

cultural identity were considerably simpler, and whose effect on Szymanowski's work showed more as time passed. Questions of personal against national independence were not all: whether folk-based or not, Szymanowski's music remained usually extravagant and iconoclastic to Warsaw musical circles (who, as far as nationalism went, still usually preferred the 19th-century ersatz variety), and he came more and more in conflict with them, even though acknowledged as a kind of progressive leader. Surface tensions, of badly-handled opposition, unwisely accepted professorships, failing health and finances, additionally resulted in further and increasingly impulsive travelling; until it all ended among the other consumptive and impoverished relics of the *ancien régime* on the French Riviera.

Unsurprisingly the official critical view in present-day Poland tends towards the works of his latest period. But it is Dr. Samson's well-supported view that Szymanowski reached his peak in the 1914-20 period, when the influence of Debussy was uppermost—but not, as with Bartók, a stage equivalent, at most, to any other on the journey home. Rather, the music of Debussy, and perhaps even more that of Ravel from *Jeux d'eau* to *Daphnis*, showed him means, involving the directest possible atmospheric and sensual contact, whereby his native stylistic details fitted into place more happily than previously. This is normally called his 'Impressionist' period. I do not wish to quarrel with Dr. Samson's use of the term, since in limited space it is a useful signpost to most of the desired associations: but I am not sure it has ever completely rid itself of its original pejorative meaning, and by the time of its application to Debussy has a vague and second-hand sense quite contrary to the truth. With Szymanowski it's *third-hand*, by 1914 absurdly out-of-date, and generally insufficient to describe his share of the huge, and then still fully alive, movement throughout Europe from Spain to Russia (nowhere more so), based on attitudes to consciousness and the balance of interior and exterior worlds. What Szymanowski lacked was that capacity for ironic self-distancing which was particularly important to Debussy, in doubt and changing circumstance: the want of it led to the long debate in Szymanowski's mind—in public writings, and internally in the composition of *King Roger*, with its themes of hedonism against principle—which lasted until the mid-1920's.

That Dr. Samson's study is centred on the music, yet approaches the complexities of his subject from a wide viewpoint, says much for his sense, sympathy and thoroughness. An initial dryness is just the surface of a deft compression with which he has a great deal to say in barely 200 pages, including a comment on every surviving piece. His approach does not pre-empt a more detailed biographical one, but whets the appetite for it.

BILL HOPKINS

As we go to press we learn with sorrow of the sudden death of G. W. (Bill) Hopkins, the composer and writer, who was a frequent and much-valued contributor to TEMPO for the past 15 years. He was 37, and since 1979 had been lecturer in music at Newcastle University. He is survived by his wife and two sons, to whom we extend our sympathy.