

just two hands. He also has two ears. And these ears recognize the sonority of each cloud that changes its colouring incessantly. It is a sort of generalized harmony (or the harmony in the ancient sense). Listening to it guides the performer throughout the performance. (It is the other side of the coin. Ears and hands collaborate in a feed-back loop.)

In Hill's article, the image of the composer appears so high above that of the performer that he might be a Platonic Creator specifying the ideal form of the world. This is merely a most academic reflection of the common view that a performer is nothing but a slave of his instrument.

A performer is an adventurer who explores sonic nebulae following the star map provided by the composer. A composition is a model which is used again and again to open the door of perception. It will be modified, if necessary, and discarded when it is no longer valid.

5-10-25 Zaimokuza  
Kamakura 248  
Japan

from STEPHEN PRUSLIN

I am not in the habit of taking issue with my colleagues in print, but I must say that Peter Hill's article on Xenakis's piano music in TEMPO 112 alarmed me to a degree. Not only have I found it possible to give numerous performances of *Herma* over the past five years without resorting to octave transposition (and at a tempo at least respectable enough to lead score-carrying members of the audience through quite a paperchase, according to various eye-witnesses), but the idea that a piano work is a kind of piano reduction, and that one plays outwards from the effect to the notes, is suspect even in principle. Suspect also is the idea that wrong notes at the ends of the keyboard are less crucial than those in the middle, even if this were acoustically and harmonically true, which it isn't. Composers agonize just as much over extreme registers as any other ones, and when one's ear is sensitized to contemporary harmony, a wrong note bothers just as much as it would in classical harmony, even if it is very high or low. A player must be ready and able to cope with the vicissitudes of a particular performance, but to found a whole theory of performance on a premise of compromise is not only dangerous, it also gives ammunition to the idea that as a performer of contemporary music, one's whole art needn't be as precise, honest, or caring as, say, the art of someone who chooses to spend his time in the service of 17th-century performance practices—an idea which I and a number of my colleagues have spent a considerable amount of time in recent years trying to correct.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### COLERIDGE-TAYLOR CENTENARY CELEBRATION

A memorial to Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) was unveiled by Sir Thomas Armstrong, chairman of the Musicians' Benevolent Fund, during a service at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Holborn Viaduct, London E.C.1 on 5 September, in the presence of the American Ambassador and the composer's daughter, Avril Coleridge-Taylor. The proceedings also featured performances of music by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, including his String Quartet.

*VARESE AT THE R.A.M.*

The Royal Academy of Music is presenting four concerts at which it is hoped to perform the complete works of Edgar Varèse. *Offrandes*, *Deserts* and *Nocturnal* were performed on 24 November, conducted by John Carewe, and on 3 December he conducted a concert of chamber music. On 26 January he will conduct the third concert (including *Ecuatorial* and *Poème Electronique*) and the series concludes on 4 February with *Amériques* and *Arcana*. All the concerts take place at Duke's Hall at the R.A.M.; admission is free.

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