

Tempo

A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF MODERN MUSIC

Edited by Colin Mason

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Is composing a career? In the current issue of *Composer* David Morgan complains that after attending a music college for several years and acquiring "a high degree of knowledge and professional skill", the young composer "must accept that, for the rest of his life, he must devote most of his time and energy to something else". This strange equation of art with physiotherapy or carpentry is an error to which composers seem more prone than the rest of the musical world—seemingly reluctant to face a fact of life which is accepted without question where pianists are concerned. A composition student entering college surely does so with the warning from somebody, if not from the principal, that the college can do not more than equip him to earn his living as a musician, with no promise of success for him as an 'artist'. The composer who cannot get performances is simply in the same plight as the performer who cannot get engagements, and he should be prepared to get his bread and butter in some other branch of musical activity—as many of the most successful composers in this century have done, just like their predecessors. Elgar and Holst, as well as Schoenberg and Hindemith, all struggled in more or less lowly musical occupations until their composing talents released them from drudgery. Britten has been a busy touring accompanist—admittedly of a rather special kind—for many years, besides founding an opera company and running a music festival; and both Stockhausen and Boulez have been active as touring performers. Among the younger established composers working in England today, Maxwell Davies, Birtwistle, and Bedford have been full-time (and highly successful) school teachers, while Williamson, Bennett and Smalley have done a stint as professional pianists. In most cases this practical activity, though undertaken for bread and butter, has also afforded an opportunity for them as composers—while Davies and Birtwistle, like Britten before them with the English Opera Group, have founded their own performing ensemble (the Pierrot Players) to provide a further outlet for their creative work. There is still a good deal that the composer can do as a practising professional musician to help himself, directly or indirectly, in what he may regard as his primary work, and with rare exceptions that is what he will always have to do, and continue doing, until the happy day when he finds that his music is getting around under its own power.

From the next issue, the price of *Tempo* will go up to four shillings (new subscription rates appear on opposite page). Since the price was last raised, in Spring 1964, production and editorial costs have gradually increased, and so has the size of the paper—the average for the last ten issues is 45 pages, compared with 33 pages for the ten issues before the last price-increase. The higher average seems likely to go on being necessary, for in addition to the several main articles in each issue, on diverse aspects of composition today, we shall continue to try to provide, in the reviews of the 'First Performances' section, extended coverage of the most important new works by composers in England today. We hope that for only five shillings extra a year subscribers will still consider us good value.