

EDITORIAL

He spoke in a diffident manner: 'As I see it, the cosmos is probably infinite, which means – well, infinite. So there are local situations – a tremendous number of them. Indeed, in a situation of infinity, there are an infinite set of local conditions, so that somewhere there is bound to be anything, if this anything is even remotely possible ...'

Jack Vance, *Emphyrio*

'VIENNA is synonymous with music', begins Gertraud Cerha's major survey of Austrian music since the war; but no longer, she proceeds to demonstrate, as regards new music. After 150 years of taking its lead from native or adopted Viennese—Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg, Webern—the musical world now probably takes less note of Austrian contemporary music than that of most countries. A myriad factors—politically determined by the end of the Habsburg Empire, the Anschluss, and the four-power occupation; exemplified culturally by the diaspora of the 'Second Viennese School' and its adherents—have reduced new music, in European music's former capital, to a 'local situation'. But a fascinating one, whose potential for wider influence lies in its unique links to the Austro-German tradition, and whose attempts even to escape the burden of that tradition retain a uniquely 'Austrian' flavour. This is the 'situation' which the Almeida Festival has brought to London for the duration of June 1987.

Although we like to imagine that our readers devour TEMPO from cover to cover, its issues are seldom planned as a unity. But an 'Austrian issue' had been long discussed, and the Almeida Festival has provided the occasion for it. The wealth of material soon necessitated a 'double number' that should include, for balance, contributions on English music originally scheduled for September. What was not foreseen was the mysterious way in which the various elements would echo and reflect one another. There is much talk of mirrors in this issue. Friedrich Cerha has composed them; Kurt Schwertsik looks into one; serialists of all persuasions need them. And there is a larger reflection too: in ceasing to be the centre of contemporary musical life, Austria has somehow assumed the character of a border territory, a far-flung outpost of the central culture, with its own distinct manners and eccentricities—a little like Britain, in fact.

Perhaps especially Celtic Britain (*Pibroch: an Austrian composer writes*, p.60; and David Brown examines the phenomenon of the Cornishman George Lloyd, who writes symphonies on the old European pattern as if most of the 20th century never happened). But Barbara Docherty (p.75) demonstrates how English Song—that most 'native' of our local traditions—responded to the Shropshire Angst of A. E. Housman by recapitulating the experience of the Austro-German Lied from Zelter to Mahler; and it is Mahler again whom Christopher Stasiak evokes to elucidate the symphonic manners of that quintessentially English figure Malcolm Arnold. It seems that a certain cultural interdependence may still transcend the restricted environment of the local situation, as Kurt Schwertsik suggests it did in the time of Thomas of Erildoune.

There is also much talk of rows (German Reihe [fem.]: a row or series—thus also in the musical sense; a line, as in a line of succession; a suite; a sequence; a range; a ranking order; an order in which people take turns). When György Ligeti (who considers himself an Austrian composer) suggested the name die reihe for the pioneering new-music ensemble founded by Cerha and Kurt Schwertsik, he surely intended no reference—except maybe an ironic one—to the journal of the same name edited by Stockhausen and Herbert Eimert, the polemical organ of Darmstadt orthodoxy. 'Totalitarian' intellectual attitudes—whether espoused in the name of political faith or aesthetic ideology—and the need to leaven them with common sense, is another frequent theme. That leavening seems often to involve a return to basics, to musical (and verbal) roots: a re-education in the procedures of tonality, a return to the values inherent in the vernacular and dialect, an increased awareness of debt to folk art, and to powerfully symbolic figures from the remote past, such as the Monk of Salzburg and the Canon of Scoune.

Gottfried von Einem, a direct heir (as Martin Anderson suggests) of an Austrian tradition that runs from Schubert to Franz Schmidt and Joseph Marx, has naturally felt this need less pressingly. Cerha and Schwertsik, in their very different fashion, illustrate the ways in which a slightly younger generation of Austrian composers has come to terms with their radically changed social and cultural situation. Krenek and Spinner represent the exiles from whose example Austria ceased to benefit; Eisler an exile whose fleeting return had significant repercussions. J. M. Hauer unexpectedly emerges, not as a footnote to Schoenberg, but a 'skeleton key figure' (as someone once said of Satie) whose compositional attitudes, as much as his works themselves, had an unexpectedly fructifying effect on the new Austrian avant-garde.

If there is a single unifying idea here, implicit in almost every item of this issue, it is probably that of 'eclecticism'. The local adaptation and harmonization of apparently conflicting influences, native and foreign, historical and contemporary, intellectual and linguistic as well as musical, would seem to define each composer's uniqueness more effectively than redundant critical notions of 'originality'. But as we see from the very different examples of Spinner, Krenek, and Malcolm Arnold, each composer's eclecticism has a different and proper scope. This issue of TEMPO might therefore have been 'designed as a defence of eclecticism, but of eclecticism within scientific bounds'—as A. E. Housman described his classic study of *The Manuscripts of Propertius (1894)*. For Housman goes on to warn his readers equally against two 'enemies': 'the devotee of system who prefers simplicity to truth, and who ... seeks to overawe the timid by sonorous talk about sanæ artis praecepta omnia; and ... the born hater of science who ... by appeals to the reader's superstition would persuade him to hope without reason and against likelihood that he will gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles'. Both species are alive and well and practising musicology; but our various contributors attest that, ultimately, the only sure way to resist their blandishments is to trust our ears.