

# Tempo

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF MODERN MUSIC

Edited by Colin Mason

© 1969 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 51-36700

---

The title of the BBC2 programme on electronic music, 'The same trade as Mozart', was a promising one, but we waited the whole hour before we discovered its relevance, when it turned out that the producer had pinched it from the final throwaway remark of one of his composer-contributors, Justin Connolly. The approach to the subject that it implied – an exploration of the relationship of electronic music to the music of the past – was something that the programme itself never began to attempt. Are the composers of electronic music in fact in the same trade as Mozart, or to put it more precisely, is the art that they practise the same, in the essential sense that it does or can provide a self-sufficient, aesthetically and emotionally satisfying aural experience?

A good many of us already feel sure of the affirmative answer to that, from the masterly compositions of Stockhausen if from no other, but there are many more who remain to be convinced – and here it is fair to say that this programme, by its restrained and intelligent presentation of the Stockhausen excerpts played, will certainly not have hindered the spread of that conviction. Connolly however was not so fortunate with the visual treatment of his 'M-Piriform', which I found arbitrary, irrelevant, and a severe distraction from the musical merits of an undoubtedly (in many senses conservatively) musical piece. The problem here is indeed the same as for television presentation of Mozart, intensified by the seemingly greater need for elucidation or interpretation (the latter was predominant here) of an unfamiliar kind of music. Musicians know from long experience what startling misunderstandings of music are possible in the responses of those primarily interested in some other art – choreographers, painters, writers (if a literary man puts together two words about music, said Aaron Copland in a memorable line, one of them will be wrong), and in this sense television programmes are electronic music's least need at present. The point was made during the programme that the main uses to which it is put are still for film and drama productions, usually in connection with such subjects as science fiction or the supernatural. What it most needs now is to unburden itself of this kind of association, and to prove its aural self-sufficiency by addressing itself to those whose interest is purely musical. At the beginning of the vogue for electronic music it was noticeable that it attracted large numbers of people who were never to be seen at concerts of any other kind of contemporary music, suggesting that it might be destined to become part of some new kind of composite artistic manifestation not primarily for listening. But at recent concerts some of this audience has shown signs of fading away, indicating perhaps that composers of electronic music are after all going to find themselves in the same trade as Mozart – or, more relevant, the same as Stravinsky, Webern, Vaughan Williams and Rawsthorne. Those of us listeners who have not faded away are impatiently waiting for them to show more signs of catering for the same market.