

TEMPO

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When a great composer dies, it is natural that the world of music should in every possible way pay homage to his memory. Yet it is also natural that these public gestures tend to conflict with our private instincts. For they awaken a fear that something of the general mood is temporarily imposing itself upon the music, and thus appearing to change or obscure its inherent qualities of feeling. So, rather than risk a failure of response, we may choose to withdraw for the time being, even though we are aware that the truest way of commemorating a composer is by continuing our direct involvement with what he has written. That withdrawal is not without its value. We need time to absorb the fact that one work has become the last, and that nothing will now change the direction and proportions of the line formed by all the others. And the music, for its part, may need to be left alone for a while. To accustom itself to the absence of its creator

Each of the four Stravinsky works considered in the following pages was chosen because a composer or performer wished to write about it. Wished, that is, to confront some aspect of Stravinsky's mastery and inspiration. In that sense the selection is arbitrary. In another it is not. Each work comes from a different phase in Stravinsky's output; and there are, broadly speaking, four phases. Discussion of four other works from each of those phases would have served equally well as a reminder of the immense range of Stravinsky's achievement, and yet would have left a newcomer with the impression of a significantly different composer

The list of 'representative' works by Stravinsky would make strange reading. It would either be limited to the single name of *The Rake's Progress*, which is Stravinsky's one synoptic masterpiece, or it would need to continue until almost every mature work was mentioned – so few are the by-works and bagatelles. One of the traits Stravinsky had in common with Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern was an acute awareness of the preciousness of creative time

Through form, says Stravinsky, we 'establish a working agreement between ourselves and the chaos which surrounds us.' Exactly 20 years have passed since Schoenberg's death left the supreme arbitration of that agreement in the hands of Stravinsky alone. And today? No more supremacy, perhaps; but thanks above all to Stravinsky and Schoenberg, some agreement, and therefore much hope