



*(Recent months have been marked by the passing of a cruelly large number of distinguished musicians. It has never been TEMPO's practice to devote undue space to formal obituaries; and the tributes of various kinds which are here offered to the memories of five composers imply no forgetfulness of the debt which 20th-century music owes also to such notable performers as Cathy Berberian and Sir Adrian Boult (first interpreter not only of countless British works but also conductor of the British premières of Mahler 3, Doktor Faust, Wozzeck, and Schoenberg's Variations for Orchestra).*

*Igor Markevitch died of a heart-attack on 7 March in Antibes. We publish here for the first time in English some remarks of his composition teacher, the late Nadia Boulanger. Mlle. Boulanger died in 1979, just before the revival of interest in and renewed performance of Markevitch's own compositions began to reverse the 'great tragedy' of which she spoke.)*

## IGOR MARKEVITCH (1912–1983)

*Nadia Boulanger*

I REMEMBER the first day that Markevitch joined my class; he must have been about 15. I had just played the students in my counterpoint class an example of four-part counterpoint and I had asked if anyone could play it back to me. The usual reply to this sort of question is utter silence. But the young Markevitch got up and said very courteously: 'If I may, Mademoiselle, I would like to try'.

'You can't. You have never done any counterpoint'.

To everybody's amazement, perhaps even to his own, he replayed the whole thing from memory. By the end of the lesson, half the students were ready to serve him devotedly, while the others were never to forgive him. He was too superior, too smart, too cultured.

Markevitch, virtually still a child, was sure of himself: ask him a question, he knew the answer and said it; the others sometimes found this a little irritating.

*Igor Markevitch made his name first of all as a composer?*

Yes. I have no idea why he stopped composing or showing what he had written. I am not keeping any secrets; I am faced with a secret whose extent and nature are a mystery.

*It seems to me that your decision to give up composition is equally an extremely difficult one to explain.*

It concerns no one.

*Markevitch's decision falls into the same category.*

The same category as what?

*As your own decision.*

Oh! Not at all. In my case, it was the knowledge that my music was useless. Markevitch might or might not be in agreement with himself but he cannot, whatever the misapprehension he is labouring under, believe that his music is insignificant. *Psaume* and *Icare* are major scores. They contain so much energy and originality.

I honestly do not know what happened. For me, it is a great tragedy: that music of such character should be written and yet made use of by no one.

There are some who are surrounded by the ignorance of those who keep company with them—those who ought to have everything to gain by benefiting from the association. One would have everything to gain from getting to know Markevitch better. He is known, he is fêted as a conductor; but, in other respects, the other side of his personality is greeted by total ignorance and incomprehension. That is of no importance; he is Markevitch.

(from *Mademoiselle: entretiens avec Nadia Boulanger* by Bruno Monsaingeon. English translation by Sue Rose, printed by kind permission of the publishers, Editions Van de Velde).

