

describe Cage, in considerable and strenuously humorous detail, as a bloody bore and have done with him is to turn one's back on musical history, on music today. Cage has proved a powerful force in contemporary art, musical and extra-musical: is it not up to a musical journal to try and explain why? I myself, with my type of ear and my musical background, am not even able to regard him as a composer or a musician; yet I would not deny him a touch of genius. What has to be explained, among many other things, is his influence on highly musical musicians—an influence which by now is Western-world-wide.

At the same time as this fatuous review appeared in *Music & Letters*, we had a thoughtful article on Cage's two books in *Composer* (Edwin Roxburgh), and an equally responsible review of them in *Tempo* (Brian Dennis), as well as a conversation on closely related subjects, entitled 'The Contemporary Pianist', between John Tilbury and Michael Parsons in *The Musical Times*. It is fascinating to observe that these pieces in no way duplicate each other, whereas what the reviewer in *Music & Letters* has to say about Cage has been said a thousand times over. Prof. Westrup may or may not sympathize with it; if he does not, he would delight us if he invited a realistic and reasoned article on Cage for a future issue of *Music & Letters*—nor, in this instance, need he fear any mathematical formulae and diagrams.

But does Professor Westrup think that, say, Alfred Nieman's fascinating 'A Fresh Look at Webern' in the Winter 1968/9 issue of *Composer* is diagrammatical and ultimately purposeless? Most contemporary composers are, in fact, immeasurably more articulate conceptually than were most composers of the past; now, more than ever, is the time to let the composer himself speak, even if you are disinclined to let his 'propagandists' have a say. Does *Music & Letters* want to succeed with its implied battle cry, 'Stop the world! I want to get off'? Should we all get off?

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

In his article 'Who's exhausted?' (*Tempo* 87, Winter 1968/69) Mr Tim Souster writes: "Boulez, Amy, Barraqué, Stockhausen—and 'the avant-garde camp is exhausted' (Peter Stadlen, *Daily Telegraph*, 2/12/68)." Later on Mr Souster renders the charge more explicit: "I have stressed the differences between the music of Boulez, Amy and Barraqué, differences systematically minimised by those who brand the avant-garde 'exhausted'."

In my review, which was headed "Rich music of 7 min. Boulez 'Variation'", I praised the re-composition of the first movement of 'Livre pour Quatuor': ". . . artful additions not of bars but of parts . . . carry new thought . . . offer much richer fare to the mind and indeed to the senses. . . comes from the ear and hence reaches the ear . . . Mr Boulez emerges as a badly-needed revolutionary force in the exhausted avant-garde camp."

Mr Souster, a critic malgré lui, tells us that he would have preferred to write a piano piece rather than his article. No doubt he is trying to save time and trouble by quoting from memory.

Yours etc.

PETER STADLEN

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