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**DURRANT'S**

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**Round House**

**Music Digest** by **DOMINIC GILL**

The London Music Digest is a new concert series at the Round House that will present regular programmes over the next few years—a rough schedule is already planned as far ahead as 1979—of 20th-century masterworks. The emphasis will be on post-war music; and each concert or group of concerts, somewhat after the model of Maurice Fleuret's *Journées* in Paris, will be mainly devoted to the work of a single composer.

The Digest made its debut yesterday with two concerts and two composers, each represented by a single work. The first, in the afternoon, was Stockhausen, and the work, *Stimmung*. "*Stimmung*" means tuning, and also mood, fluidity, disposition: the music is a rich and complex elaboration for six amplified solo voices of a single chord, the six overtones of a deep keynote B. The overall structural scheme is laid out by the composer: to this scheme, the singers "tune in," adding their own patterns, reacting to those of others', invoking from time to time a "magic name."

Stockhausen himself describes

the experience of *Stimmung* in mystical, religious terms: it is "meditative music. One listens attentively to the innermost depth of sound... the very innermost. All the senses are awake and calm. In the beauty of the sensual shines the beauty of the Eternal." In the Round House, as in St. John's, Smith Square, where I heard it first in May last year, the Collegium Vocale from Köln tuned us very quickly into their mood, caught us expertly in their web of shifting patterns, key-notes, poems, chords—and in some impressive climactic ritual moments. And yet, somehow, were they not all a little too polished, too effective, too easy a way to the innermost depths—these 75 minutes of gentle, pretty vocalise? After half an hour, even more irreverent thoughts began to break through the Eternal. The last of them was distinctly unfair: a new title for *Stimmung*—could it be "Variations on Old MacDonald Had a Farm"?

The evening recital, played by Roger Woodward, was given over to two performances of Jean Barraqué's piano sonata—that

huge, forbidding and rigorously through-composed serial *chef d'oeuvre*, a 2-movement sonata of more than 40 minutes, and of more than Boulez-like concentration and complexity, which Barraqué composed 20 years ago at the age of 22. André Hodeir, in his *Musique depuis Debussy* sums up the sonata as "a grandiose expression of despair," and compares it in stature to Beethoven's *Hammerklavier*.

When Woodward gave the first public performance of it in London last year, I found it a difficult, unapproachable work worthy of much admiration and respect. Last night it seemed no less difficult, no less convoluted—but perhaps less unapproachable, a deeply impressive piece, gaunt, bare-boned, starved of colour and feeling, but threaded with real force and fire. Woodward's performances above all were very fine: the second especially, an astonishing *tour de force* in which all the elements melded, an elemental battle of sound and silence, the tragedy of the final paragraphs all the more persuasive for being so strongly contained.