
intensely romantic, even ecstatic gestures are conveyed via a meticulous notation that sometimes looks more like an engineer's (or an architect's) drawings. And what is one to think of Feldman, the physically gross creator of sounds on the verge of audibility, who began as a Cageian apostle of total freedom, and ended up writing huge sonic panels based on the intricate abstract patterning of Turkish rugs?

Concert 'B' is a typical 'late-night' concert (even with the 8.30 start, don't expect to be home too early!) Common to all the composers is the desire to abolish traditional concepts of time, whether the time-span involved is 2 minutes (Cage) or nearer to 2 hours (Feldman). Even the oldest composers represented share this ambition - Satie through hypnotic repetition, Scriabin through a shimmering, constantly shifting rhythmic surface. But the most spectacular and thought-provoking items come at the beginning and the end. We've always thought of music as a generically human activity, even though we've made uneasy exceptions for birdsong (even before Messiaen gets to work on it) and, ever since the ecological euphorias of the late sixties, for the evidently 'structured' song of the hump-backed whale. Even when we conceded the possibility of animal 'music', we located it in a ghetto quite disjunct from 'musica humana'. Self-evidently, tigers couldn't compose in the style of Boulez, or penguins in the style of Xenakis. But walruses? Les Gilbert's recordings from Alaska, here receiving their first public airing, suggest that there are more new music concerts in the arctic than we imagine. Feldman's late music, on the contrary, expands characteristically human patternings to a length where they seem almost part of the (urban) environment.

As **Concert 'C'** makes clear, the Anglo-Australian connection ain't what it used to be. In earlier times, it would have been a reciprocal avowal of conservative values, and with a very different choice of composers (even youngish ones) such a conjunction would still be possible. This concert, however, offers a very different focus. After the New Simplicity and the New Romanticism of the seventies (which still continue, of course) came a counter-move: the New Complexity. Perhaps, in historical terms, it wasn't so new: it was a reassertion of the age-old Western fascination with the idea of change and risk in art. The works of younger British composers like Dillon, Barrett and Dench (who now lives in Sydney) may be terrifyingly hard to play, yet this difficulty is no end in itself, but the key which, with luck, will unlock new expressive realms for music. The younger Australian composers in this concert (Brophy, Formosa and Smetanin, whose very names are enough to indicate how relative the notion of 'Australian' is) are more concerned with the excitement generated by the New Virtuosity, rather than 'complexity' per se, while David Lumsdaine, perpetually the youngest spirit among the older Australian composers, shows just how much emotional and intellectual intensity can be generated by judicious eclecticism placed in harness with obsessive vision.

The notion of the 'exotic' in music, applied at a level which goes way beyond artistic tourism and kitsch, is explored in **Concert 'D'**. The lure of the exotic was always part of French culture - one thinks of Flaubert's **Salambo**, Voltaire's **Zadig**, and the paintings of artists as different as Gauguin, Manet and Rousseau, not to mention the elderly Saint-Saëns' various flirtations with northern Africa. But when Debussy heard a gamelan orchestra at the Paris Exposition, it provided him not with a new musical picture-postcard, but with a basis for completely reassessing his approach to musical time and sonority. Since Debussy, the criterion for absorbing 'exotic' (i.e. non-Western) musical elements has been that not only the technical surface, but also the spiritual substance must be, at very least, inflected. Few of Debussy's 2nd Book of Preludes directly evoke non-Western cultures, yet the latter's shadow lies everywhere. For Anne Boyd, this 'shadow' leads to the redefining (via retuning) of an archetypal emblem of recent Western music-making: the concert grand piano. For a Russian composer like Prokofiev, the responsibilities of 'nationalism' extend, almost inconceivably, from the Baltic to Mongolia. Takemitsu, the most enduring of current Japanese composers, reverses the proposition: in his many works for piano, the West is viewed, with a certain detached fascination, from the East.