committee method of running the Proms, the best method of ensuring the flair that an individual mind can bring, without long-term prejudice to composers and performers alike, is to have a separate post, limited in tenure to four or five years. To ensure that the Proms planner can then build the programmes his imagination dictates, more extensive use of the BBC orchestras would give almost complete control over the repertoire - producing a saving of more than 62% - and maintain high standards in the BBC's own orchestras.

The Proms and Natural Justice has been widely reviewed in the dailies (one is reproduced in the centre of this issue) and magazines. It is published by Toccata Press at £1.95 plus 30 pence p&p, and is available from their trade counter at 40 Floral Street, London WC2. Toccata Press, before you ask, has been set up by the Editor of this august journal in the hope of making available inexpensive but well-presented scholarship on areas of musical activity neglected by the 'critical establishment'. Books on composers who are not yet part of the popular pantheon will not attract the casual reader unless they are at a price he is prepared to pay. Too many publishers use their monopoly of information to keep up the price: Toccata Press will keep its prices as low as possible, restrained only by the danger of insolvency. I insert this blurb in the hope that RSS members would like to make suggestions for future topics - composers, traditions, institutions, styles and so on. If you can think, for example, of composers about whom there is little or no scholarship readily available in English, or if you know of a manuscript - perhaps one turned down by a more conventional publisher - I would be delighted to hear from you.

Indeed, RSS members could do much to ensure wide readership of The Proms and Natural Justice as well as contribute to the future health and happiness of Toccata Press, if they did what they could to publicise this important document: mention the title to friends and acquaintances and urge them to buy a copy; ask your local library to order a copy, and ask your friends to do the same; suggest to local bookshops that they might want to stock copies; and, of course, I hope that you will want to acquire copies yourselves. As Toccata Press was founded very recently, none of the trade directories will carry the address until next year. It would help, therefore, if you were able to refer libraries, bookshops and the like, to 40 Floral Street, London WC2.

MJA

See STOP PRESS on page 26

## FORUM

RS has very kindly offered to use TONIC as a forum for any questions that members might wish to ask about his music. He stipulates, however, that 'TONIC mustn't become a mouthpiece for me' - so no loaded questions, please! Letters care of the Editor, who will forward them on arrival.

## PROOF-READERS REQUIRED

I would be most grateful if anyone would like to help with proof-reading scores and parts, as and when necessary. An extra pair of eyes is always valuable - composers are notoriously bad proof-readers, as they tend to see what should be there, whether it is or not. Once errors get into published music, they can be the devil to get rid of. So any volunteers will be gratefully welcomed.

RS

[Letters through the Editor, please, who will forward them as they arrive.]

## 60TH BIRTHDAY RADIO INTERVIEW

MICHAEL OLIVER: It seems only a year or two ago - in fact, it was nearly thirty years ago - that young Robert Simpson began to make a name for himself, not cautiously with a 'sinfonietta', 'concertino' or a 'petite suite', but challengingly with a full-scale symphony and a remarkable string quartet. In a period when lots of composers were finding it difficult to write quartets or symphonies (some of them have even said that symphonies are impossible to write now), Robert Simpson has devoted most of his composing life to them. He once said that people write symphonies because they can. There is more to it than that, surely?

RS: Well, you want to write something large, you want to write something challenging, you want to write something that will test every ounce that you've got; and the symphony has always been regarded, ever since Mozart and Haydn, as the greatest challenge to a composer, since it is the most highly organised form of orchestral music: we call it a 'symphony'. It doesn't have to be in any particular shape of form nowadays, but it is still (to me, at any rate) that challenge; and so if it is something into which I am putting everything I've got, I call it a

symphony - provided it is comprehensive enough as a piece: it includes all the various aspects of music, like fast tempi and slow tempi, organic growth and so on; all that. That is to me what a symphony is. If you start something and you see it is going to grow organically - this has become rather a habit with me - it tends to turn into a symphony.

MO: You would say, wouldn't you, that the concept of tonality is essential to writing a symphony?

RS: Well, that is a very difficult question. We could be here for two hours discussing that one. I would say that tonality is important in the sense that intervals are important; the relationships between tones, between pitches is important. The differences between a fifth and a third and a seventh are very important because they exist. They are phenomena which we hear and feel. They set up resonances in the mind. Every composer finds different resonances in these intervals: in the classical period they led to the system of classical tonality with which we are all familiar, with things like sub-dominant, dominant and mediant. But nowadays the relationships between pitches, between intervals, can generate a new kind of tonality, in which the actual resonances between the intervals, between different notes, will, if you feel them truly, finally result in something emerging which is essentially tonal.

I do not believe and have never believed in the idea that all semitones of the chromatic scale are of equal importance in relationship to each other, because this ignores the fact that there are different intervals between them. It is those intervals which are the vital stuff of which I want to make music.

MO: Was it caution, or just a sense of economy on the title page of the score, that made you decide to call your third symphony simply 'Symphony No.3' rather than 'Symphony No.3 in C'?

RS: Well, it's not in C in that sense, because the first movement is a conflict between C and B flat, and C only eventually emerges at the end of the last movement, so I couldn't say the whole symphony is in C. In fact, the symphony is about a conflict between C and B flat; to call it 'in C' would give the game away right from the start.

MO: People tend to interpret symphonies subjectively: they say that this symphony ends 'affirmatively', 'triumphantly', 'in despair' and so on. When you are writing a work of that kind, do you think of it with these emotional labels attached, or are you more concerned with conflict between B flat and C?

RS: I'm not concerned with moods in the usual sense of the term. I can get feelings from music, of course. I react very emotionally to music; it means an enormous amount to me. Fidelio, for instance, has a tremendous effect on me emotionally, and so does all the music that I love. I hope that my own music, if I feel it strongly enough as music, will have this effect on somebody. But I do not start by saying 'I'm going to write a "Tragic Symphony"', or 'I'm going to start with darkness and finish in triumph', or this kind of romantic stuff. First of all, I look at the material and ask myself: 'What is there inside this that I can extract? What can I make it become?' And so it grows; I let it grow. I criticise it as it grows: if it is not good enough, I stop and go back maybe, then go on, but I go by instinct. I don't have any theory - I just say: 'Does this feel right?' If it doesn't feel right, then I scrap it and do something else. But, in effect, what emerges is a process, a dynamic, a living (I hope) process which will say

something to somebody. And I hope that it is something positive rather than something negative, because I think if it does grow truly, then it is positive.

MO: Your First Symphony, I believe, is in fact your fifth; is that right? There were four before.

RS: Yes, I did scrap four in my ill-advised youth.

MO: How could you possibly bear to do that? I can barely manage to throw away the first page of a script that has gone wrong, but to throw away four symphonies ...

RS: It was a long time before I actually did throw them away. It was after I had written what is now No. 1, and I thought it was such an advance on what I had done before that I didn't want anybody to see those.

I got the idea with No. 1 that I would have two opposite tonalities - A, and E flat (which is a tritone away, as far away as you can go) - and I would make the symphony oscillate between these two extremes. This was purely an abstract idea of mine. I also had the idea that I would have liked to make a real one-movement symphony, because many symphonies said to be in one movement are linked movements that are quite separate from each other really. This one I wanted to make really organic, to make it grow right from the beginning to the end, to have one tempo all the way through so that the pulse would remain the same all through the symphony and I would have to vary it simply by thinking at different rates over it. The symphony has actually three different basic tempi but they are all over the same pulse.

MO: I have heard it suggested that what actually happened to you that time was Nielsen. Is there any sense in that?

RS: Oh yes; but I had got two-thirds of the way through that symphony when I was hit by the first movement of the Espansiva, which knocked me completely for six, so much so that it stopped me composing for six months. I just didn't know what to do. I thought: 'Well, somebody's done it. I've been wasting my time'. But then it all came back; and I think the last part of that symphony does, perhaps, show the influence of Nielsen more than the rest.

MO: Since the First Symphony, which made a tremendous inpression in the 1950's, Robert Simpson has perhaps been better known to the musical public for his books on, of course, the symphony and on Bruckner and Nielsen, and for his championship of the music of Havergal Brian, than for his own compositions. During his nearly thirty years as a BBC producer, it somehow seems that he promoted the cause of every unfairly neglected composer one can think of, with one exception - himself. I wondered whether that job, which involved immersing himself in music of every school and every fashion, affected his own composing.

RS: Oh yes, I think so, although I would say that it probably affected me more as a distraction than anything else, because it left me comparatively little time to work. I was restricted to weekends, and any evenings I felt lively enough to do it, when I could get the sound of the telephone out of my head, and I used to spend half my holidays composing. But, of course, being in contact with lots of new music all the time, reading scores and listening to tapes and hearing it, I knew and still know what is going on all over the world. You tend to take what you want and leave the rest, but it's interesting all the time,

although sometimes it can be distracting. One of the things I found distracting was not so much the music itself but the arguments which raged round it, among colleagues and musicians. I often felt I was wasting my time saying to people: 'It's no good arguing that because the climate nowadays is like it is, you mustn't do this, you mustn't do that; it's not "relevant".' 'Relevant' is one of their favourite words - they love it, you know. I don't know what it means.

MO: Now that you are relatively free, are you making big plans for what you are composing over the next few years? Will it be more symphonies and more quartets; or are you saying: 'At last I have got time to write an oratorio'?

RS: Well, I've got various commissions which I have to do. I'm working on another symphony just now which will be No.8. It didn't start as a commission, but as something I really wanted to do; and there's a quartet I have to write for the Delme Quartet; and a brass band piece which is a commission; and various other things. All this is going to take me the next year, eighteen months, or so. I would like to write a big oratorio but I haven't found the words yet. I might have to devise the text myself - but this is very much in the future. The symphony I'm doing now is a rather interesting way of trying to write a symphony. I felt that the 18th century composers knew their own audience - Haydn knew everybody who was going to listen to his symphony next week. He could see all their faces. How marvellous to be able to compose when you can see the faces of everybody who is going to hear it, and you can say 'That will shake 'em up!' as you are writing it. This is something a modern composer doesn't have. It's either a radio audience, which might as well be non-existent; or a vast sea of faces at the Festival Hall, if he's lucky enough to get a symphony performed there; and so on. It is so nice to have something real to compose for, and so I asked a friend of mine who is a painter and a very intensely musical person, Anthony Dorrell (he has broadcast on music, in fact) and I said to him: 'Would you describe to me what kind of a symphony you'd like to hear?' He wanted notice of this question. He went away and, finally, wrote me a letter describing the general outline of the sort of symphony that he thinks he would like to hear. Since we've a lot in common musically and philosophically - we think in very much the same way - it's not surprising that I don't find it awfully difficult to try to oblige him. That's what I am trying to do now.

MO: Does the stimulus to write a work ever come from non-musical happenings?

RS: After the event, usually. In the Third Symphony it was after the event. I suddenly had the feeling that the second movement reminded me of an occasion which was true. Whether the music actually has its origins in that, I don't know; but it happened one morning when I was lying in bed - it was just dawn, in the summer. I was half awake, gradually waking up (you know how it is first thing in the morning), and I heard the dawn chorus start. All this sudden fantastic, enormous sound, the energy of the birds, this tremendous vitality and urgency suddenly struck me and I had no choice - I just had to leap out of bed and open the window and look out. It was after I had written that piece that I remembered this. It wasn't a deliberate attempt to describe it, but it does seem to me to say just that.

MO: How do you feel about your own works when you have actually got to the double bar?

RS: I think of the relief, the marvellous feeling of having finished something, having got it out of the way, that it's been an awful sweat. Then I think I'd like to hear it, of course. But maybe I think of the next piece, because you're moving forward all the time. But as you go on changing, you begin to get new ideas, to become aware of more possibilities. One consequence of this is that it makes choice more difficult, because composing is choosing. We have to choose what to do next, and the wider the possibilities, the harder the choice, so composing becomes harder as you get older. Experience enables you to cope with more problems, but it also makes it harder to choose what problems to cope with.

MO: I think we can look forward to some challenging solutions to symphonic problems now that Robert Simpson is, let's not say 'retired', now that he has become a full-time composer. After all, look what his friend Havergal Brian achieved after his sixtieth birthday.

---

Our thanks go to both contributors for permission to print this interview which was first broadcast on the BBC Radio 3 programme, Music Weekly on 1 March 1981. -Ed.

---

## TWO REPLIES

---

### 1. THE NAIVE AND THE SENTIMENTALIC COMPOSER - AND HANS KELLER

---

BRIAN DUKE

The middle fiddles give a distinct pulse to a fixed chord, as the 'cello begins on its lowest note: but this is not the Mozart C major string quintet; the cello's tune begins C - D - F - E: it might be a development of the famous theme in the finale of the Jupiter symphony.

But the procedure is then different; for it is the start of Robert Simpson's fourth string quartet. Despite its great and acknowledged debt to Beethoven - specifically the first Razumovsky quartet - there is its plain and personal voice. And sometimes this voice has a very Mozartian quality in the way it stuns the ear, not by power, but by getting in under the ears. As the composer once commented in another context:

> 'I couldn't help it ...
> I was born that way ...
> it's called Original Sin'.

This is a subjective effect, of course, showing how careful we have to be when assessing any kind of music. Then there is the personality of the composer, which may aid or hinder our understanding of the music. Primarily it should make no difference; the music is what really matters. Naturally, if a piece of music is sensed as being very interesting, or great, the hearer will want to learn something of its creator. Indeed, there are some things about him that the music will inevitable reveal; not surface details such as the colour of his eyes, but deep springs - that is, if the music has any real value.

# THE BRITISH MUSIC SOCIETY

President: Sir Lennox Berkeley CBE

The Annual Lecture and Concert, following the A.G.M. as usual, will this year consist of a

Lecture on

THE MUSIC OF BERNARD VAN DIEREN
given by Alistair Chisholm

followed by a performance of the

STRING QUARTET No. 6
given by the Van Dieren String Quartet

7.30 pm
Saturday, 31st October 1981
LONDON COLLEGE OF MUSIC
Great Marlborough Street, London W1

---

A U R A C L E  R E C O R D S

First Release:

BRITISH MUSIC FOR PIANO DUET

LORD BERNERS.....Fantaisie Espagnole
LORD BERNERS.....Trois Morceaux
CONSTANT LAMBERT.....Trois Pieces Negres
PHILIP LANE.....Badinage

Peter Lawson &
Christopher Scott
(piano, four hands)

AUC 1001 - £4.99

Distributed by Parnote, or available from:
Auracle Records, 24 Yew Tree Court,
Bridge Lane, LONDON NW11

Third come the processes which occur in any piece. These ought to be worth investigating. This is a point to bear in mind, even when we are struck by a particularly memorable tune; it can be analysed, and for a composer it can be the most difficult thing in the world to write a strong, individual tune, maybe one that fits the mood of a poem and not just the rhythm of its words. Musically it will begin to define its territory; then comes the need for balance and 'musical development'. Without these, our interest will wane.

These three elements in music - our initial reaction, our impression of the composer, and our investigation of how the piece is constructed - are quite distinct, and any influences between them should be mild; we should never jump to conclusions, even when the new piece, or a composer previously unheard, shifts our view of the musical world.

In his article in TONIC Vol. 1, No. 2, 'The Man and the Music' (pages 7 - 11), Hans Keller invites us to consider two opposed kinds of artists. Here is a fascinating polarity: on the one hand, the 'naive' composer, on the other the 'sentimentalic', as he translates Friedrich Schiller's German neologism, sentimentalisch. That polarity certainly categorises many creative musicians. One sees at once which side of this figures like Wagner or Britten, Beethoven or Stravinsky lie. He helps us fix our ideas by these examples, and others, and it is strange that a distinction drawn on the evidence of arts other than music should apply, but it seems to do so, at least for the most part. The strangeness arises as Mr Keller points out (page 8, paragraph 2) in that music is the art furthest removed from 'any pictorial or conceptual thought' - a most important consideration.

When it comes to the matter of 'development', it is innocuous to comment 'strictly musically, development is indeed the hallmark of the striver' (page 8); however, this relates a musical process to a matter of character. Then as Mr Keller goes on to aver, '...Mozart wasn't all that fond of it, found various inspired, masterly ways out of it, or else didn't even plunge into it in the first place - as, say, in the Figaro Overture'. Now this smacks of chicken and egg; whichever may be cause and which effect, there is no doubt here that we are being led to support that a matter of character and a matter of what happens when a piece of music unfolds into the listener's mind are thus intimately connected. But if this opinion has much truth in it, it may be testable; following Sir Karl Popper, let us see if it is falsifiable.

Development is a matter of musical technique. It arose at a particular point in the evolution of music. In his time Haydn undoubtedly spurred it on, as befits the father of the symphony and of the string quartet; later composers in these (and related) forms took the point, more or less - even Bruckner, whose architecture is as striking as his themes. It took him some time to find his way, but that is the measure of the unusual nature of his architectural solutions to the 'symphonic problem'.

Indeed Bruckner, with Brahms, began a renaissance of the symphony that continued well into the twentieth century. Perhaps without fully realising it, both were looking for ways of renewal (I speak not of their personalities, but of what music they wrote, and of the processes therein); Brahms indeed apparently hid some of his experiments quite well; it takes an open ear to hear his Tragic Overture as a proper one-movement symphony, and the opening movement of the Fourth Symphony as a set of variations - as well as being in sonata form. Once pointed out (both insights come from Harold Truscott), they seem fairly obvious.

(continued on page 16)

THE LISTENER
21 MAY 1981 VOL 105 NO 2713

# MUSIC

*Hans Keller*

## Behind our backs

*Robert Simpson Quartets* (Radio 3)
*A Composer Speaks* (World Service)

I don't want to add to Robert Ponsonby's Prom problems (persuasively propounded in this column a fortnight ago), but if there are 'some over-inflated reputations', there must needs be reputations that are justly or accurately inflated. Is it they, then, which make him think that in the performing arts, you can 'by and large, equate costliness with quality'? With inflated quality, maybe. Conversely, in the current series of Simpson Quartets, the Delmé Quartet's insight into the composer's creativity is such that if the players were paid according to the quality of their interpretations, the BBC probably couldn't afford them.

Whoever heard Sunday's Seventh Quartet surely won't miss next Sunday's Eighth (and last), which I know from a close study of the score. Like the Seventh, it is a sovereign quartet texture—created, exceptionally, by a composer who is not a string player himself: his eavesdropping, concrete imagination has assimilated those ultimate secrets of quartet sonority which escaped a Schumann, Brahms or Stravinsky. Dr Simpson celebrated his 60th birthday this year, and it is gratifying to note that the World Service, too, is marking the occasion by throwing this shamefully neglected mastermind into full relief. (Yes, let me say 'mastermind': why should we yield to the cheapening of the concept and avoid it?)

In fact, I started last week's listening at 4.15 am on Monday, in order to catch the second of nine World Service programmes in which Robert Simpson is answering Julian Budden's congenial questions about the problems of our age's composer—and indeed about the nature of music. What a feast it was to hear, for once, unscripted talk which was both deeply thoughtful and literate, not to speak of the contribution of the untrendy interviewer who, far from starting every new question with that mandatory, 'challenging', meaningless 'But...', proved capable of developing a genuinely searching conversation. As a result, Simpson himself was able to show that notwithstanding his contempt for mere words, he is as brilliantly articulate in front of the microphone as behind the string quartet.

Don't miss these eventful programmes, then, which can also be heard on Thursdays at 12.15 pm (BST), on Saturdays at 9.15 am, and on Sundays at 10 pm. However accidentally so, Radio 3's and the World Service's Simpson series form a perfect unity and thus provide one of the weightiest radio experiences of the year—which listeners who haven't chanced upon the present reminder are bound to miss: why doesn't Radio 3—and hence *Radio Times*—heed what the World Service is doing when? 'The World Service is not for domestic listeners' has ceased to be a relevant answer: they love it and, God knows, they know why.

Grateful, in any case, for this unplanned Simpson festival, I was proportionately disappointed the other night at the Wigmore Hall when his substantial Quintet for 3 double-basses, clarinet and bass-clarinet received its first performance without being relayed: a direct relay (whose placeability my professional eye confirmed in *Radio Times*) would have been both a major event and, *qua* relay, a bargain. However, if a studio recording is envisaged, all is forgiven: a retake or two won't do the double-basses any harm!

* We hope to print material from some of these discussions in later issues of TONIC. Ed.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
FRIDAY, JULY 31, 1981

# THE SOUND OF WHOSE MUSIC?

THE PROMS ARE WITH US AGAIN and profoundly welcome. But the musical solace of midsummer has come under some constructive and principled criticism from one of our finest musicians, ROBERT SIMPSON, Radio 3 producer, champion of BRUCKNER and NIELSEN, symphonist and author of "The Proms & Natural Justice" (Tocata Press £1·95). While praising the achievements of Sir WILLIAM GLOCK, who dominated the Proms for 14 years, Dr SIMPSON finds too narrow a concentration of power for too long in the hands of Sir WILLIAM and his successor, ROBERT PONSONBY. He has a rather frightening list of the serious 20th-century composers who were given no performance at all or less than an hour's hearing in the Glock era. A list of omissions which includes HONEGGER, MARTINU, RUBBRA, SZYMANOWSKI, REGER, FRANZ SCHMIDT, VAGN HOLMBOE and COPLAND is worrying. But it is the natural consequence of both the personal preference of an individual and the rentaconcert system by which a grand London orchestra comes at relatively short notice with its fixed *table d'hote* repertoire.

Dr SIMPSON's response is to ration the power of the man in charge to a term of, say, five years. At the same time he has costed and worked out a means of making huge savings in the operation. There would be cuts in costs of no less than 62 per cent. The five-year director could plan ahead, spreading the programme across all tastes but rightly exercising his own enthusiasms

At present so many premiers are derniers. Orchestral music, and especially the Proms, needs a broader choice of unfamiliar music old and new which people will want to hear again, not the crude combination of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto and the first and last performance of Atonalli's Desolations 38. Dr SIMPSON's combination of utilising in-house resources, putting a time limit on absolute power and trying to think ahead sounds very much like sense.

(continued from page 13)

One problem with the Keller thesis is that one would like to think about other great composers. Here is another polarity:

'When the angels play for God,
they play Bach;
But when they play for themselves,
they play Mozart
... and God eavesdrops'.

as the great theologian Karl Barth once began a lecture.(1) One wonders why Mr Keller never mentioned him - is it difficult to fit Bach into his map? Or just that Bach flourished before the first burgeoning of the symphony?

Now Mozart belongs to the first period of symphonic growth; whatever his personality, it is right to look for development in his musical thought. But we must not expect such a high musical intelligence to confine his developments to what are, formally, development sections. Indeed, the three da Ponte operas illustrate perfectly the distinctly Mozartian solutions to the symphonic problem of development. The point is that there are many solutions; and we must note that Mozart was a surprisingly late developer. Only after the King Thamos music (K345) do strings of various kinds of masterpieces emerge; these latter works, with only the occasional outlier such as the great Piano Concerto in E flat (K271), are the ones which are indispensible. Further, there is the manifold nature of Mozart's music: it comes from many sources; just as in the da Ponte operas each character retains his own viewpoint whilst participating in a musical unity, so in the non-vocal pieces. The magic lies in the fusion of so many apparently disparate elements. Under these conditions, 'musical development' is an obvious process to look for. Individuality is retained, yet there is no musical tug-of-war, not even in Don Giovanni with its multiple orchestras, and the great daring of some of the harmony. The last is associated with the Statue, and and is as extreme as it is simple - triads of E flat and A major, arpeggionated in the bass. The diminished sevenths are more like tokens of terror than the means of moving the music forwards.

The Overture to Figaro is a fascinating and highly concentrated example of the Mozartian kind of development. Mozart does not indeed 'plunge' into a development section; but this large-scale fact does not entail the absence of development. Far from it - the opening proceeds by expansion: one bar of bustle, two bars, four; then at once a contrast, which also expands; the music obeys a kind of Parkinson's Law, filling a vacuum, slowly, gently and by degrees. The impression must be that of being let into the action, which has already been going on for some while, and we don't know precisely when we become aware of it. Hence the marvellous comment of Fritz Busch, rehearsing the overture at Glyndebourne in the 1930s: 'Already too loud.' - even before a note had been played. Thematically the overture has no direct link with the rest of the opera; in a sense it is a mood piece. Despite coming to a full stop as it finishes, it is but an upbeat to the first vocal item.

Now expansion is a particularly Mozartian way of developing a musical idea, and the long section in the dominant key even contains a false hint of modulation (bars 100 - 107) before resuming. The reason becomes clear when the voices enter on the other side of the home key. The overall effect of the Figaro Overture is thus to indicate much activity, but within a set framework of 'normality' - whereas Don Giovanni is full of abnormality and dark hints, some of which were to be picked up in the first quarter of the twentieth century, to be wise after the event.

So the Figaro Overture resumes its opening almost exactly at the midpoint of its duration. Each of its musical ideas is a tiny bud, warmed, watered and fertilised by its surroundings, each of which might easily be another such bud. Complex tonal relationships are not to be found in the overture; they are present in Cherubino's second aria, Voi, che sapete; whilst both that aria and Cherubino's first, Non so piu cosa son, show a wide range of musical buds, some tiny, from which vocal lines and other details grow. It may not be quite true to say that almost anything was grist to Mozart's mill - he frequently confines himself to scraps of scales and arpeggios - but heaven alone knows what he might have used, had he the opportunity to profit from the experience of hearing the Eroica. It was left to a twentieth-century composer to declare:

> 'We should at the same time be able to get away from the key, and yet use diatonic persuasion,' (2)

but by then the tonal waters had become vastly muddied.

(1) From the Rev. Paul Oestreicher.

(2) Carl Nielsen, in a letter to Henrick Knudsen, 19 August 1913.

---

## 2. THE CANON IN ROBERT SIMPSON'S SIXTH QUARTET

LIONEL PIKE

A chance remark in an otherwise generally excellent article by Bayan Northcott (TONIC, Vol. 1, No. 2) has caused me to think about the third movement of Robert Simpson's 6th Quartet. The description used by Mr Northcott is that it is 'an elaborate, if somewhat stiff-jointed double canon'. The very idea of a canon conjures up in most people's minds things academic and possibly rather four-square. Yet, for me at least, this particular canon is the very antithesis of those two descriptions.

The third movement of this Quartet is not, of course, intended to be heard in isolation: like the Menuetto of Beethoven's Opus 59, No. 3 (of which Quartet Simpson's is a close study), one of its functions is to exorcise the ghost of a second movement whose material has led us down some very gloomy paths indeed. Beethoven's idea of dispelling this gloom is to write a rather old-fashioned Minuet: a 20th-century composer - at least, one who is not a neo-classicist - can scarcely resort to pastiche of this type, and for Simpson a canon (though one in a 20th-century idiom) supplies a corresponding appeal to older music. Simpson's second movement had itself begun as if in canon, though the music is dark, and moves in very regular note values at first. The composer exorcises this gloom by starting his third movement on the same notes but by continuing in contrasting and rather wispy fashion, and by writing contrapuntal lines of considerable charm and beauty, yet with an irregularity that is easily demonstrated by the use, in the first few bars, of every note value from semiquaver to breve. The change from slow to fast motion for the central section removes this canon yet further from the academic class.

Another of the movement's functions is to carry through a further stage in the logical argument of the work as a whole. The canon is thus an exploration of the pitches announced at the opening of the Quar-

tet, and of the relationship of those pitches to each other. One can perhaps most easily demonstrate this facet by reference to the fast central section of the canon, which turns its attention to the interval of a perfect fifth - the interval so commonly found between entries in fugue. This fifth is traceable back to the C sharp-G sharp interval in the opening chord of the first movement. In the fast section of the canon, Simpson contrives to explore the fugal analogy while continuing to use canon four-in-two. Thus the second violin is imitated by the 'cello a fifth lower, and the first violin is imitated by the viola a fifth lower. By using a certain amount of thematic correspondence between the pairs, the analogy with fugue is made the more intimate. Furthermore, the imitation by a fifth below is countered by sequential repetitions of the material a fifth higher: thus at each new appearance of the material the lower two instruments take over the pitch that the higher pair had used at their previous entry. Not only is a gradual increase in tension produced by this means, but the splendid fugue of the Finale is neatly prepared. (It would be superfluous here to examine the ramifications of the fifth in any more detail - but a long study could be made of the use of this interval in the canon.) Just as the opening of the movement does not sound so obviously canonic that any but the most attentive would realise (without examining the score) that a canon four-in-two is being played, so a more-or-less converse feeling is created in the central section. Its tumultuous counterpoint does not sound like canon at all, but like fugue.

My earlier assessment of the canon as 'non-academic' does not, of course, imply lack of skill: one need look no further than bars 5 and 6 to see how skilful is the arrangement of the voices so that a rising scale high up in the first violin is imitated right down through the layers of the quartet until it begins on the 'cello's C string. Moreover, it is not a dry exercise - there is plenty of feeling in the piece. When one remembers how this movement must advance the musical argument of the Quartet as a whole, it is indeed difficult to think of any composer who could have written a better canon. To me, it is worthy of Bach or Beethoven. I certainly cannot think of it as 'stiff-jointed' in any way whatsoever.

---

## WORKING WITH SIMPSON

---

JOHN UNDERWOOD
(Violist with the Delme Quartet)

In 1954 or so I was asked by the BBC to play a Sonata by Martinů. This pleased me because I had long been worried that such an admirable and prolific composer was so seldom heard in this country despite his seven Quartets and a great deal of other music. I duly turned up to the studios at Maida Vale and for the first time met Robert Simpson. Immediately I felt at home with his warm and enthusiastic personality: he had the aura of a person you know you could work with, in, say, a quartet - someone who thinks along the same wave-length. I had already heard some of his symphonic writing and was most impressed by the musicality, and - an important point, sadly lacking these days - the craftsmanship of it. But it was hearing a broadcast from Birmingham (I think) that I heard for the first time his quartet writing. It was geared very much to this special medium - music <u>for</u> the instruments rather than <u>against</u> them. This means that modern devices such as 'noises' of an 'extra-mural' nature, padding, in fact, all those things

that smack distinctly of lack of knowledge and artistry, can have no place in his particular scheme of things.

The fact that this Quartet had an immediate rapport with a professional player, that it was something you had to listen to, put RS very high in my book. As you all know, we have to play and listen to far too much music and this can have an advantage in that your ears will select only things of an interesting and worthwhile nature.

I shall now jump forward quite a few years to the 'sixties when I realised Bob's sympathy for the medium much more; this came about through Haydn. Here is a common denominator which influences a man like Bob and players like ourselves enormously. His appreciation of this immortal composer is quite extraordinary and, of course, a player is bound to take advantage of his knowledge in working upon these masterpieces. I'm sure that if I say the joy of working as interpreters of these works, composed by the most under-rated of the Classical composers, and feeling involved with us, really does spark Bob off.

I can illustrate this by a simple story. One day only last year we were preparing one of Bob's Quartets for performance; and when we reach the 60% stage, we like to ask him along to rehearsal to clarify points. Having sat through the work and 'clarified' various points, you would expect that as a busy man he would then want to go home - but we couldn't get him to go, because he knew we were rehearsing the Haydn A major. He insisted on sitting there whilst we rehearsed - of course, his opinion was constantly sought, and he in his turn was concentrating upon, I think, the methods we have for ensuring ensemble and a degree of unity of musical thought. At the end of this, some two hours later, he had become as involved as we were with the music and remained quite silent and said suddenly in his rather lovely gruff voice: 'FFFascinating'. Just in passing, I might add that he often shows more interest in, say, Haydn than his own pieces, which shows how modest (he would say something else) he is about his own great achievements.

We have now played all his Quartets and I should like to mention a few thoughts about them. The problems in doing so for the amateur writer are enormous - it is bad enough for the professionals to try to write about an abstract subject like the beauty of music.

Nor is it easy for the professional player to write for the amateur reader. Unless you're involved in the rehearsal and technical method of preparation (I am now talking of the actual playing technique), it is practically impossible to understand the problems. The first thing, of course, when dealing with any composer of note is essentially his style and the musical background from which it has grown. You cannot perform Simpson without taking into account, from a playing point of view, Beethoven and Haydn. This means that chording and key relationships must have the same understanding as in the two composers mentioned - a simple matter if quartet intonation were tempered like a piano. But it's not, so one's attention to key, chord changes and their intonation becomes a critical part of interpretation. Time to get around a musical corner might well be governed by a chord change, for example, just as in any classical piece. Secondly, one must play his music with a beauty of sound - simply just 'what comes to hand' will not do. For instance, Bob always likes a fairly heavy sforzando sound, even in, say, the slow movement of the Sixth, his third 'Razumovsky'. This can take quite a degree of culturing because if you're not very careful, with just four of you doing it, the result can be crude and ugly, not powerful. One's consideration of these type of problems brings one much closer to the music, and I think you will see that the

# TIME REMEMBERED

# ALAN BUSH

**An 80th Birthday Symposium**

**EDITED BY**

## Ronald Stevenson

Contributors include

WILLIAM ALWYN
JOHN AMIS
SIR THOMAS ARMSTRONG
BERNARD KEEFFE
HANS KELLER
MALCOLM MACDONALD
ATES ORGA
GRIGORI SCHNEERSON
BERNARD STEVENS
MAX ROSTAL
SIR MICHAEL TIPPETT
COLIN WILSON

**plus a complete list of works**

**bibliography**
**discography**
**concert repertoire**

**many illustrations, photographs and music examples**

**Limited edition of 350 copies** **Price** £9.50

AVAILABLE in OCTOBER

**BRAVURA**

Cut along dotted line

Bravura Publications, Chartreuse House, Hopton Wafers,
Cleobury Mortimer, Kidderminster, Worcs, DY14 0NA

TO BRAVURA PUBLICATIONS: Please Send Me My Numbered Copy Of
TIME REMEMBERED "ALAN BUSH: 80th. Birthday Symposium"

Name .....

Address .....

.....

..... Postal Code

10% DISCOUNT TO MEMBERS OF THE ROBERT SIMPSON SOCIETY

soloist or orchestral technique is very different from that of a quartet. Another point is that the accompanying lines in Bob's music must be shaped according to the musical phrase, not merely rhythmic, metronomic 'chunks'. Once again, the shape of the phrase - where it's going and where it finishes - must be considered by everyone in the quartet. Sometimes the same phrase, for example, if recurring later in the piece, might need reshaping in order to accomodate another figure added to it, perhaps something fugal underneath.

Of Bob's 'Razumovskys', his Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Quartets, the one I prefer at the moment is No. 6. Perhaps the thoughts and moments in it are more related to Beethoven Op. 59, No. 3 than the two earlier quartets. One can take the opening Introduction, for instance. Knowing of Bob's interest in the extraordinary sequence of searching chords at the opening of the Beethoven, I feel his thoughts must have been kindled by that in his own piece. Just think of the first six bars of Beethoven and then listen to Bob's piece. Bob exploits this 'searching' in his piece, and he also uses the 'resolution' of the chord immediately preceding the Allegro. Thus, as a player one can identify straightaway with that type of procedure because it is closer, from a musical viewpoint, to Beethoven's Third rather than being, perhaps, a musical comment on an abstract idea inspired by Beethoven.

With all Bob's Quartets, as in the great classics, one's musical spirit wanders. At one time you associate more with one work than another, whereas an academic person will, perhaps, have worked out theoretically which is the best work, and will be bound by that logic. However, as an interpreter, the one you're working on will quite often seem to be 'the one'. But I must say that we do like Nos. 7 and 8; they are both fine works that we enjoy playing.

No.7 is in many ways very delicate and, because of this, the more tone colour you can find in the writing, the better. Blend of musical sound and a controlled imagination are very important to the interpretation of this piece. In fact, in all Bob's pieces, you are allowed (as in Haydn) to use your own fantasy and imagination so long as you bear in mind that all the time the writing is very definitely 'quartet' as an instrument in itself. The problems arise in that four people are required to play it.

The No.8 is a robust piece, full of contrast - like we are, sometimes sad, sometimes very humorous, as in the mosquito-like Scherzo. The writing, of course, is clever and cultured; the use of the beauty of the instruments has all his usual understanding and, of course, he uses this to great advantage, building up through contrast, all the way to the high climax of the last movement - and yes, at the moment it's my favourite.

As a quartet we have often discussed the things that might have happened had Bob been a professional player, as was Suk, for instance, who played second violin with the Bohemian Quartet for 50 years. Bob seems to be such a musician - some-one whom we as players would have loved to have had in our side of the profession. But it was not to be, and I daresay that he might not have had time to write the works he has, if he had been involved with performance. So we do like to see him at rehearsals - although there's one big snag: it makes time pass too quickly.

# A Discography of recordings held in The British Institute of Recorded Sound

This discography lists BIRS Taped and BBC Transcription discs followed by commercially available discs.

## A BIRS Tapes and BBC Transcription discs

### 1 As Composer

1 Canzona, brasses
Philip Jones Brass Ensemble
BBC TN 1966, March 29 — BIRS M 731

Philip Jones Brass Ensemble — BBC TR 125069

2 Energy, brass band
Newsome, Roy (cond.)
Sunlife Stanshawe Band
BBC R3 1978, December 18 — BIRS M 7738 BW

3 Incidental Music to Ibsen's play 'The Pretenders'
Horenstein, Jascha (cond.)
Philharmonia Orchestra, London
(1st UK performance) — BIRS M 3010
BBC R3 1971, April 18 — BIRS M 3060

4 Quartet, strings, No. 1
Delme String Quartet
BBC R3 1981, April 5 — BIRS T 3926 BW

5 Quartet, strings, No. 2
Aeolian Quartet of London
BBC TP, 1964, February 13 — BIRS O 8 R

6 Quartet, strings, No. 3
Delme String Quartet
BBC R3 1981, April 19 — BIRS 4921 W

7 Quartet, strings, No. 4
Delme String Quartet
BBC R3 1981, April 26 — BIRS T 3962 BW

8 Quartet, strings, No. 5
Gabrieli String Quartet
(1st broadcast performance)
BBC R3 1980, Feb 3 — BIRS T 2848 BW

9 Quartet, strings, No. 7
Gabrieli String Quartet
(1st broadcast performance)
BBC R3 1978, May 6 — BIRS 3200 BW

10 Piano Concerto (1967)
Ogdon, John (piano)
Silvestri, Constantin (cond.)
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra — BBC TR 121641

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 11 | Symphony No. 1 | |
| | Pope, Stanley (cond.)<br>London Philharmonic Orchestra | BBC TR 111120<br>BBC TR 126833/4 |
| | Simpson, Robert (cond.)<br>London Philharmonic Orchestra<br>BBC R3 1970, March 14 | BIRS 1543 W |
| 12 | Symphony No. 2 | |
| | Horenstein, Jascha (cond.)<br>Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra | BIRS 1740 W |
| | Simpson, Robert (cond.)<br>Royal Philharmonic Orchestra | BIRS 634 |
| 13 | Symphony No. 3 | |
| | Groves, Charles (cond.)<br>Royal Philarmonic Orchestra | BBC TR 122849/50 |
| | Rignold, Hugo (cond.)<br>Royal Philharmonic Orchestra | BIRS 734 R |
| 14 | Symphony No. 4 | |
| | Davis, Andrew (cond.)<br>BBC Symphony Orchestra | BBC TR 137443/4 |
| 15 | Symphony No. 5 | |
| | Davis, Andrew (cond.)<br>London Symphony Orchestra<br>(1st performance)<br>BBC R3 1973, May 3 | BIRS P 936 W |
| 16 | Symphony No. 6 | |
| | Groves, Charles (cond.)<br>London Philharmonic Orchestra<br>(1st performance)<br>BBC R3 1980, April 8 | BIRS T 2290 BW |
| 17 | Trio, piano, clarinet, violoncello | |
| | Music Group of London<br>(1st broadcast performance)<br>BBC R3 1968, November 29 | BIRS 1221 R<br>BIRS 1590 W |
| | Wallfisch, Peter (pf.),<br>De Peyer, Gervase (cl.),<br>Pleeth, William (vlc.) | BIRS 1535 R |
| 18 | Variations and finale on a theme of Haydn, piano | |
| | Balsam, Artur (pf.)<br>BBC TP 1965, May 2 | BIRS M 367 R |

II As arranger

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Bach, J.S., arr. Simpson | |
| | The Art of Fugue: Contrapuncti 1-4 | |
| | Delme String Quartet<br>BBC R3 1981, April 5 | BIRS T 3926 BW |

2 Bach, J.S., arr. Simpson
The Art of Fugue: Contrapunctus 8
Delme String Quartet
BBC R3 1981, April 19 BIRS 4921 W

3 Bach, J.S. arr. Simpson
The Art of Fugue: Contrapunctus 9
Delme String Quartet
BBC R3 1980, October 26 BIRS 4335 BW

NB. Last year, when part of the series of eight programmes covering the String Quartets and Art of Fugue arrangements was being broadcast for the first time, machine failure caused some items to be missed. These were retaken on their recent rebroadcast. -Timothy Day.

III As Speaker

1 Conversation with Malcolm Macdonald
before the performance of Fifth Quartet
BBC R3 1980, February 3* BIRS M 8304 BW

2 'The Biggest symphony ever written':
discussion on Havergal Brian's Gothic Symphony
Boult, Sir Adrian
Fairfax, Bryan
Simpson, Robert
BBC HS 1966, October 30 BIRS M 850 R

3 Conversation with Havergal Brian
BBC R3 1970, May 10 BIRS M 2026 W

4 Discusses and introduces some of his own works
Cooke, Deryck
Simpson, Robert
BBC tape TLO 638/587 (copy of) BIRS M 976 W

5 'The Ferociously Anti-pessimist Composer':
talk on his attitudes to composition.
BBC R3 1971, May 12 BIRS M 3083 R

6 Discusses with Malcolm Macdonald his Fourth Quartet
and its relationship to Beethoven's Op.59, No.1.*
BBC R3 1980, January 27 BIRS 3767 BW

7 Talk about Symphony No. 5.
Simpson, Robert
Stevenson, Ronald
BBC R3 1973, May 5 BIRS M 4906 R

8 Talk about Brian's Symphony No. 1 ("Gothic"),
including archive recording of Brian in conversation
with Robert Simpson
BBC R3 1980, May 25 BIRS 3908 BW

* These two talks, with the third of the series (on the Sixth Quartet), will appear in the next three issues of TONIC. -Ed.

Commercial discs

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Canzona, brasses | |
| | Locke Brass Ensemble | RCA RL 25081<br>RCA GL 25308 |
| | Philip Jones Brass Ensemble | Ace of Diamonds SDD 274 |
| 2 | Energy, brass band | |
| | Boddington (cond.) | |
| | GUS Band | Columbia TWO 379 |
| 3 | Quartet, strings, No. 1 | |
| | Aeolian String Quartet | Unicorn UNS 234 |
| 4 | Quintet, clarinet and strings. (1963) | |
| | Walton, Bernard (cl.) | |
| | Aeolian String Quartet | Unicorn UNS 234<br>Unicorn UNS 262 (re-issue) |
| 5 | Symphony No. 1 | |
| | Boult, Sir Adrian (cond.) | |
| | London Philarmonic Orchestra | Gramophone BLP 1092<br>Gramophone HQM 1010 |
| 6 | Symphony No. 3 | |
| | Horenstein, Jascha (cond.) | |
| | London Symphony Orchestra | Unicorn UNS 225<br>Unicorn UNS 262 (re-issue) |
| 7 | Volcano, brass band | |
| | Parkes (cond.) | |
| | Black Dyke Mills Band | Chandos BBR 1004 |

Discography compiled by A. H. Mason.

My thanks go to Ateş Orga, whose suggestion prompted me to write to the BIRS, and, at the BIRS, to Diana Hull, Chief Cataloguer, to Timothy Day, Curator of Western Art Music, who had started to assemble material for us independently, and to Helen Mason for all her effort in compiling this list. -Ed.

---

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

---

Dear Sir,

In the fourth footnote to my article The Origin of the First Symphony you quote Debussy, via M. Croche, as saying that Beethoven's piano sonatas are very badly written for the piano, and that they are more accurately described as orchestral transcriptions. I take it that this, with its concluding remark 'RS is in good company', was meant jokingly, but there is a serious point behind it. To take the last item first: others have had the idea that some, at least, of Beethoven's piano music would find its most fitting home on the orchestra - Weingartner,

for instance, who orchestrated Op.106, with the noble idea of liberating this masterpiece from its piano shackles, only to have to admit that he was wrong and that Beethoven actually knew what he was doing in the first place.

As for the rest, when Beethoven wrote badly for the piano, he did so from the standpoint of an expert pianist, not from that of one who is not a pianist, and this makes all the difference. (Badly, here, = unusually, and, as with Schubert's piano writing, it also means that bunglers are not encouraged - except, of course, by those who continue to set such works as examination and competition test pieces.)

Last point: Debussy was an expert in his own brand of pianism which was a million miles away from any classical or German romantic concept - not better, but just different; and there is plenty of evidence in his comments on the classical sonata to show that that he never understood it, and that, being human, he damned what he did not understand. But this does not make his observations on either the sonata or those who did understand it authoritive, but merely the irritable outburst of one who knows he does not understand.

Yours sincerely,

Harold Truscott,
Deal, Kent.

---

## SIMPSON ANTAGONISTES

---

Its four movements rise in tonality by successive fifths; the themes themselves make clear use of fifths, mostly rising; and much of the harmony evolves from this common but inexhaustible interval. But it doesn't matter if you can't tell a fifth from a rissole.

(Introducing Eighth String Quartet at Birthday Celebration, 25.iv.1981)

Most of his life he was conciously striving to be in front, and his very last period shows him striving not to be behind.

(On Stravinsky, from talk on late Beethoven, Radio 3, 8.iii.79)

Evidently he has his own ideas about the value of perceptive criticism; these prevent him from blundering into it himself.

('Composer and Critic', The Musical Times, June 1955)

---

## STOP PRESS

---

RS will talk on the issues raised in his new book, The Proms and Natural Justice, at a function organised by the Music Club of London. He will outline the issues raised, and their effects, and deal with questions from the floor. Wider issues may be raised in the second part of the evening, which will be chaired by the Editor of TONIC.

TIME: 7.30 p.m. DATE: Thursday, 10th September, 1981.

PLACE: Swedenborg Hall, 20 Bloomsbury Way,
London WC1. (opp. British Museum)

## SCORES AVAILABLE FOR STUDY OR PURCHASE

| WORK | FORMAT | PRICE PUBLISHED £ | PRICE SOCIETY £ | LOAN/PURCHASE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Symphony No. 1 | Miniature score | 3.50 | 2.50 | |
| " No. 2 | Study score, A4 size | 10.00 | 7.50 | |
| " No. 3 | " " " " | 10.00 | 7.50 | |
| String Quartet No. 1 | " " 10" x 7" | 1.90 | 1.40 | |
| " " No. 2 | " " " " | 2.20 | 1.60 | |
| " " No. 3 | " " " " | 2.30 | 1.70 | |
| " " No. 4 | " " " " | 6.00 | 5.00 | |
| " " No. 5 | " " " " | 6.00 | 5.00 | |
| " " No. 6 | " " " " | 6.00 | 5.00 | |
| " " No. 7 | " " " " | 4.50 | 3.50 | |
| Clarinet Quintet | " " " " | 8.50 | 6.00 | |
| Clarinet Trio | " " A4 size | 6.00 | 5.00 | |

N.B. Full scores of the Symphonies 4-7 are available for hire only, from Lengnicks.

---

To: JOHN and SYLVIA BROOKS
THE ROBERT SIMPSON SOCIETY
3 ENGEL PARK
LONDON NW7 2HE

Please send me the scores I have indicated above on loan/for purchase.*

I enclose a cheque, made payable to the Robert Simpson Society, for £....

**Name** .....

**Address** .....

.....

*Delete where inapplicable

The Robert Simpson Society would be grateful for contributions towards the postage of scores on loan.

---

To: JOHN AND SYLVIA BROOKS
THE ROBERT SIMPSON SOCIETY
3 ENGEL PARK
LONDON
NW7 2HE

I enclose £ ... as a donation towards the costs of recording, for public sale, four previously unrecorded String Quartets by Robert Simpson (Nos. 3, 6, 7, 8: to be confirmed).

I understand that if for any reason this proposal cannot be implemented, I may reclaim my donation or, alternatively, leave it at the disposal of the Robert Simpson Society for use in other projects.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

SIGNATURE ..... DATE .....

The Organ Music of

PERCY WHITLOCK

The organ music of Percy Whitlock (1903-46) is featured on an LP issued by Wealden Studios. It has been recorded by ROBERT GOWER on the instrument at St Stephen's, Bournemouth, where Whitlock was organist from 1930-35. This is a fine Pearson church with good acoustics and an excellent 1898 Hill organ, restored by Rushworth and Draper in 1951.

Much of the music on this disc, therefore, is played on the instrument for which it was composed. Most of the music has not been available on record before, and it is hoped that this LP will bring about a revival of interest in a sound which is immediately appealing.

The programme is:

FANTASY CHORALES Nos. 1 in D flat major &
2 in F sharp minor
CANZONA (from the SONATA in C minor)
MARCH for 'THE PHOEBE'
PSALM SKETCHES: IMPROMPTU & SORTIE

The record costs £5.00, and can be ordered from:

ROBERT GOWER, 22 Woodlands Road, London SW13.