

INTRODUCTION

It is not possible for a conductor to distribute parts for 'Autumn 60' among orchestral musicians and then get up on the rostrum and conduct the piece. The very fact that the parts and the score are identical implies that a higher degree of interest and involvement is demanded of the musicians. They have to acquaint themselves with the musical principles underlying the work; they have to investigate the range of possibilities opened up by the score. And finally they have to accept the responsibility for the part they play, for their musical contribution to the piece.

Nobody can be involved with this music in a merely professional capacity. These pieces stand to one another in a relation of mutual support and enrichment; experience gained from one is of vital importance in interpreting the others. In practical terms; any musician who has worked on 'Autumn 60' (and no instrument is excluded from taking part in that piece) is in a position to tackle either part of 'Solo with accompaniment'; players of harmony instruments can also turn to 'Material', while all four pieces are available to pianists.

Even apart from these practical considerations, it seems that these pieces may be 'read' and enjoyed by people who do not play musical instruments. For such people it is of course a matter of little concern that the four pieces in this book are for different instrumental groupings. Educated music lovers buy full scores not only for the sake of taking them to concerts and 'following with the music', but also for the pleasure of actually *reading* the music, of experiencing a kind of imaginary prototype performance. It is well known that very often there is much more in a score than what is used in the production of a sounding performance, much more than what is communicated through a single performance.

Such speculations have a very specific relevance for the pieces in this volume. The musical potentialities of 'Autumn 60' cannot be fully exploited in a single performance; a glance at the example on page 8 shows that the number of possible solutions for even a single beat far exceeds the number of musicians that can be got together for a performance, and if all the possible solutions were presented simultaneously the result would in any case be an undifferentiated mass of sound. Thus the criterion of a good performance is not completeness (*i.e.*, perfection), but rather the lucidity of its incompleteness. Any performance is a kind of documentary relic (more or less revealing) of the composer's conception. The music itself on the other hand lies in the score; the score is the composition, and as such has its own value apart from any particular interpretation.

Having stated that these notations exist in their own right, are even musically expressive in a certain sense, it is necessary to retreat from that position again and investigate the efficacy of the notations—how potent and economical is their stimulation of the instrumentalist and hence how well they are equipped for survival in a developing musical and cultural situation. A balance must be maintained between cogent explicitness (necessary to galvanise the player into action) and sufficient flexibility (in the symbols and the rules for their interpretation) to permit of evolution.

Their best guarantee for survival would be a completely self-contained, closed logical system for each piece. Such systems might be rediscovered even after a lapse of thousands of years in a state of preservation comparable to that of Egyptian mummies. But however beautifully preserved they would nevertheless be dead, their language and meaning forgotten. So these little systems—these pieces—are *not* self-contained; like seeds, they depend on the surrounding soil for nourishment, they

are irremovably embedded in their environment, which is the musical situation today. And the mechanism of growth is built into them: the numbers in 'Solo with accompaniment' refer to qualities that can change with the changeable climate of musical thinking, and obviously objects as yet uninvented can change the shape of 'Memories of you'.

But beyond these growth mechanisms, the pieces also need camouflage to protect them from hostile forces in the early days of their life. One kind of protection is provided by the novelty and uniqueness of the notations; few musicians will take the trouble to decipher and learn the notations unless they have a positive interest in performing the works. But a more positive kind of camouflage is needed; something to persuade the watchful custodians of our musical garden that these tender young emergent plants bear more resemblance to flowers or vegetables than to weeds. So as seeds, besides containing a growth mechanism orientated towards the future, they also bear hereditary characteristics linking them with the past. So it will be found that the pitches given in 'Autumn 60'—and in the nature of things these pitches will often predominate—are almost pentatonic. And in 'Material', although the pitches are seldom tonally associated, the rhythmic pulsation and the development of the rubato idea provide a similar handhold. 'Solo with accompaniment' and 'Memories of you' are more aggressive, tougher, simpler in conception and consequently stand in less need of such camouflage. 'Memories of you' even dispenses with the tempered scale, except insofar as this is represented symbolically by the presence of a grand piano.

Cornelius Cardew. January, 1966.

Preview File Only